



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Cofnod y Trafodion
The Record of Proceedings**

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Wednesday, 26 September 2012**

Cynnwys
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Yn y golofn chwith, cofnodwyd y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi. Yn y golofn
dde, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

In the left-hand column, the proceedings are recorded in the language in which they were
spoken. The right-hand column contains a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation.

*Cyfarfu'r Cynulliad am 1.30 p.m. gyda'r Llywydd (Rosemary Butler) yn y Gadair.
The Assembly met at 1.30 p.m. with the Presiding Officer (Rosemary Butler) in the Chair.*

The Presiding Officer: Good afternoon. The National Assembly for Wales is now in session.

Cwestiynau i'r Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Gwasanaethau yn Nghastell-nedd Port Talbot

Services in Neath Port Talbot

I. David Rees: *A wnaiff y Gweinidog roi'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf am ddarparu gwasanaethau meddygol aciwt i bobl Castell-nedd Port Talbot. OAQ(4)0175(HSS)*

I. David Rees: *Will the Minister provide an update on the delivery of acute medical services for the people of Neath Port Talbot. OAQ(4)0175(HSS)*

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Lesley Griffiths): Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Local Health Board has agreed plans to ensure that Neath Port Talbot residents continue to receive safe, sustainable, high-quality acute medical services.

David Rees: Thank you for that answer, Minister. I also wish to thank you for accepting the invitation and visiting Neath Port Talbot Hospital last week, to see for yourself the fantastic facilities there, which benefit the communities in Neath Port Talbot. However, over four weeks ago, the delivery of acute medical care was transferred—and patients were also transferred—mainly to Morriston Hospital, during a shortage of staff. We recognise the difficulties that we have had in recruiting staff. While I recognise the importance of delivering safe services, I have continuously raised concern about overloading services at other hospitals as a consequence. Morriston Hospital is a particular example of that.

The Presiding Officer: Order. Are you coming to a question?

David Rees: I have received reports from constituents about the service at Morriston Hospital.

The Presiding Officer: Order. You do not have to point your finger at me. [*Laughter.*] I asked whether you were coming to a question.

David Rees: Yes. What is the Welsh Government doing to monitor emergency services at Morriston Hospital, to ensure that this change has not resulted in poorer services being provided to the people of Neath Port Talbot?

Lesley Griffiths: I was pleased to visit Neath Port Talbot Hospital—I believe that it was a week today. I was impressed with the hospital and the facilities that it offers. I was grateful for the chance to talk to staff and patients. It was important that I spoke to staff about the changes. I expect the health board to manage services across the region, and to ensure that those services are safe and effective; you referred to the services at Morriston Hospital. My role, as Minister, is to ensure that the health board delivers on that expectation. I understand that Morriston Hospital is introducing a super-triage system, called REACT, in addition to the existing nurse triage service. I hope that that will go some way to reassuring you.

Suzy Davies: As David Rees said, capacity is already stretched at Morriston Hospital as the result of the removal of acute provision at Neath Port Talbot Hospital, as people remain confused about the difference between acute and emergency admissions. As a result, patients are already being admitted to the Princess of Wales Hospital in Bridgend, because Morriston

Hospital cannot cope. In the light of extra demand on accident and emergency services at the Princess of Wales Hospital, do you agree that plans to merge accident and emergency services from Bridgend, Llantrisant and Merthyr—that is three A&E departments—will be a merger too far? Furthermore, what representations have you had from the Assembly Member for Bridgend to help persuade you that the A&E department in Bridgend should not be closed?

Lesley Griffiths: You are obviously referring to the plans that have come out of south Wales—the four health boards working alongside two of the other three health boards. It is an engagement process that has begun today, and that is the right thing to do—to raise these issues, to raise their proposals, and for Members to have their input as they go through the process.

Bethan Jenkins: Minister, you have been happy to accept Abertawe Bro Morgannwg LHB's reasons for moving acute services from Neath Port Talbot Hospital, where the LHB used the Wales Deanery's claims that there are not enough doctors at Baglan to support services. Therefore, how do you explain an urgent service change, reported recently in ABMU board papers, which talks not only of the transfer of two acute consultant physicians out of the hospital, but of the transfer of a further two consultant physicians to Singleton Hospital and elsewhere? Do you not agree that, without physicians, this amounts to a further removal of necessary services at this hospital?

Lesley Griffiths: I mentioned in my answer to David Rees that I expect the health board to manage services across the region. I believe that we will see much more of this, namely that consultants will not be based only in one hospital, or work only in one hospital—they will have to work across the region.

Vaughan Gething: We have all seen the service changes that have taken place in Neath Port Talbot, in, if you like, an urgent and unplanned manner, because the service was no longer sustainable given the medical staff available. Do you share my concern that this is a pattern we could see across other parts of Wales if we do not move to a new pattern of delivering healthcare that is clinically led in a planned and managed way to change the way in which services are delivered for the best interests and needs of patients?

Lesley Griffiths: I think it is very important that we see a planned way through, and that obviously is what the service reconfiguration will bring forward today. As I mentioned, we have seen the south Wales plans coming forth and we will go through an engagement process before the formal consultation begins in January. I hope that we can avoid the sort of thing we saw in Neath Port Talbot.

Gwasanaethau Meddygol yn Abertawe

Medical Services in Swansea

2. Mike Hedges: *A wnaiŵf y Gweinidog ddatganiad am fuddsoddiad Llywodraeth Cymru mewn gwasanaethau meddygol ac iechyd yn Abertawe. OAQ(4)0173(HSS)*

2. Mike Hedges: *Will the Minister make a statement on Welsh Government investment in health and medical services in Swansea. OAQ(4)0173(HSS)*

Lesley Griffiths: The Welsh Government is investing £878.3 million revenue funding in the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Local Health Board in 2012-13, and capital funding of £37.9 million.

Mike Hedges: I thank the Minister for that response. Again, returning to Morriston Hospital, which seems to be a matter of great concern this afternoon, the hospital's accident and emergency department is very busy. It has received investment of £5 million, thanks to this Labour Welsh Government. Do you agree that this substantial investment in one of our busiest A&E departments in Wales will not only allow more patients to be diagnosed and

treated sooner, but enhance the current facilities to better assist staff in their important life-saving work?

Lesley Griffiths: There are certainly very exciting developments in Swansea and we have seen some significant investment in the area over the last year or so. I would also like to visit again at some point. We also need to monitor Morriston Hospital to ensure that it has the resources required as we go through the service reconfiguration.

Byron Davies: Minister, we are all aware of the problems surrounding the acute medical services at Neath Port Talbot Hospital and I do not intend to reopen the issues now. I do, however, want to broaden the issue and reiterate my concerns, and the concerns of the Welsh Conservatives here, about the shortage of specialist doctors and some general medical staff across Wales. Given your answer to the previous question about the investment in health and medical services in Swansea, what are you doing to ensure that these investments and our medical services are properly staffed, and what specific measures have you taken in the short term to prevent any further closures?

Lesley Griffiths: It is up to the health board to ensure that they have the staff required. We obviously have our medical recruitment campaign. Wales is not protected against the recruitment issues that exist across the UK. My officials monitor performance delivery and finances continually and that will be included in the monitoring.

Bethan Jenkins: The issue of emergency services and the diversion to Morriston has already been mentioned. I have spoken to many staff members there who told me that they could not cope and that, at one point, there were 15 ambulances lined up waiting to admit patients. Is this the reality of what we face now, with the 'Together for Health' announcement that has been made and four A&E departments for 1.5 million people? Is this not what the centralisation of services will really mean for Welsh patients?

Lesley Griffiths: As I have said, the south Wales plans are only an engagement. It is about bringing forward the ideas and the issues, and you can now engage in that process to ensure that the proposals going forward into the consultation are the right ones. You have to accept that there is unprecedented demand; all the chairs told me in the meeting on Monday that we have had a very unusual summer and that we have had an unparalleled demand for services. I think that that is something that we will continue to see. We talk about the demographic ticking bomb, and maybe we are seeing that coming forward now. We are all aware of the challenges facing the NHS, and this is something that we will have to take forward.

Gofal Newyddenedigol yn y Gogledd

Neonatal Care in North Wales

3. Darren Millar: *A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad am ddarparu gofal newyddenedigol yng ngogledd Cymru. OAQ(4)0168(HSS)*

3. Darren Millar: *Will the Minister make a statement on the provision of neonatal care in north Wales. OAQ(4)0168(HSS)*

Lesley Griffiths: Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board is responsible for the planning and delivery of neonatal services for its local area and for ensuring they meet the all-Wales neonatal standards.

Darren Millar: You will be aware that there are concerns across north Wales at Betsi Cadwaladr's proposals to transfer level 3 neonatal care into the north-west of England at Arrowe Park Hospital, leaving north Wales without any kind of level 3 provision, which raises all kinds of issues around access and choice of nationality. That recommendation goes against the recommendation of the clinicians in north Wales. What are you going to do to ensure that Betsi Cadwaladr LHB listens to the concerns being expressed in north Wales, and

can you assure us that level 3 neonatal care will be available in north Wales for those babies who need it in the future?

Lesley Griffiths: Clearly, it is important that these babies, some of whom are very sick, have the best outcomes and best possible life chances. I have discussed this matter with the chair of the health board and I will continue to do so as we go through the service reconfiguration.

Ann Jones: I wanted to raise the fact that neonatal care in north Wales is currently the subject of consultation. Along similar lines to Darren Millar's question, will you ensure that the families of babies are not left wondering how far they will have to travel once this consultation process is over? When you next meet with the chief executive and chair of Betsi Cadwaladr LHB, could you urge them to ensure that they take over this issue sensitively given that the babies and their families are often at a precarious stage and that we want to see the best available for north Wales?

Lesley Griffiths: It is a sensitive issue and while there have been improvements to neonatal services, we are not, as I said in evidence to the Children and Young People Committee under the chairmanship of Christine Chapman, where we would want to be. I raised this with the chair of Betsi Cadwaladr LHB last Monday.

Ieuan Wyn Jones: Diolch i'r Gweinidog am ei hymateb. Rwyf yn siŵr ei bod yn ymwybodol bod pryderon nid yn unig yn y gogledd-ddwyrain, ond yn y gogledd-orllewin hefyd am y gwasanaethau arbenigol hyn. Rydym i gyd yn sylweddoli bod angen gwasanaeth arbenigol iawn ar rai o'r babanod hyn. Onid yw'r ffaith ein bod yn ystyried cael ysgol feddygol ym Mangor yn gyfle i ni sefydlu uned o'r fath yn Ysbyty Gwynedd?

Ieuan Wyn Jones: I thank the Minister for her response. I am sure that she is aware that there are concerns about these specialist services not only in the north-east, but in the north-west. We all realise that some of these babies require very specialist services. Is not the fact that we are considering having a medical school in Bangor an opportunity to establish such a unit at Ysbyty Gwynedd?

Lesley Griffiths: I presume that you have raised that with Betsi Cadwaladr LHB, because it is something that has been raised with me and something that it is continuing to look at.

Aled Roberts: You will be aware that you responded to a written question that I tabled regarding changes in the Wales Deanery's policy since Betsi Cadwaladr LHB formulated its proposals. If the proposals go through, it will mean that trainee doctors would not be trained in either the Betsi Cadwaladr area or the Hywel Dda LHB area because there would be no level 3 unit. Is there, therefore, a need for them to carry out further risk assessments with regard to workforce planning? Would you be prepared for the minutes of the neonatal network and the considerations of the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee to be made available to Assembly Members to see what their views were regarding those plans?

Lesley Griffiths: I am meeting with the Wales Deanery next month, when I will discuss this matter. I will take advice on the issue of the minutes.

Ymgyrchoedd Iechyd y Cyhoedd

4. Gwyn R. Price: *A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad am ymgyrchoedd iechyd y cyhoedd yng Nghymru. OAQ(4)0162(HSS)*

Public Health Campaigns

4. Gwyn R. Price: *Will the Minister make a statement on public health campaigns in Wales. OAQ(4)0162(HSS)*

Lesley Griffiths: The Change4Life campaign is supporting people to achieve a healthy body weight, to eat well, drink sensibly and be more physically active. Around 42,000 families and adults are active members. The Fresh Start Wales campaign is raising awareness of the harm

second-hand smoke in cars causes, particularly to children.

Gwyn R. Price: The flu season is rapidly approaching and we should all be encouraging the at-risk groups to be vaccinated. What steps is your department taking to ensure that advertising is targeting these at-risk groups in particular?

Lesley Griffiths: It is important that we target the at-risk groups and the vulnerable groups. Last year, we did not reach the target that we set for flu vaccination. I have had continual discussions on this since last winter. Members may be aware that, from this year, pharmacists will also be vaccinating alongside general practitioners. I think that we need to consider NHS staff because we also offer vaccinations to them and, again, the target was not reached. So, I am keen to improve on that this year.

William Graham: Every year, unfortunately, around 11,000 people suffer a stroke in Wales. In the last two weeks, a free risk assessment has been offered by pharmacies across Wales, which is a step in the right direction. What more do you think you can do to take the public health message to the people of Wales?

Lesley Griffiths: We can always do more, but the public has its part to play and we have provided many campaigns on this and it is something that pharmacies do well. I understand that the uptake of this was good.

Lindsay Whittle: What advice did the current Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Dr Ruth Hussey, and the previous one, Dr Tony Jewell, give the Welsh Government on the proposed amendment to the smoke-free legislation to exempt the film and tv industry?

1.45 p.m.

Lesley Griffiths: This is something that I have discussed with both Dr Tony Jewell and the new chief medical officer, Dr Ruth Hussey. We are proposing an exemption for performers in Wales, and it is narrower than the exemption for England. I will be bringing a statement to the Chamber in, I think, two weeks' time regarding the regulations.

Julie Morgan: Public health campaigns are essential in tackling obesity. What is the Minister's view of the statement made over recess by Dr Haboubi, the chair of the national obesity forum for Wales, that obesity levels in Wales are just behind those in the USA, and that, in his view, bariatric surgery should be used much more often than it is at the moment?

Lesley Griffiths: The findings that he brought forward made for very troubling reading. It is clear that Wales, like many other developed nations, does have problems with rising rates of obesity. There is clearly a role for bariatric surgery as a legitimate means of tackling the problem, but I believe that it should be limited. It is serious, it is very high risk, and it is very invasive surgery, and I think that it should only be used in the most extreme cases. Since I have been Minister, it is something that I have looked at, because I am concerned that the criteria perhaps need to be changed. I have asked officials to undertake a review of the pathway.

Adroddiad Coleg Brenhinol y Ffisigwyr Report by the Royal College of Physicians

5. Mark Drakeford: *Pa asesiad y mae'r Gweinidog wedi'i wneud o ba mor berthnasol i Gymru yw Adroddiad Coleg Brenhinol y Ffisigwyr, 'Hospitals on the edge? The time for action'. OAQ(4)0172(HSS)*

Lesley Griffiths: The report confirms what we have known for some time: the status quo is not an option and health services need to change if they are to be safe and sustainable for patients in the future.

Mark Drakeford: The ‘Hospitals on the edge?’ report echoes exactly the case for change in the NHS that you have articulated here ever since the start of the fourth Assembly: an ageing population, increasing demand and a looming crisis in the medical workforce leading to an urgent need to redesign services both within hospitals and between them—and all this at a time when, as the report says, public expenditure cuts have an inevitable impact on the NHS. The subtitle of the report is ‘The time for action’; what action are you taking to ensure that the NHS in Wales is fit to meet the medical and financial challenges that the Royal College of Physicians so clearly set out?

Lesley Griffiths: My officials constantly monitor performance, delivery and finances in the NHS. We have very robust accountability mechanisms in place, which obviously hold health boards to account for their performance. If I can just touch on finance, I have stated time and again that it is my strong expectation that they fulfil their statutory responsibilities and come in on budget. However, I have mentioned before that we have had an unprecedented and unparalleled demand on services over the summer, right across Wales, so I thought it timely, as we approach the mid-point of the financial year at the end of September, that we have the opportunity to take stock of the situation in NHS Wales. I have asked my director general to undertake a mid-year review looking at the resource pressures on the NHS, and that includes performance, delivery and finance. It is important that, even in light of these difficult financial times, we continue to deliver high-quality and sustainable services.

Angela Burns: The ‘Hospitals on the edge?’ report talks about fractured care and the lack of continuity of care. I will just read a little bit, because it was highlighted yesterday by the Commissioner for Older People in Wales:

‘The hospital/community divide continues to widen. There appears to be little or no joined up thinking between social care and acute hospital trusts’.

You have minor injuries units being closed because GPs are apparently prepared to take on their work, yet we have letters written by GPs saying that they have no intention of taking on the work—if the local health boards cannot get something as simple as that sorted, how will they be able to take people out of hospital more quickly and put them into social care? Given the stature of the report, have you had any talks with local health boards to ensure that they are going to get the big picture right? They are failing to get the small picture right.

Lesley Griffiths: You are absolutely right to discuss the integration of primary and secondary care. We obviously have an integrated system, and now is the opportunity to get it right. You have heard me say before that 90% of health service contacts are in the primary care setting, yet 90% of our resources are spent in hospitals. While the focus is obviously on service reconfiguration—on hospitals and hospital buildings—we need to put a lot more emphasis on primary care. We need to get the services in the primary care setting before they are removed from the secondary care setting and get that integration in place.

Elin Jones: I asked the First Minister yesterday whether he believes that our medical schools have a responsibility to train enough doctors for the future needs of the Welsh NHS. He answered by complaining about the UK Government’s immigration policy. Can you improve on his answer?

Lesley Griffiths: It is important that workforce development is much more robust than it has been, and I have spoken to officials about that. We need to be a bit more scientific about

getting those numbers right. I had a discussion at the beginning of this week with my colleague Leighton Andrews about pharmacists, because we need to make sure that we are training enough pharmacists as well as doctors. Therefore, there are ongoing discussions.

The UK immigration laws are a particular difficulty. I am very disappointed and I have written to Damian Green, the relevant Minister, who has refused to meet me. However, I will continue to pursue this issue, because it is something that we need to discuss. Indeed, this issue was raised with me by physicians and clinicians when I was at Neath Port Talbot Hospital last week.

Elin Jones: Your answer was a bit of an improvement, so I thank you, Minister. Do you agree that the Welsh NHS is almost a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government and, given that you know the staff profile of the NHS—for example, the age profile—that you can predict the workforce needs for the next 5 to 10 years? Do you, therefore, believe that Welsh medical schools have a responsibility to work with you to train the future medical workforce of the Welsh NHS? If they do not take up that challenge, do you have the responsibility to direct them to do so?

Lesley Griffiths: I think that they do take up that challenge and that is something that we discuss with them. We also have a role in ensuring that the doctors trained here in Wales stay in Wales. For instance, we provide accommodation for foundation doctors. We need to be looking at incentives like that to make sure that those doctors remain in Wales when they have completed their training in Wales. We do not want to see them going to the other side of the world; we want them to stay here in Wales. Therefore, it is down to the Welsh Government, the Wales Deanery and the medical schools to all work together to ensure that that happens.

Ymgyrch Amser i Newid Cymru

Time to Change Wales Campaign

6. David Melding: *A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad am ymgyrch Amser i Newid Cymru MIND Cymru. OAQ(4)0158(HSS)*

6. David Melding: *Will the Minister make a statement on MIND Cymru's Time to Change Wales campaign. OAQ(4)0158(HSS)*

Lesley Griffiths: Time to Change Wales is the first national campaign designed to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems, and complements the key themes included in the programme for government and 'Together for Health', to improve the mental health of the people of Wales.

David Melding: I should commend Gofal and Hafal, which were also part of the campaign. It is not just a Mind Cymru campaign; it is an umbrella campaign. I am particularly impressed by one of the key documents, which seeks to bust the myths about mental health and sets it in the context that, like other illness, mental health illness is just part of the natural process of life, and that people with mental health illnesses frequently get excellent treatment and recover and are even cured completely. This is the hopeful message that we need to get across to people. Will you also commend those who are talking about their own experiences of mental health? I am pleased to say that I was invited to talk and to write a piece about my own experiences as part of the campaign. It is by talking about these illnesses that we can create a better environment for people to recover from them.

Lesley Griffiths: Absolutely. I spoke at the launch of the campaign at the Wales Millennium Centre back in February, and I am glad that you mentioned Gofal and Hafal as the other two partners with Mind Cymru in this campaign. Last Friday, in my role as a constituency Assembly Member, I attended a Hafal event, where I spoke to people about their personal experiences. You are absolutely right that tackling the stigma and the discrimination that is unfortunately associated with mental health illness is the right way forward. It is an excellent

campaign and the whole point of it is to change those negative attitudes.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Hoffwn gymeradwyo'r gwaith a wnaed gan David Melding ar y mater hwn ers 13 mlynedd yn y lle hwn, fel un sydd wedi ceisio'i gefnogi yn ystod y cyfnod hwn. Mae'n anffodus ein bod yn dal mewn sefyllfa lle mae gan bobl broblemau iechyd meddwl. Bydd un o bob pump o boblogaeth Cymru, ar ryw bwynt yn eu bywydau, yn dioddef o afiechyd meddwl, ac eto mae'r stigma hwn yn parhau; clywsom hynny yn y pwyllgor y bore yma. Beth allwch chi, fel Gweinidog, ei wneud i newid y sefyllfa hon a sicrhau bod y bobl hyn yn cael y parch y maent yn ei haeddu mewn cymdeithas?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I would like to applaud the work done by David Melding on this issue over 13 years in this place, as someone who has tried to support him during that time. It is unfortunate that we are still in a situation of people having mental health problems. One in five people in Wales, at some point in their lives, will suffer from a mental illness, yet this stigma persists; we heard that in committee this morning. What can you, as Minister, do to change this situation and to ensure that these people are treated with the respect that they deserve in society?

Lesley Griffiths: I think that Rhodri Glyn Thomas is right; it is sad that the negative attitude, discrimination and stigma continue. I referred to the event that I went to on Friday in the constituency in Wrexham. One gentleman there told me how he could not get an interview for a job because he put on his application form every time that he had mental health issues; he felt that that was the reason why. Improving the mental health of the people of Wales is a key priority. We have the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010, which Hafal has told me it warmly welcomes, particularly Part 2 of the Measure, which refers to care and treatment plans. Hafal feels that there is already improvement in the care and treatment plans going forward. Next month, we will be launching 'Together for Mental Health'.

Pobl sy'n byw yng Nghymru Wledig

People Living in Rural Wales

7. Russell George: *A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad am bolisiau Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer gwella iechyd a lles pobl sy'n byw yng Nghymru wledig. OAQ(4)0159(HSS)*

7. Russell George: *Will the Minister make a statement regarding the Welsh Government's policies for improving the health and wellbeing of people living in rural Wales. OAQ(4)0159(HSS)*

Lesley Griffiths: I am committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all people in Wales and our policies are designed to support this. The rural health plan identifies specific issues relating to rural Wales and work has been taken forward under the three key themes of access, integration and community cohesion.

Russell George: One concern that has been raised with me, and not just by my constituents, is with regard to noise from onshore wind turbines. I am a member of the Petitions Committee, which examined a petition on this issue in detail, and we had some emotive evidence of the cumulative impact that noise from turbines is having on people's lives. I believe that there is a potential long-term health risk for rural communities where people live, or potentially live, near large-scale windfarms. What work is the Welsh Government doing to examine this issue further?

Lesley Griffiths: I will speak to my officials about this issue and will write to the Member.

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: Byddwch yn ymwybodol o'r argymhellion yn y gogledd o safbwynt gwasanaethau iechyd a'r goblygiadau i ardaloedd gwledig fel Rhuthun,

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: You will be aware of the recommendations made for health services in north Wales and the implications for rural areas such as Rhuthun, where there is

Ile mae sôn am israddio gwasanaethau'r ysbyty, cau ysbyty Llangollen ac yn y blaen. I ba raddau rydych yn cydymdeimlo â thrigolion y cymunedau gwledig hynny, sy'n poeni'n fawr ynglŷn â hygyrchedd y gwasanaethau hyn, yn enwedig ar adeg pan fo tlodi trafndiaeth yn broblem gynyddol a phan fo Cyngor Sir Ddinbych yn ymgynghori ar dorri trafndiaeth gyhoeddus o ganlyniad i doriadau Llywodraeth Cymru?

talk of downgrading hospital services, closing Llangollen hospital and so on. To what extent do you sympathise with the residents of those rural communities, who are very concerned about the accessibility of these services, especially at a time when transport poverty is an increasing problem and when Denbighshire County Council is consulting on cutting public transport as a result of Welsh Government cuts?

Lesley Griffiths: Transport links are one thing that I have reiterated to health boards; they have to ensure that they incorporate issues around transport in their plans. I am meeting my colleague Carl Sargeant, the Minister for Local Government and Communities, next week to discuss this on a cross-Wales basis. However, it is really not about buildings—it is not about hospitals. You heard me answer Angela Burns earlier on where the majority of contacts are made. It is about ensuring that those services are there for everyone as close to home as possible.

The Leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats (Kirsty Williams): Minister, key to the health and wellbeing of patients living in rural areas is the ability to recruit and retain medical staff, particularly doctors. The Government's response to the shortage of doctors in rural areas is your much-lauded recruitment campaign. Could you tell the Assembly, in a way that the First Minister could not yesterday, how many doctors—in what specialties and to which hospitals—have been recruited as a result of your campaign, which started over seven months ago?

Lesley Griffiths: I have asked my officials to look at the numbers in response to the question that you asked yesterday, and I will write to you.

Kirsty Williams: I am grateful that the Minister will find out how many doctors have been recruited so far. You will be aware that, with regard to Hywel Dda Local Health Board's plans for service reorganisation and those in north Wales, for those plans to go ahead as consulted on, they will need to recruit additional staff. How confident are you that those plans can be robust when they are so reliant on the recruitment of substantial numbers of new doctors when, to date, we have not been able to recruit those doctors?

Lesley Griffiths: The health boards will have to look at that closely, because we have issues with recruitment. The number of vacancies that I saw has now dropped, and I am hopeful that the recruitment campaign is helping with that, along with other issues that have been taken up. We are now recruiting robustly from overseas, and, as I said, I will write to you with the numbers.

2.00 p.m.

Darren Millar: Reference has already been made to the 'Rural Health Plan' for Wales, which says this:

'Accessing services is the foundation of effective rural health and a basic human right.'

It goes on to say that the crucial role that community hospitals

'play in the life of the countryside gives them greater significance and importance than would be the case in urban areas.'

Given that health board proposals include plans to close Blaenau Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital, to cut services at Ruthin Community Hospital, to close Tregaron Hospital, to close Aberaeron Hospital and to cut services at Tywyn Memorial Hospital, what assurances can you give the people of Wales that you stand by the commitments made in the 'Rural Health Plan' about the accessibility of services?

Lesley Griffiths: As you just heard me say, Darren Millar, it is not about buildings; it is about services, and it is about having the right services. I stand fully behind the 'Rural Health Plan'. Only today, I have announced more funding for healthcare in rural areas and, just please bear in mind, it is not about buildings—I understand that people get very attached to hospitals—it is about services.

Darren Millar: Is it not the reality, Minister, that health boards across Wales are facing a cash crisis as a result of your record-breaking NHS cuts? Do you agree that one way to release some cash to improve rural health services would be to scrap your free-prescriptions-for-all policy? I note that today, the leader of the Scottish Labour Party—

The Presiding Officer: Order. This is question time.

Darren Millar: —at Holyrood said that—

The Presiding Officer: Order. Darren Millar, this is question time. You have already asked one question in your second supplementary, so please come straight to the question. No more preamble; just the question.

Darren Millar: I am continuing with my question.

The Presiding Officer: Make it short, please, because we are well over time for this question.

Darren Millar: Do you agree with the leader of the Scottish Labour Party who asked,

'What is progressive about a chief executive on more than 100,000 a year not paying for his prescriptions, while a pensioner needing care has their care help cut?'

Lesley Griffiths: The Conservatives never fail to disappoint me. I do not know when they will wake up and accept the fact that they are on the wrong side of popular public opinion on this. Election after election, the people of Wales have supported us and have voted in favour of it. Free prescriptions keep people out of hospitals. They are part of social justice and of eradicating poverty, which is clearly something the Welsh Conservatives would never be able to recognise.

Sganiau i Fesur Amsugnad Pelydr-X Ynni Duol Duel Energy X-Ray Absorptiometry Scans

8. Kirsty Williams: *A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad am sganiau i Fesur Amsugnad Pelydr-X Ynni Duol (DEXA/DXA) sydd ar gael i gleifion sy'n dioddef o osteoporosis. OAQ(4)0166(HSS)*

8. Kirsty Williams: *Will the Minister make a statement on the availability of Duel Energy X-Ray Absorptiometry (DEXA/DXA) scans for patients suffering from osteoporosis. OAQ(4)0166(HSS)*

Lesley Griffiths: The Member for Brecon and Radnorshire will be aware that we corresponded on this issue in August. I stated that waiting times for DEXA scans for nearly half of all patients in Wales is within five to six weeks. However, I am aware that there are some issues for Powys residents, and I understand that the health board is actively looking

into this.

Kirsty Williams: The experience for many Powys residents is that they have had to wait well over six months for a DEXA scan. The Minister will be aware that many osteoporosis patients are on calcium tablets, and there is new evidence to suggest that the use of calcium tablets can lead to an increase in heart attacks. Will the Minister urgently look at the provision of timely DEXA scans for the patients who are severely worried that delays in their treatment could lead to dependency on medication that may not be right in their particular cases, or might lead to more severe healthcare problems that will end up costing the health service more?

Lesley Griffiths: Clearly, if that is the case for a patient who is having to wait, that should be done on the basis of clinical need and clinical urgency. I also think that Powys teaching board is considering whether it should provide a DEXA service, if you are referring to Powys patients. Across Wales, the DEXA scans are provided on various sites, but as I said it is a matter for clinical judgment, and if a patient thinks that they are waiting too long, they should go back to their GP and see if it can be brought forward.

Janet Finch-Saunders: Research has shown that in the UK over 60% of patients with hip fractures have presented themselves on previous occasions. It is widely recognised that an early scan for osteoporosis, while identifying the extent of bone fragility, also provides an opportunity for preventive action and attention. Figures show that as few as 10% of women, and a shocking 2% of men, are known to have been tested for osteoporosis using a DEXA scanner. Minister, the National Osteoporosis Society has called on you and the Welsh Government to ensure that the distance between a patient's home and their nearest scanner is no more than 50 miles. How are you working to achieve this? Will you commit to ensuring that the provision that is currently available at Llandudno General Hospital will remain, and will not be subject to any downgrading, as has been the case with other services in this hospital?

Lesley Griffiths: I have mentioned that several hospitals and facilities across Wales provide DEXA scans, and Llandudno is obviously one of them. As far as I know, there are no plans to take away the DEXA scan service from Llandudno hospital, but I will write to the health board and then write to the Member to confirm that point.

The Presiding Officer: Question 9, OAQ(4)0163(HSS), has been withdrawn.

Rhannu Data a Chofnodion Cleifion

Sharing Patient Records and Data

10. Julie James: *A wnaiff y Gweinidog amlinellu pa brotocol sydd ar waith i rannu data a chofnodion cleifion ar draws Byrddau Iechyd. OAQ(4)0160(HSS)*

10. Julie James: *Will the Minister outline what protocol is in place to share patient records and data across Health Boards. OAQ(4)0160(HSS)*

Lesley Griffiths: Through the individual health record, information from the patient's GP record is now available to out-of-hours doctors for emergency care across all health boards in Wales.

Julie James: A number of my constituents have contacted me with the concern that, once they are transferred between health boards, they are placed on new waiting lists. Minister, have you considered any way in which waiting times for such patients could be reduced, either through co-ordination across health boards or via some kind of universal waiting list?

Lesley Griffiths: Yes, it is something that I have looked at and I understand that there are no special provisions in the referral-to-treatment guidelines, which I do not think is acceptable. Therefore, I have asked my officials to look at this and to provide me with further advice. I

will write to the Member on this point.

Mark Isherwood: What actions are you taking, can you take, or will you take to address concerns about the lack of communication between north Wales GPs, the systems in place at Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board and the records kept in Shrewsbury, Telford and the Walton Centre on Merseyside in respect of the sharing of records across the border?

Lesley Griffiths: It is vital that all appropriate health professionals have access to the right information in the right place at the right time. In Wales, we are pursuing a single electronic patient record, but there are obviously issues with cross-border work. My officials are holding discussions to ensure that that information is readily available to be shared.

Gwasanaethau Iechyd Meddwl

Mental Health Services

11. Mohammad Asghar: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad am ddarparu gwasanaethau iechyd meddwl yng Nghymru. OAQ(4)0171(HSS)

11. Mohammad Asghar: Will the Minister make a statement on the provision of mental health services in Wales. OAQ(4)0171(HSS)

Lesley Griffiths: In October, I will be launching Together for Mental Health, a cross-governmental strategy to improve user outcomes, promote recovery and reablement, challenge stigma and realise better integrated joint working between key agencies. Its objectives are to continue the development of world-class mental health services and improve the wellbeing of the wider population.

Mohammad Asghar: Thank you for that reply, Minister. In a recent report, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales criticised the support offered to mental health patients, claiming that some felt coerced into treatment. Mind Cymru has said that it had serious concerns that the needs of patients were not being placed at the centre of care, and this point was also made to me recently by Bill Walden-Jones, the chief executive of the mental health charity Hafal. Will the Minister undertake to investigate this matter to ensure that we target resources to provide a holistic and client-focused approach to the treatment of people with mental health problems and expand the scheme of independent mental health advocacy in Wales?

Lesley Griffiths: The Member will have heard me, in an earlier answer to David Melding, say that Hafal in particular has warmly welcomed the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010—Part 2 of which relates to care and treatment plans. I was talking to Bill on Friday, and Hafal has really embraced the mental health Measure and ‘Together for Health’; it has been very helpful during the consultation in putting forward recommendations. We are really getting there when it comes to mental health services in Wales. Service users certainly tell me that services are better than they have ever been. Therefore, I am very disappointed to hear that from you.

Alun Ffred Jones: Gwn fod gwasanaethau iechyd meddwl yn y gogledd-orllewin yn gwneud gwaith da, ond maen nhw o dan bwysau. Mae'r sefyllfa i gleifion sy'n siarad Cymraeg yn wan iawn ac mae diffyg darpariaeth wedi bod yn broblem ers blyneddoddedd. Pa gamau ymarferol y mae eich Llywodraeth wedi eu cymryd i wella'r sefyllfa a sicrhau bod Cymry Cymraeg sy'n dioddef problemau iechyd meddwl yn cael gwasanaeth yn eu priod iaith?

Alun Ffred Jones: I know mental health services in the north-west do good work, but they are under pressure. The situation as regards Welsh-speaking patients is very weak and the lack of provision has been a problem that has existed for a number of years. What practical steps has your Government taken to improve the situation and to ensure that Welsh speakers who suffer mental health issues receive services in the language of their choice?

Lesley Griffiths: You will be aware that it is an area that was raised under the mental health Measure. It is important that vulnerable patients in particular have access to services in Welsh if they want them. This is something that I have discussed with the chair of the Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board and it is something for which it is actively trying to recruit. However, you will be aware of the challenges regarding recruitment, which we have discussed this afternoon. However, it is something that is on its radar when it looks to improve its services for mental health patients.

Eluned Parrott: Minister, I met the Rhondda Veterans Support Group over the recess, and many of them suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, as, indeed, do many personnel from the emergency services. They highlighted a number of problems that they are experiencing with accessing services quickly, particularly long waits between appointment times, which leave them for long periods of time when they are suffering difficulties and unable to talk to people about them. Will your Together for Mental Health programme address these issues with specific regard to PTSD?

Lesley Griffiths: We have been out to consultation on Together for Mental Health over the summer, as you are aware, and when we launch it next month, we will have a very good strategy that covers all ages, which looks to improve outcomes for service users, including the group that you have just referred to, and the wellbeing and resilience of the wider population. It also places, for the first time, I believe, the service user right at the centre of service delivery, and there is a focus on recovery and reablement.

Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru

Mid and West Wales

12. William Powell: *A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad am ei blaenoriaethau ar gyfer gwasanaethau iechyd yng Nghanolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru. OAQ(4)0164(HSS)*

12. William Powell: *Will the Minister make a statement on her priorities for health services in Mid and West Wales. OAQ(4)0164(HSS)*

Lesley Griffiths: Our plans and priorities for the health service for the whole of Wales can be found in our programme for government and 'Together for Health'.

William Powell: Minister, thank you very much for that answer. At last week's consultation meeting in Machynlleth, hosted by Powys Teaching Local Health Board, but with senior managers from Betsi Cadwaladr and Hywel Dda health boards also in attendance, there was recognition that, in future, health services in deepest rural Wales will rely increasingly on full collaboration. Indeed, Tony Chambers, director of performance and planning at Hywel Dda, said that such collaboration could necessitate some 'administrative architecture'. If there is backing for such an approach from community health councils, clinicians and local residents, would you also give consideration to the merit of such an approach to ensure effective collaboration to deliver services in the deepest rural parts of Wales?

Lesley Griffiths: That has not been raised with me, but collaboration is obviously the way forward, and I am pleased with the way that the health boards have worked together. The four south Wales health boards are working together in partnership with Hywel Dda, but all health boards have collaborated. We have Powys in the middle, which has had to collaborate with all. So, if that is what comes out at the end of the process, it is something that I will have to consider.

Paul Davies: Last week, I also attended a public meeting in my constituency, along with almost 500 people, to discuss Hywel Dda's reorganisation plans. Strong feelings were aired over some of the proposals, especially the proposal to close the special care baby unit at Wityhush General Hospital. I am sure that the Minister will agree that it is important to ensure that the current consultation is genuine and that the health board listens to the views of

my constituents. Therefore, can the Minister reassure us, and indeed guarantee, that this consultation exercise will be meaningful, and that the local health board will take on board the views of Pembrokeshire people?

Lesley Griffiths: I can guarantee that it is meaningful. I am pleased with the way in which Hywel Dda has upped its game with its consultation. I understand that it is holding many meetings. The fact that 500 people were there is excellent, and that their views have been heard. I spoke to the chair, Chris Martin, on Monday in one of my regular meetings with him. He has assured me that the health board is taking the views of everyone on board.

Keith Davies: Weinidog, fel roeddech yn dweud, dros yr haf cyflwynodd Hywel Dda gynlluniau i ymgynghori. Mae teimlad cryf ymysg pobl Llanelli am yr adran ddamweiniau ac achosion brys. Yn groes i gynlluniau'r bwrdd iechyd am wasanaeth o dan arweiniad nyrsys, cred fy etholwyr ei bod yn angenrheidiol cadw'r adran o dan arweiniad doctoriaid, fel sy'n bodoli, ac mae'n rhaid i mi adrodd a chynrychioli eu barn. Rwy'n falch o weld fod Simon Thomas yn cytuno â mi. Weinidog, a fuoch chi neu'ch swyddogion mewn cyswllt â'r bwrdd iechyd i weld sut mae'r ymgynghoriad yn mynd, a'i fod yn gwranddo, fel y dywedodd Paul Davies yn awr?

Keith Davies: Minister, as you said, Hywel Dda presented its plans for consultation over the summer. People in Llanelli have strong feelings about the accident and emergency department. Contrary to the health board's plans for a nurse-led service, my constituents believe that it is essential that the department continues to be doctor-led, as it currently is, and I need to report and represent their opinions. I am pleased to see that Simon Thomas agrees with me. Minister, have you or your officials been in contact with the health board to see how the consultation is going, and that it is listening, as Paul Davies said a little earlier?

Lesley Griffiths: Yes, and you will have heard my answer to Paul Davies, that I spoke to the chair on Monday and he assures me that the board is listening. Safety is of paramount importance, and I know that there are concerns about Llanelli that are well-versed. Unfortunately, I do not think that we can go back 15 years to what was there before; we have to look forward. The consultation is meaningful, and I urge everyone to get involved.

Simon Thomas: Weinidog, mae'n flaenoriaeth i Blaid Cymru gadw mynediad hygyrch i'r unedau mân ddamweiniau sy'n bodoli yn nifer o'n hysbytai cymunedol, oherwydd, yn y pen draw, mae hynny'n arbed traul ar ysbytai dosbarth mwy. Wrth ystyried y cynlluniau yn ardal Hywel Dda i israddio, ac, yn wir, gau, rhai o'r unedau mân ddamweiniau hyn, megis yn un yn Ninbych y Pysgod, sut y byddech fel Gweinidog yn sicrhau bod y gwasanaeth hwn yn parhau?

Simon Thomas: Minister, it is a priority for Plaid Cymru to maintain access to the minor accident units that exist in several of our community hospitals, because, at the end of the day, that saves the larger district general hospitals from wear and tear. Given the plans in the Hywel Dda area to downgrade, and, indeed, close, some of these minor accident units, such as that in Tenby, how will you as the Minister ensure that this service continues?

2.15 p.m.

Lesley Griffiths: You heard me say before that it is about services not buildings. We have 115 hospitals in Wales for a population of 3 million people. I do not think that we can keep all those hospitals. That is why the health boards are going through these proposals at the moment. However, it is absolutely essential that patients have safe sustainable services as close to home as possible. That is something that will have to be seen, which is why I am very pleased that south Wales health boards have come together to ensure that they look at this right across south Wales.

*Daeth y Dirprwy Lywydd (David Melding) i'r Gadair am 2.16 p.m.
The Deputy Presiding Officer (David Melding) took the Chair at 2.16 p.m.*

Cwestiynau i'r Cwnsler Cyffredinol Questions to the Counsel General

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The only question to the Counsel General, OAQ(4)0037(CGE), was withdrawn.

Cwestiynau i Gomisiwn y Cynulliad Questions to the Assembly Commission

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No questions have been tabled to the Assembly Commission.

Dadl y Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives Debate

Y Rhaglen Lywodraethu The Programme for Government

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have selected amendment 1 in the name of Aled Roberts.

Cynnig NDM5049 William Graham

Motion NDM5049 William Graham

Mae Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru:

The National Assembly for Wales:

*Yn gresynu nad yw 'Rhaglen Lywodraethu' Regrets that the Welsh Government's
Llywodraeth Cymru yn cyflawni i bobl 'Programme for Government' is not
Cymru. delivering for the people of Wales.*

The Leader of the Opposition (Andrew R.T. Davies): I move the motion.

It is a pleasure to move our first motion before the Assembly since the summer recess at the start of what most people would identify as the new political year, which we are all gathered here for today. To speak to the Welsh Conservative motion this afternoon, focusing on the programme for government, when the First Minister laid his programme for government, we on this side of the Chamber were certainly prepared to let the First Minister take things forward and, we hoped, to change the bad habits that previous Labour administrations had formed—not having ambition and not taking action or even seeking the achievements the Welsh people deserve in the delivery of their public services and the development of an economy that can be held up as robust and one of which we can be proud in relation to other parts of the UK and, indeed, Europe. The political debate at the moment is around economic activity and the actions of the Government to focus on bringing economic activity to Wales to ensure that we have the jobs and prosperity that can sustain our public services.

Looking at the programme for government, there are precious few targets to allow people to measure the improvements or otherwise in any of the fields it refers to, whether education, health or the economy. Surely, the Government should have set down that benchmark when it first laid its programme for government before the Assembly at the start of this fourth Assembly. We were told that things were going to be far different this time around. In fact, the First Minister trumpeted his much heralded delivery unit and what it would do to drive improvements across Government, and particularly the tangible improvements people would see in their everyday lives. Some 15 to 16 months into this Government, the unit certainly does not seem to be doing what it was originally set up to do by the First Minister. Indeed,

mention of the activity of the delivery unit in supporting the Ministers with their various portfolios rarely passes his lips.

From recent questions, all the First Minister seems to have had from the delivery unit are various briefings at a cost of more than £300,000. That is hardly the turbo effect on Government the First Minister outlined when he came into Government, setting out the changes this Government was going to bring forward in the fourth Assembly. Turning back to the issue of the economy, for example, looking at the Department for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science and what I consider to be the real goals of business support and inward investment to create a sustainable model of development here in Wales, we are not seeing any different tack from this Government to that of its predecessors. On inward investment, for example, we have gone from being the second most attractive place in the United Kingdom to the least attractive place. Those are the most up-to-date figures. That makes a mockery of the talk in the programme for government about developing a coherent development strategy.

I would say to the First Minister that the issue is surely that the strategy you are pursuing is wrong. Many people have pointed out time and again that, unless you make it an arm's-length operation and start being proactive and engaging with business, foreign businesses in particular will look with great suspicion at the offer you are making. This is particularly the case with the North American market, where it is a real challenge to get the Welsh voice heard. I welcome some of the initiatives the First Minister has outlined, as recently as yesterday, when he finally started to talk about placing staff on the west coast of America, a point that I raised with him last summer when looking at the footprint of staff deployment from the department for the economy. Everyone seemed to be located on the eastern side of America, and Silicon Valley and the dynamics of California as a state were totally overlooked in the Welsh Government's footprint. I am very pleased that he has taken that advice from me.

Enterprise zones, for example, are almost a non-event for this Government. There was a large fanfare when they were brought forward, but if you are a business today looking to locate in Wales, what would the offer be? The Government has come forward with little or no information in respect of favourable planning terms or business rates, for example. We have had the contract for broadband roll-out signed belatedly, some four to five months late. It was promised in the spring and it was delivered in the summer. Many comparable parts of the United Kingdom are way ahead of us on delivering that high-speed broadband that is so important to business. If you look at the Welsh Government's business offer, you will see that, with regard to its flagship scheme that was brought forward in the spring, only seven businesses have actually succeeded in achieving an allocation of money from it, to a total of £1 million out of the £40 million pot that the Government made available to businesses. That shows the slow, unresponsive nature of this Government in dealing with the economy and the situation in which we find ourselves.

In health, we have massive issues around the budget and the deficits that our health boards are having to deal with. The First Minister acknowledged yesterday, in response to oral questions, that he would be prepared to consider some end-year flexibility, despite the rhetoric of his Minister for health and what she has been telling the health boards over the last few months. What hope is there, therefore, for health boards that act prudently and live within their budgets to achieve effective delivery of services in the twenty-first century? We have told you time and again that you have cut the health budget far too harshly. Had you listened to our budget plans, you would have been able to deliver a coherent health strategy and social strategy. I know full well that the First Minister, when he stands up, will talk of a 20% education cut, which is a complete fallacy, as well he knows. A budget was laid by the Welsh Conservatives that showed how you could ring-fence the health budget and achieve far greater funding levels in education than this Government has delivered.

I hear the Minister for local government asking, ‘What about education?’ Successive Labour Governments have driven down attainment levels in Wales, so that we are the poor relation in education compared to other parts of the United Kingdom. While we have a Minister who, each day of the week, seems to come forward with an initiative, time and again the outcomes that we see are really not benefiting our students, our teachers and, above all, Wales as a dynamic country.

Mick Antoniw: Do you think that our education performance would have been better had we imposed the 20% cut that you were proposing for education spending?

Andrew R.T. Davies: As I touched on earlier, there was no proposal from the Conservatives for a 20% cut. However, it would be interesting to hear from the Labour benches how they are going to make up the shortfall in the higher education funding budget, which was calibrated as a difference of between £50 million and £60 million between Wales and England and £150 million between us and Scotland. The higher education sector is a vital part of our economy. It offers a unique base for research and development and, above all, it can lead our economy—if it has the right leadership from Government, but also if it has the ability to work to its own initiative. What we are seeing with the destruction that this Minister is trying to inflict on Cardiff Metropolitan University, for example, against its wishes, will push the HE sector backwards in Wales.

David Rees: You have just mentioned your views. I was going to ask you whether you would support the reconfiguration of higher education in south-east Wales. Clearly, you do not and, therefore, think that it is good as it is.

Andrew R.T. Davies: I fully support the reconfiguration with regard to the University of Glamorgan and the University of Wales, Newport. That is a sensible amalgamation, but when you have the best post-1992 university, namely Cardiff Metropolitan University, making a very strong case for its independence while continuing collaborative working across the university sector, that is surely a wish that should be protected and enhanced. This Minister, sadly, is not doing that.

Looking, as I said in my earlier remarks, at educational attainment levels, we have the PISA inquiry coming forward in November this year. The Minister has already written that off as being too soon to judge whether we are making real improvements. That is coming from a party that has been in Government since devolution started. I could understand it if it had inherited some of those problems, but it has not. It has created most of those problems, and that is the real problem with this entire programme for government. Is there a difference between this programme for government and other programmes for government that have been laid by Labour Governments in Wales? The answer is clearly ‘no’. We were told to expect better delivery, because of the delivery unit, but we are not seeing it. Attainment levels in education are falling, economic activity is falling and the health service, time and again, is coming back—

The Deputy Minister for Skills (Jeff Cuthbert): You have said for the second time that attainment levels are falling in Wales, yet GCSE and A-level results are improving in Wales.

Andrew R.T. Davies: The gap between our attainment levels and those of the rest of the United Kingdom is getting wider, as well you know, Deputy Minister for Skills. While I recognise the admirable work that you are undertaking, Deputy Minister, I do not believe that the efforts of the Government to date are making those changes that are needed to drive Wales further into the twenty-first century as an economic powerhouse, looking after the vulnerable, but driving forward economically on the front that we require Wales to drive forward on. We are getting more and more lazy Labour policies coming forward, because you

feel that you are the party of incumbency and that you are the party with the right to govern. We have to make sure that the people of Wales understand what you are failing to deliver. That is the problem with the Labour Party: time and again it fails to deliver, as has been identified by the previous Minister for the economy, Andrew Davies. It is good on strategy, but poor on delivery and outcomes. It is not this Andrew Davies saying that, but the Andrew Davies who was in the Government previously for 10 years.

To date, this programme for government is failing to live up to its ambition and promise. I fully expect the Chamber to divide along political lines today and for this motion to be rejected; however, it is important that, 15 to 16 months into this Assembly, we identify whether any changes have been made to the strategy of the Government, and they have not. All that we have is more lazy Labour—poor on ambition, poor on action and poor on achievement. That is why I urge support today for this motion that is before the Chamber on the programme for government.

Gwelliant 1—Aled Roberts

Amendment 1—Aled Roberts

Ychwanegu pwynt newydd ar ddiwedd y cynnig: Add as new point at end of motion:

Yn nodi mai un o nodau'r Rhaglen Lywodraethu yw 'lleihau effaith amddifadedd ar gyrhaeddiad addysgol', ac yn credu y dylai hyn fod yn flaenoriaeth dros y flwyddyn nesaf. Notes that an aim of the Programme for Government is 'to reduce the impact of deprivation on educational achievement' and believes this should be a priority over the next year.

Kirsty Williams: I move amendment 1 in the name of Aled Roberts.

I thank the Conservative party for tabling this motion for debate today. Andrew R.T. Davies opened his contribution by saying that this was the first debate of a new term, but it seems to me that it is very much the old arguments that we are having in the Chamber. The challenges facing our nation are clear and I do not think that anyone from any political party would argue with them. The economy continues to struggle, not just because of the current economic climate in which we find ourselves as part of this global recession, but because of some fundamental structural weaknesses within the Welsh economy that successive administrations in Cardiff bay have struggled to get to grips with. Our schools are underfunded and, while I welcome the fact that pass rates may indeed have gone up, when we benchmark ourselves against the rest of UK, and, perhaps even more importantly, when we benchmark ourselves against the rest of the world, we find that we are falling further and further behind. In the health service, we are spending record amounts of money and probably more per head of population than is being spent across the border, yet our outcomes for patients are considerably worse. They are more likely to die of cancer and they are more likely to have a heart attack and die from it. Therefore, we are spending more money, but our results are weaker.

2.30 p.m.

The Government's answer to these problems was outlined in the programme for government, which the First Minister launched to great fanfare, with some very pretty pictures in the document, last year. At the time, the Welsh Liberal Democrats said that there was much in the document with which we agreed. We did not disagree with the analysis of the challenges facing Wales, and many worthy initiatives were outlined in that document. I said at the time that I just was not convinced that those policy interventions were of the breadth and the critical nature that were needed to address the problems. Over a year later, I am still to be convinced.

As I said, there is much of the Government's legislative programme—when we finally get an opportunity to vote on it—that the Welsh Liberal Democrats will support. There is much by way of individual policy motions that the Welsh Liberal Democrats are happy to lend their support to. However, over a year in, is it really making a difference to those three fundamentals: the state of our economy, the achievement of our children in schools, and the ability of our NHS to deliver? At the very best, the jury is out, but, from my perspective and that of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, it is not enough. It was telling from the flurry of press releases at the end of last year that the biggest achievement of this Government so far was the introduction of the pupil premium, which was not its idea and was not included in its programme for government at all.

We need to do much more to drive our economy forward. We have been painfully slow to grasp the opportunities that the enterprise zones potentially afford us. We are not seeing the progress in this area that the Welsh Liberal Democrats would like to achieve. While we very much welcome—and we supported this venture—the increase in the number of apprenticeships, we must do much more to get our young people back to work. On education, it is telling that the Minister has set results for improvements in the Programme for International Student Assessment positioning at the end of this term, but does not have any expectations that we will see improvements in PISA sooner. In health, we have got ourselves embroiled in a situation where, once again, the Government has been unable to take people forward with its arguments. We are embroiled in a health service that sees people standing outside their local facilities with banners, because we have not been able to engender sufficient trust and belief in the arguments about why services need to change.

The paucity in legislation coming forward is an embarrassment to me as someone who campaigned to get this place legislative powers. We are in danger of playing into the hands of all those in the 'no' campaign who said that we did not have the capacity, the ideas, or the drive to deliver it. I hope that, when this is debated, as it undoubtedly will be this time next year, the Welsh Government will be able to demonstrate that the measures that it is taking are having a fundamental effect on our children's ability to gain good qualifications and then to go on and get a decent, well-paid job, and also, for those people who need health and social services, on services being there in a timely fashion and on facilities being well staffed and well run.

Mark Isherwood: In this Welsh Labour Government's programme for government document, the First Minister says that he has been given a mandate to deliver on a renewed set of ambitions. In other words, the ambitions of the two previous Labour-led Welsh Governments failed to deliver. In fact, on almost every objective measure, they made the situation worse. However, listening to the rhetoric of this blame game, First Minister, you would think that you were an extension of the UK Labour opposition in Westminster rather than a Government in your own right, responsible for delivering a programme on anything.

When he published this Welsh Government's first annual report in May, this First Minister told the Assembly that Labour was committed to its pledge to deliver. However, the reality was summed up in my local paper, which commented that,

'It would have been rather strange if he'd said that it was designed to show that they were not committed to deliver...the really important question is, deliver what? In all the pages there is scarcely a hint. There are tables which show how far behind the rest of the UK's Nations and Regions the Welsh economy is lagging...but as to what Mr Jones and his Labour team are doing about it he was as specific as only he can be. Nebulous claims, meaningless promises. A damning 660 page dossier made as boring and impenetrable as possible to disguise years of complacency and/or incompetence'.

Those are not my words; so ends the quote from my local paper. Even before the credit crunch, the Labour-led Welsh Government had delivered the highest child poverty rates in the UK, record youth unemployment and working-age worklessness at double the UK average. Despite two rounds of European funding, which was supposed to close the gap, west Wales and the Valleys, including four north Wales counties, will be the only region in western Europe to qualify for the highest level of support in the next round of European funding. The Federation of Small Businesses states that business confidence in Wales is now lower than in any other part of the UK except Northern Ireland. Although the UK is now once again the top destination for inward investment in the EU, Wales has slipped from top to bottom destination among the 12 UK nations and regions under a Labour devolved Government.

It is in this context that we should consider Monday's statement by Carwyn Jones, 13 years after Labour took the reins of government in Wales, that attracting foreign investment and encouraging international trade was the way forward for Wales. At least he had the good sense to invite the Conservative Lords Heseltine and Green, the UK Minister for trade, to his economic summit on Monday. Co-operation between both Governments is essential if we are to attract investment and create jobs.

Keynesian economics states that budget deficits are supposed to be a product of recessions, not booms, but Labour did not get this, and its plan B would generate bigger cuts, less investment, fewer jobs, higher interest rates and growing business failures and house repossessions. As Keynes himself said,

‘When the facts change, I change my mind.’

With Wales falling behind the rest of the UK, as we have heard, in reading, maths, science and GCSE results, this Welsh Government told the Welsh Joint Education Committee to make GCSE English language more severe at grade C and then told the WJEC to regrade when lower grades resulted. It required health boards to propose damaging changes to health services, with the Minister for health then leaving them to take the flak while launching her own consultation on a health compact with the people of Wales—

David Rees: Do you not agree that health changes are, in fact, necessary? To take my own hospital as an example, there is a lack of doctors and services could not be provided. If changes were not made, unsafe services would be provided and people would suffer.

Mark Isherwood: We strongly object to the Welsh NHS facing the biggest cuts in any part of the UK. The reality, however, is summed up by Flintshire's over-50s action group, which in a letter to the Minister states that the health board consultation there is not

‘in any sense of the imagination a consultation; it was no more than a statement of intent.’

After 13 Labour years, Wales is also suffering a housing supply crisis. However, this Welsh Government says that it has no plans to follow the UK Government's measures to deliver billions for new homes, despite the Chartered Institute of Housing saying that this was putting housing front and central of the UK Government's policy to kick-start growth, and the National Housing Federation, representing England's housing association, saying that this has the potential to kick-start the housing market. This Welsh Government tells us that merger and collaboration is the answer to all, but it underestimates the financial costs and overplays the benefits. It is about time it stopped whingeing and started taking responsibility for the mess that it has created.

Elin Jones: Heb amheuaeth, yr hyn a ddylai fod yn flaenoriaeth i'r Llywodraeth hon yw'r economi a chreu amodau i hybu **Elin Jones:** Without a doubt, what should be a priority for this Government is the economy and creating the conditions to promote

gweithgarwch economaidd. Yn ystod y ddadl hon y prynhawn yma, byddaf yn cynnig tair agwedd benodol i ganolbwyntio polisi economaidd. Yn gyntaf, mae brys sylweddol i gynyddu buddsoddiad cyfalaf mewn prosiectau is-adeiledd cyhoeddus. Mae gwaith, er enghraifft, gan Gymdeithas Awdurdodau Lleol Lloegr, sy'n dangos am bob £1 o wariant ar is-adeiledd, mae gwerth £2.84 o gynnydd yn y cynnyrch mewnwladol crynswth. Mae Plaid Cymru wedi cynnig, ac yn cynnig, y cynllun i greu cwmni Build for Wales—Adeiladu dros Gymru i gynyddu'r cyllid cyfalaf sydd ar gael i Lywodraeth Cymru ei fuddsoddi. Nid yw Llywodraeth Cymru wedi gwrthod y model hwn, ond 18 mis ers ei hethol, nid ydym wedi gweld cynnydd ar gynllun o'r math na fersiwn Llafur, hyd yn oed, o'r math hwn o gynnydd. Mae digon o gynlluniau cyfalaf allan yna. Er enghraifft, yn fy etholaeth i, mae gan y bwrdd iechyd lleol dri chynllun cyfalaf yn barod i symud, sef ysbytai newydd yn Nhregaron, Aberteifi ac Aberaeron.

Mae Plaid Cymru hefyd eisiau gweld mwy o ddefnydd o bwerau benthyg gan awdurdodau lleol, trosi ryw gymaint o arian refeniw'r Llywodraeth yn arian cyfalaf, a hefyd, yn yr hirdymor, hyd yn oed ddeddfu ar gaffael a pholisi caffael i sicrhau mwy o gytundebau a swyddi i gyflenwyr lleol.

Yn ail, o ran polisi economaidd, mae busnesau ar hyn o bryd—heddiw—o dan bwysau ariannol sylweddol, ac mae trethi busnes bellach yn ganran llawer uwch o drosiant nifer o fusnesau. Mae hyn yn bendant yn wir am siopau a busnesau canol tref. Mae gwerthiant ar i lawr, yn enwedig yn yr ardaloedd gwledig a glan-môr ar ôl yr haf gwlyb a gawsom. Rydym wedi gweld nifer o fusnesau'n cwyno am y pwysau ariannol difrifol y maent oddi tanynt. Mae llawer o syniadau hirdymor da ar drethi busnes yn adroddiad diweddar Brian Morgan, ond mae pwysau ariannol ar fusnesau yn bodoli ar hyn o bryd. Dyna pam mae Plaid Cymru o blaid ymestyn y cynllun rhyddhad trethi busnes i fusnesau sydd â gwerth ardrethiannol o hyd at £18,000, hyd yn oed os yw hynny ond am gyfnod o ddwy neu dair blynedd.

Hoffwn gymryd y cyfle i ddiolch i'r

economic activity. During this debate this afternoon, I will be proposing three specific aspects to focus economic policy. The first is the extreme urgency to increase capital investment in public infrastructure projects. The Local Government Association in England, for example, has carried out work that shows that for every £1 spent on infrastructure, there is a £2.84 increase in gross domestic product. Plaid Cymru has proposed, and is proposing, a scheme to set up a Build for Wales—Adeiladu dros Gymru company to increase the capital funding that is available to the Welsh Government to invest. The Welsh Government has not rejected that model, but 18 months since its election, we have not seen any headway on such a scheme or even a Labour version of such a proposal. There are plenty of capital programmes out there. For instance, in my constituency, the local health board has three capital projects ready to go, with new hospitals in Tregaron, Cardigan and Aberaeron.

Plaid Cymru also wants to see more use made of borrowing powers by local authorities, transferring an amount of revenue funding from Government into capital funding, and also, in the long term, even legislation on procurement and procurement policy to ensure more contracts and jobs for local suppliers.

Secondly, on economic policy, business are currently—today—under significant financial pressures, and business rates now represent a far greater percentage of many businesses' turnover. That is certainly true of town-centre shops and businesses. Sales are down, particularly in rural and seaside areas after the wet summer that we have just had. We have seen a number of businesses complaining about the serious financial pressures that they are facing. There are many good long-term ideas on business rates in Brian Morgan's recent report, but the financial pressures on businesses are pressing now. That is why Plaid Cymru is in favour of extending the business rate relief scheme to businesses that have a rateable value of up to £18,000, even if only for a period of two or three years.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the

Gweinidog Busnes, Menter, Technoleg a Gwyddoniaeth am gwrdd â chynrychiolwyr busnesau a siopau yng nghanol tref Aberteifi gyda fi yn ddiweddar, gan glywed yn uniongyrchol oddi wrthynt am y pwysau ariannol yr oeddent oddi tanynt. Yn anffodus, roedd un busnes a oedd i fod i ddod i'r cyfarfod hwnnw ychydig wythnosau yn ôl, ond caeodd ei ddrws am y tro olaf y diwrnod hwnnw, ac roedd hwnnw'n fusnes a oedd wedi bodoli yn nhref Aberteifi ers sawl degawd. Felly, mae'n drueni mawr gweld y pwysau ariannol yn dod â busnesau hirdymor i ben yn ein trefi ni.

Yn olaf, cynnig Plaid Cymru yw edrych unwaith eto ar y targed o ran creu prentisiaethau. Targed y Llywodraeth ar hyn o bryd yw creu 12,000 o brentisiaethau. Mae hynny yng nghyd-destun y tua 50,000 o bobl ifanc sydd yn ddi-waith ar hyn o bryd yng Nghymru. Rydym eisiau gweld y Llywodraeth yn bod yn fwy uchelgeisiol wrth greu prentisiaethau, gan greu hyd at 30,000 o brentisiaid. I ddelifro hyn, byddem yn awgrymu y dylai'r Llywodraeth weithio gydag awdurdodau lleol i greu cynlluniau ariannu prentisiaid, fel y mae Cyngor Gwynedd wedi'i wneud. Mae model ganddo ar hyn sydd wedi cychwyn, gyda'i gronfa benthyg lleol.

Nid wyf am ymddiheuro am ddefnyddio fy nghyfnod i yn y ddadl hon i sôn am yr angen i hybu'r economi. Dyna flaenoriaeth y cyfnod a dyna beth ddylai fod yn flaenoriaeth i'r Llywodraeth. Cynigais nifer o syniadau y prynhawn yma ac rwy'n gobeithio, yn ei ymateb, y bydd y Prif Weinidog yn rhoi i ni ei syniadau a'i flaenoriaethau ef o ran hybu'r economi, ac y bydd hyd yn oed yn ystyried cymryd ymlaen rhai o'r syniadau y mae Plaid Cymru yn eu cynnig.

Janet Finch-Saunders: The programme for government technically outlines the Welsh Government's intentions for Wales and should be a dynamic and forward-thinking document that enables the Welsh Government and the Cabinet to deliver on the much-promised and badly needed improvements to our public services in Wales.

In delivering these services, third sector organisations play an extremely vital role. I will take the opportunity to thank the Chair of the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, Mrs Ann Jones AM—[*Interruption.*] There has to be some good coming out of this, you know. [*Laughter.*] I thank the Chair for arranging the stakeholder event this morning, at which some 32 such organisations were present. The majority came to highlight their concerns and were questioned on the programme for government. Not a Member here

Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science for joining me to meet representatives of businesses and shops in Cardigan town centre recently, hearing directly from them about the financial pressures that they are facing. Unfortunately, there was one business that was supposed to attend that meeting a few weeks ago, but it closed its doors for the last time on that day, and that business had been in Cardigan town for many decades. Therefore, it is a great shame to see financial pressures leading to the closure of well-established businesses in our towns.

Finally, Plaid Cymru's proposal is that we revisit once more the target for creating apprenticeships. The Government's target at the moment is to create 12,000 apprenticeships. That is against a backdrop of some 50,000 young people in Wales being out of work at the moment. We want to see the Government being more ambitious about creating apprenticeships, creating up to 30,000 apprentices. To deliver that, we would suggest that the Government should work with local authorities in order to create apprenticeship funding schemes, as Cyngor Gwynedd has done. It has a model for that, which is in place, with its local borrowing fund.

I will not apologise for using my time in this debate to talk about the need to promote the economy. That is the priority for our time and that is what should be the priority for the Government. I put forward a number of ideas this afternoon, and I hope that, in his response, the First Minister will give us his ideas and his priorities for promoting the economy, and that he will even consider taking onboard some of the ideas that Plaid Cymru has proposed.

who was present this morning can deny the big concern that came forward, which was highlighted by people on every table that we went around. That was that there is a distinct lack of transparency from the Welsh Government relating to the budget process and to the provision of funding. There was a request from these organisations that, whatever changes are made to their budgets—if there need to be any—they are made in the most transparent way possible.

2.45 p.m.

Many were also concerned because they require a three-year programme of funding. They explained today how vulnerable they feel and how much in limbo they are, because they are waiting for funding and do not know whether they can sustain or provide services indefinitely, or whether people are going to be made redundant. To a large degree, this is the voluntary sector—a vital component of future delivery of success for this Government. Despite high-profile underperformance issues in a number of local authorities, 19 of the 22 authorities in Wales received 100% of their outcome assessment grants for 2011-12. This was at a time when there was, in some local authorities, underperformance in some service areas. Outcome agreements must not be tick-box exercises. Too many such exercises go on within this Government. There needs to be challenge to help to improve our vital public services, in order to protect our electorate and residents in Wales.

The programme for government aims to improve access and patient experience in healthcare. However, no referral-to-treatment targets have been met on an all-Wales level since this Welsh Government has been in power. Average ambulance response times are missing targets, with one example being that only 54% of category A first responses in Ynys Môn were arriving within eight minutes. The annual report re-emphasises the importance of timely treatment for urgent suspected cancer patients. Shockingly, however, we have seen the health board covering the First Minister's own constituency failing the 95% target by a staggering 21 percentage points in June. In education, the annual report claims that underperformance at key stage 2 is rising, yet this comment appears to be founded on an indicator with no definitive figures, alongside acknowledged variability across the board.

Furthermore, although 12% more is spent per head on public services in Wales compared with the UK average, 14% of children in Wales are now living in poverty. Rather confusingly, 75% of the annual report chapter on poverty is copied verbatim from elsewhere in the document. For example, residents in Torfaen receive 73% more funding from the Welsh Government, the Welsh European Funding Office, the community facilities and activities programme and other public funding sources than those in my constituency of Aberconwy. With such a disparity in per-head spend across Wales, the Welsh Government should be focusing on more effective regional and national analyses of poverty in Wales in order to tackle poverty head on. I ask the First Minister whether there was an equality impact assessment strategy as part of the original programme for government, and I ask whether there was any mention or consideration of this when the annual update of the programme for government was produced.

Moreover, despite the promise to support the economy and business, the Jobs Growth Wales scheme is 600 jobs behind schedule, and funding from the SME investment fund has been received by only three businesses.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. Conclude now, please.

Janet Finch-Saunders: Mention has already been made of the disappointment over the little information coming forward from the First Minister's much trumpeted delivery unit. Delivering for Wales is neither easy nor straightforward—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. Okay, that is it. Thank you. I call now on Jenny Rathbone.

Jenny Rathbone: There is absolutely no lack of transparency as to where the cuts to the police service have come from, and that is from the UK Government. There has been a 20% cut in the budget for our police, and a similar cut in police numbers. I am not saying that there should be no cuts. However, I am sure that the 12% cut proposed by Labour in Westminster was much closer to what is safe to be doing. A very important manifesto commitment for Labour—one that is in the programme for government—is that we are providing 500 extra police community support officers across Wales. In line with the programme for government, we will have all of them in place by September next year.

I am delighted at the progress that the Government has made so far, with 300 community support officers already deployed or in training across Wales, about 70 of whom are based in Cardiff. Some of them are based at Roath police station in Adamsdown where, I am sad to say, there is plenty of work for them. This is an area of deprivation with more crime and anti-social behaviour proportionately than in the rest of the city. I spent some time there last week with the Minister for Local Government and Communities, Carl Sargeant, talking to one of the new Welsh Government-funded community support officers about the work that he is about to undertake. He is a very keen young man who had previously been a volunteer special constable—it is excellent to see somebody who has put work into the community as a volunteer now able to join the police force and do such an important job. With him, we met the PCSO who was mentoring him as part of his induction, and it was clear from all the comments being made by his superiors that he was hitting the ground running.

While crime in south Wales last year was at its lowest level since 1983—yes, its lowest level since 1983—which meant that there were more than 6,000 fewer victims of crime in 2011 compared with 2010, there is, sadly, a worrying increase in property crime, theft from cars and burglaries, which I am afraid is inevitable, going as it does with a steep rise in unemployment. So, I would completely agree with others who have spoken about the economy being the top-line priority for our Government, but I think that crime, the causes of crime and the fear of crime are also incredibly important to our community. I therefore think that these PCSOs have a very important role to play in maintaining the confidence of the public and in maintaining face-to-face contact with the public in the light of these other reductions in services being made by the South Wales Police force. For example, all local police stations across Cardiff have closed to the public apart from three: Fairwater, central and Rumney. That is again a result of these too-far, too-fast cuts being imposed by the UK Government.

Byron Davies: Am I hearing you right? Are you saying that unemployed people commit burglary as a matter of course?

Jenny Rathbone: Not as a matter of course, but, unfortunately, there is a correlation between people who become desperate and who do not have a way at the moment of—do you not accept, as a former policeman, that there is a correlation between rises in unemployment and increases in crime? I would be surprised if you were not aware of that. I am in no way arguing that unemployed people therefore go off and carry out burglaries, but the increase in the levels of poverty and desperation among people does lead to an increase in crime, and that has been shown—it has been reported in the police authority community meetings that there has been an increase in thefts from vehicles and an increase in burglaries. It is increasingly important that the police listen to what the community has to say in order to continue the good work of preventing crime and detecting those who have committed crime. That is why the PCSOs are so important in enabling that to happen. I heard only last night that drug arrests that have taken place in Llanedeyrn were directly down to the fact that the police had received soft information from the public. That is absolutely the work that the police have to do,

namely to work in partnership with the public, and that is the work that the PCSOs are doing.

William Graham: May I pose some questions to the Labour Government here and ask why it has denied the people of Wales a freeze on their 2012-13 council tax bills? It is totally at odds with the programme for government's alleged commitment to reducing poverty and supporting the Welsh economy. After the United Kingdom government gave councils in England the opportunity to freeze council tax for a second successive year, a £39 million consequential was made available to the Welsh Government. Now, households in Wales have been hit with a rise of 139.88% in their council tax bills since 1997. The Welsh Government did nothing to relieve the burden in these difficult economic times, despite being given the money to do so. The Welsh Conservatives were the only political party in Wales to support a freeze that would put more money into people's pockets and help local economies to thrive. We subsequently learned that freezing council tax in Wales would only have cost £21.3 million.

The programme for government calls for the introduction of a council tax benefit system; while progress has been made, the Welsh Government has demonstrated hypocrisy with its approach. In England, the United Kingdom Government is currently replacing the council tax benefit scheme with around £4 billion in grants, which will be handed to local authorities to develop their own localised support schemes, enhancing the United Kingdom decentralisation agenda while saving £490 million. The Minister has attacked the United Kingdom Government's approach, saying he felt that locally defined approaches were not appropriate because people in one authority might get a different level of support to those in a neighbouring authority. However, the Minister is clearly playing party politics with this issue. There is a Welsh Government initiative in place to aid pensioners in paying their council tax bills, but it is not nationally defined. According to the Welsh Government's own rhetoric, it allows local authorities to deliver a scheme of assistance that is best suited to local circumstances.

The national transport plan was revised in December 2011 and contains prioritised objectives based on future budget availability. Some projects are delayed until 2015, which is beyond the scope of the current plan. These schemes include taking forward a transport advice programme to reduce the emissions from car and van fleet operators, developing a freight consolidation centre and introducing additional services on the Vale of Glamorgan line and the Heart of Wales line.

The national transport plan lacks a focus on aviation. Despite the creation of the Cardiff Airport taskforce, which we understand has only had one meeting to date, the Welsh Government has a complete lack of strategy relating to how it hopes to improve the numbers of passengers travelling through Cardiff Airport, and how it aims to encourage new airlines to the airport. The lack of international connectivity was a factor in the rejection of the Welsh Government's bid for the green investment bank. An express bus service between Cardiff airport and Cardiff city centre, and safety improvements to the A4226, Five Mile Lane, are also delayed, and will now be delivered beyond 2015. In response to the inquiry into international connectivity, the Institution of Civil Engineers Wales Cymru commented:

'the consistent failure of WG and the Local Authorities around Cardiff Airport to upgrade the link from Junction 34 on the M4 to Cardiff Airport has adversely affected development of the airport'.

The programme for government aims to monitor the number of individuals killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents, to make sure that Government actions are on track. Yet road traffic statistics for 2011 show that 1,126 people were seriously injured—a rise of 13% since 2010—and 121 people, sadly, were killed on Welsh roads. The Welsh Government has recently been criticised for misleading the public over its investment in transport. Of the £336

million that the Welsh Government claims to have invested in transport, only £79 million of capital investment has been provided for public transport, with a subsidy of £172 million payable to the Arriva Trains Wales franchise, which includes payments to cover train drivers' wages.

The Welsh Government has failed to support the bus network throughout Wales and, in January 2012, it announced that it was cutting bus services funding by £3 million. The local transport subsidy will be cut from £11 million to £8 million, a 27% reduction. Despite an announcement by Carl Sargeant that the cuts will be postponed for six months, the Welsh Local Government Association stated that the severity of the cuts was unforeseen and local authorities are now warning that the effect on services is likely to be most severe. There has been a lack of investment in rail infrastructure in north Wales. Although the Welsh Government supported electrification in south Wales, limited focus has been placed on the electrification of rail lines in north Wales. The First Minister has stated that consideration must now be given to the electrification of the north Wales main line in particular—that was in June of last year.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. Conclude now, please.

William Graham: Thank you, Deputy Presiding Officer.

Lynne Neagle: I am grateful to the Welsh Conservatives for tabling this debate. I am grateful that, so early in this Assembly term, they have handed Members the opportunity to compare and contrast the performance of this Welsh Labour Government with an administration in Westminster that has spent the best part of 12 months lurching from crisis to crisis between cock-up, chaos and complete disarray. It beggars belief that the Tories have the audacity to raise questions about our record given what we have seen from their party in Government recently: a deficit reduction strategy that is crippling the economy and is not cutting the deficit and then a half-baked budget that was pulled apart in u-turn after u-turn, until all that remained was a grubby tax cut for the richest 300,000 in society, which left the other 56 million people angry and out of pocket.

3.00 p.m.

Andrew R.T. Davies: I am grateful to the Member for Torfaen for giving way. Do you not recognise that, when Labour was in Government, the highest rate of tax was 5p lower than the proposed new rate of tax of 45p from April next year for high earners?

Lynne Neagle: I recognise that you are driving this economy into the ground, while Labour was on the road to recovery. We have seen a chaotic Cabinet reshuffle, which saw the Prime Minister who said that you had to vote blue to go green appoint a climate change sceptic as Secretary of State for the environment, and, last week, we saw the unedifying and totally unacceptable sight of a Tory frontbencher admonishing a serving police officer charged with the serious duty of protecting the Prime Minister.

In a summer when we all basked in the feel-good glow of British sporting success, in three strokes the Conservatives utterly destroyed their economic credibility, demonstrating once and for all that compassionate conservatism was nothing more than a public relations construction designed to detoxify brand Tory and showing just how aloof, arrogant and out of touch they are with modern Britain.

What have we seen from the Liberal Democrats? Their constitutional reform programme was strangled at birth by a cohort of right-wing Tory backbenchers who wield increasing power within the coalition—

Eluned Parrott: I believe that the reform of the House of Lords was a constituent part of the Labour manifesto. Where were Labour MPs in supporting the reform of the House of Lords if democracy is so important to you?

Lynne Neagle: You need to look to your own party in relation to that, Eluned.

We have seen a pupil premium that Ofsted has said is failing to make any difference whatsoever in many schools in England and a half-hearted apology from Nick Clegg on the fees hike, which will just add insult to injury for the 15,000 young people who have been put off from applying for university since fees were tripled.

Tempting as it is, I do not need to use all of my time in this debate to pull apart the record of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats at a UK level, because on this side of the Chamber, we can more than stand up and be counted. We are not even halfway through this Assembly term and while, yes, there is more that remains to be done, I am proud to be a member of a party in Government that has a clear vision of a better, fairer Wales that we want to build for the future, in spite of these bleak economic times.

This Government is sticking to its pledge to stand up for the people of Wales and is delivering on the economy, through the small and medium-sized enterprise investment fund, the economic growth fund, Jobs Growth Wales, Skills Growth Wales and the national infrastructure plan. It is pulling out all the stops to try to support the economy at a time when Downing Street has put the brakes on economic growth and ruined the recovery started under Labour. It is a Government that is grasping the nettle of modernisation and reform in the NHS, in the face of the worst kind of bandwagon jumping, scaremongering and political opportunism from the opposition on all sides. This party is delivering for our children and young people's future. It is sticking to its guns on child poverty, investing in Flying Start, refusing to sell Welsh students down the river, unlike Nick Clegg, and taking bold and decisive action to correct an obvious injustice that threatened to damage the life chances of our GCSE students in Wales.

I want to say to Janet Finch-Saunders that the reason why more money is spent in Torfaen than in her constituency is because we have higher needs there. That might be an alien concept to the Welsh Conservatives, but that is how we in Welsh Labour do things.

No Government is perfect. Members know that I am not shy about raising concerns over delivery or implementation on the ground, but when it comes down to it, I believe that most people in Wales recognise that Welsh Labour in Government is doing a good job in incredibly difficult circumstances. Andrews or Gove, Pickles or Sargeant, Carwyn or Cameron—I know who the Welsh public would rather see running this country.

The First Minister (Carwyn Jones): I thank Members for their contributions during the course of this debate. It gives us great pleasure to extoll the virtues of our programme for government—the first of its type in the history of the Assembly, one that is carefully costed and considered and based on principle and on a strong legislative programme.

When the Government was elected in May last year, the Labour Party stood on five main manifesto pledges, as well as a host of others. We said that we would deliver Jobs Growth Wales; we have, and it is on target—it is only five months old. The target was to create 4,000 job opportunities by April of next year, and I believe that that target will be easily met. We said that we would reduce the deficit in school spending between Wales and England; we are doing that. We said that we would ensure that more police community support officers would be employed; we are doing that, to make up for the lack of funding from the UK Government. We said that we would take Flying Start forward, doubling the number of families eligible under that programme, and we are moving toward that. We are also making progress on

ensuring that people have better access to general practitioners. We have put forward a legislative programme that will occupy the Assembly over the course of the next year; a programme that I believe is exciting and will deliver real benefits to the people of Wales. We have nothing to be ashamed of with regard to this programme for government. This is an example of a Government delivering on its manifesto promises. We have never felt the need to stand up and apologise for breaking our main election promise, as the Deputy Prime Minister has done, because we have never done such a thing.

We will accept the amendment put forward by the Liberal Democrats. It has been called a pupil premium; we call it a pupil deprivation grant—we believe that that is better; it is certainly more effective than the pupil premium in England, if nothing else. However, I was interested to hear the contributions from the other parties.

Gwrandewais yn fanwl ar Elin Jones. Mae'n wir bod rhaid inni gael system o fenthyca. Rwy'n credu ein bod yn agos i gael cytundeb gyda Llywodraeth y Deyrnas Unedig ynglŷn â chyllid yng Nghymru, a bydd datganiad ar y mater hwnnw'n cael ei wneud yn yr wythnosau nesaf. Mae'n wir i ddweud bod rhaid inni gael pwerau benthyca. Mae'r cynllun buddsoddi yn seilwaith Cymru wedi cael ei gyflwyno, ac mae'n dangos sut y mae'r Llywodraeth yn mynd i sicrhau y bydd mwy o arian yn mynd i'r economi yn y dyfodol.

Mae'n rhaid imi ddweud ein bod yn cytuno bod eisiau cael mwy o arian i'r economi yng Nghymru, ac rydym wedi gwneud hynny. Os edrychwn ar beth sydd wedi digwydd yn ddiweddar, mae £30 miliwn wedi'i roi i gronfa twf economaidd Cymru, £40 miliwn i gronfa buddsoddi mewn busnesau bach a chanolig eu maint, £100 miliwn i gronfa hybu gwyddoniaeth bywyd yng Nghymru, £1.5 miliwn i gronfa datblygu digidol, £6 miliwn i gronfa benthyciadau microfusnesau, ynghyd â'r gwaith sy'n cael ei wneud, a'r arian sy'n cael ei roi, i sicrhau bod pobl yn cael band eang cyflym erbyn 2015. Byddwn yn dweud bod llawer iawn wedi cael ei wneud dros economi Cymru yn y flwyddyn ddiwethaf.

Fodd bynnag, mae un peth y byddwn yn ei ofyn i Plaid Cymru. Mae un prosiect yn mynd i ddod â 600 o swyddi ac yn mynd i hybu'r iaith Gymraeg mewn un rhan o Gymru, sef prosiect Wylfa B. A yw Plaid Cymru yn fodlon dweud ei bod yn cefnogi Wylfa B? Clywsom yr wythnos diwethaf bod Plaid Cymru yn erbyn ynni niwclear—mae hynny'n rhywbeth i'r blaidd—ond nid yw'n erbyn ynni niwclear ar Ynys Môn nac yn Nhrawsfynydd. Rydym ni ar y meinciau hyn,

I listened carefully to Elin Jones. It is true that we need a system of borrowing. I believe that we are close to reaching agreement with the UK Government on funding in Wales, and a statement will be made on that issue in the coming weeks. It is true to say that we need to have borrowing powers. The Wales infrastructure investment plan has been introduced, showing how the Government will ensure that more funding comes into the economy in the future.

I must say that we agree that we need more money coming into the economy in Wales, and we have done that. If we look at what has happened recently, £30 million has gone into the Wales economic growth fund, £40 million into SME investment fund, £100 million into the fund to promote the life sciences in Wales, £1.5 million into the digital development fund, £6 million into the microbusiness loans fund, along with the work that has been done, and the money that has gone in, to ensure that people have fast broadband by 2015. I would say that a great deal has been done for the Welsh economy over the last year.

However, there is one thing that I would ask Plaid Cymru. One project will deliver 600 jobs and promote the Welsh language in one part of Wales, namely the Wylfa B project. Is Plaid Cymru willing to say that it supports Wylfa B? We heard last week that Plaid Cymru is against nuclear energy—that is something for the party—but it is not against nuclear energy in Anglesey or Trawsfynydd. We on these benches and the people of Wales want to know whether Plaid Cymru supports

a phobl Cymru, hefyd, am wybod a yw Plaid Cymru yn cefnogi'r prosiect cyfalaf mawr hwn a fydd yn hybu cymaint o bethau ar Ynys Môn ac yn helpu cymaint o deuluoedd i sicrhau bod ganddynt fywoliaeth.

Elin Jones: A ydych yn cytuno gyda Plaid Cymru, os oes Wylfa B, y dylai'r swyddi a'r cytundebau ar gyfer y gwaith gael eu gosod yn gyntaf yn lleol, yn sir Fôn a'r gogledd-orllewin?

Y Prif Weinidog: Ydw, ond mae'n newyddion i mi bod Plaid Cymru o blaid Wylfa B; mae hynny'n beth newydd eto. Rwy'n credu ei bod yn bwysig dros ben ein bod yn cadarnhau beth yn union yw safbwynt Plaid Cymru. A yw Plaid Cymru o blaid Wylfa B? Mae'n gwestiwn eithaf rhwydd, ac rwy'n credu bod pobl Cymru am glywed ateb iddo.

this major capital project that will facilitate so many things in Anglesey and help so many families to secure a livelihood.

Elin Jones: Do you agree with Plaid Cymru that, if there is to be a Wylfa B, the jobs and contracts for the work should be laid first of all locally, in Anglesey and north-west Wales?

The First Minister: I do, but it is news to me that Plaid Cymru is in favour of Wylfa B; that is something new again. I think that it is very important that we know exactly what Plaid Cymru's position is on this. Is Plaid Cymru in favour of Wylfa B? It is a relatively easy question, and I believe that the people of Wales want to hear an answer to it.

I listened carefully to what Kirsty Williams had to say. She said that the economic difficulties faced by Wales are down to global factors and the Welsh Government—nothing, of course, to do with the UK Government, of which the Liberal Democrats are a part. We know that there are many things that the UK Government could be doing to help the economy of Wales and the rest of the UK with regard to capital investment. Belatedly, we have the British business bank, announced by Vince Cable. We do not know what the details are—we are told that they will come in December—and we do not know how far he has been allowed by the UK Treasury to take his idea. Time will tell.

She talked about health; in Wales, she said, we spend more money and get fewer outcomes. Is that not an argument for reconfiguration? That is exactly what we are trying to do—ensuring that we get the best outcomes for the health of the people of Wales in Wales. She talked about enterprise zones, saying that, somehow, we are lagging behind. Those zones became live in Wales on the same day as in England; there is no lag and the situation is exactly the same in Wales as it is elsewhere.

I noted, with approval, the leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats' attempts to distance herself from her colleagues elsewhere in the UK. I think that that was a very wise move on her part, if I can put it that way. However, I will ask her one question: does she agree with the regarding of the English language GCSE? If she does, does she condemn the words of Nick Clegg, who said that it was all the fault of a meddling Welsh Government? The word 'meddling' always sounds to me as if someone is trying to come across as a Scooby-Doo character; perhaps that is true. However, is it right for Nick Clegg, as Deputy Prime Minister, to spend all of his time, it seems, when he talks about Wales, attacking the Welsh Government, and attacking, on this occasion, Welsh students? The people of Wales deserve an answer.

Let me turn, finally, to the Conservatives. I listened carefully to all of their spokespeople, and the gist of what they were saying was this: 'we want more money for health, education and transport and more money off the council tax'. Where on earth is this money coming from, at a time when their party has made cuts in the Welsh Government's budget?

I listened carefully to the leader of the Welsh Conservatives. He welcomed the appointment

of new staff abroad, yet his party was very fond at one time of calling our overseas offices ‘mini embassies’, and was critical of them. His party was critical of the London office. I welcome his conversion. There is nothing better than a sinner who returns to the fold. Let us be charitable about that.

He said that, somehow, we were behind the rest of the UK with broadband. I am not aware of anywhere else, particularly the whole of England, where broadband has been rolled out faster than it has in Wales. We are certainly not behind England in that regard.

Again, he talked about education. I ask him again: does he, or does he not, support the regarding of the English language GCSE in Wales? I will give him an opportunity to answer that question when he responds to what I have said. The people of Wales deserve an answer.

I was forced to listen to Mark Isherwood, and did so with some trepidation. He seems to think that all was fine before 2008, and that youth unemployment was somehow at a record high before the credit crunch was a factor. We know that that is not right. He said that housing needed to be improved. If that is the case, why is it that his party is proposing a 25% cut in the housing budget? It does not make sense to call for more housing on one hand, and to say that you want to cut the budget by a quarter on the other. That is the kind of trick that we know the Tories are trying to pull off.

I listened to what Janet Finch-Saunders had to say. We make no apologies on this side of the Chamber for spending more money on those areas that people need to see developed in the future. We know that, at a time of economic difficulty for the UK, it is important that Governments are governed by principles and protect those services that people hold most dear. William Graham talked about council tax; I will come back to that in a second.

I will conclude now, Deputy Presiding Officer. Once again, the Conservatives say ‘spend more money on health’. They sent out a press release in 2010, during the budget negotiations at that time, saying that inefficiencies needed to be rooted out in the health service. Yet, every time that a reconfiguration is proposed, they oppose it. What do we see? They want to make a 12.5% cut in education. They want a 12% cut in local government funding—how that stands with their thoughts on council tax, I just do not know. They want a 30% cut in spending on economic development and transport. This is the party that claims that it wants to see Wales move forward. It simply wants to cut money from people’s pockets. We will stand on delivery, honesty and principle, and we will deliver for the people of Wales.

Andrew R.T. Davies: The First Minister gets more laughable by the day. He reminds me of Krusty the Clown; he says one thing and delivers something very poor in its place. He mentioned three things that he said the Welsh Conservatives have talked about in this debate, including the issue of more money for council tax. You were given the money for that, First Minister. We have identified how you can ring fence the health budget and not have to implement your £538 million of cuts. We have also identified how you can put more money into schools by directly funding those schools, which would free up £102 million. Equally, First Minister, if you had a more efficient system of delivery to schools, you would have some local authorities achieving closer to the English average of 10% rather than the 30% that some local authorities take out of the education budget at the moment. That is fact.

3.15 p.m.

If that is the strength of your defence of the programme for government, then God help us for the next three years that the Government will be sitting around that desk, trying to deliver and to change the scenario. In fairness to the First Minister, when he took office for the fourth Assembly, he identified the fact that previous Governments had been poor on delivery. As I identified, it was not a Conservative who pointed that out, but his former colleague in

Government and friend in the Labour Party, Andrew Davies, the former Member for Swansea West, who identified that as one of the flaws of previous Labour Governments.

Joyce Watson: Will you take an intervention?

Andrew R.T. Davies: I would, Joyce, but I have only three minutes to sum up and I took three interventions during my opening remarks.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. You are not taking an intervention.

Andrew R.T. Davies: I also think that it is right that I pick up on the points that other speakers made during the debate.

This was an example of the First Minister at his worst—looking over the border at England rather than trying to defend the inactivity of his Government and his failure to deliver. I thought that this was the point made by the leader of the Liberal Democrats about the legislative programme. We all gathered around that referendum and we all promoted the idea that primary legislative powers should come here. However, what have we had to date from this Government? All we have had is a Bill on local government bye-laws. That is the engine and dynamic of the Government here from the Labour Party.

Most Governments, when they come in, show some ambition and some actual ability to get on top of the problems and to achieve and deliver. It is during the first 14 to 16 months of Government that that happens. This Government has quite happily sat back and adopted the typical lazy Labour approach of, ‘We are the incumbents; we have the right to rule’. I listened to the Member for Torfaen today, after £2 billion-worth of investment was announced in July for the electrification of the Great Western line from London and the Valleys lines—a comprehensive transformation of the south-east Wales economy in difficult times—by the coalition Government in London. You cannot knock that, or the £57 million that the Government has made available for broadband delivery here, to work in partnership.

Lynne Neagle: Will you take an intervention?

Andrew R.T. Davies: The hand of partnership has been reached out time and again, but Labour has reverted to tribalism. I will take the intervention.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. There is not—

Lynne Neagle: I do not recall mentioning that particular thing. I was talking about the rest of the catastrophic governance of the country that your party has been involved in.

Andrew R.T. Davies: I appreciate that time is pressing, Deputy Presiding Officer. The only catastrophic Government that came into play was that of Gordon Brown, which inflicted regional pay, bankrupted this country and which epitomised the lazy Labour attitude of those who sit around that front bench. I hope that Members will support this motion today to give that lot a kick up the backside so that they start to deliver for Wales.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The proposal is to agree the motion without amendment. Does any Member object? I see that there is objection. Therefore, I will defer all voting on this item until voting time.

**Dadl Plaid Cymru
Plaid Cymru Debate**

**Polisi Caffael Cymru
Welsh Procurement Policy**

Y Dirprwy Lywydd: Rwyf wedi dethol gwelliant 1 yn enw William Graham a gwelliannau 2, 3 a 4 yn enw Aled Roberts.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have selected amendment 1 in the name of William Graham and amendments 2, 3 and 4 in the name of Aled Roberts.

Cynnig NDM5050 Jocelyn Davies

Motion NDM5050 Jocelyn Davies

Mae Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru:

The National Assembly for Wales:

1. Yn croesawu adroddiad McClelland 'Gwneud y Gorau o Bolisi Caffael Cymru':

1. Welcomes the McClelland report 'Maximising the Impact of Welsh Procurement Policy';

2. Yn cydnabod gwerth caffael cyhoeddus i economi Cymru;

2. Recognises the value of public procurement to the Welsh economy;

3. Yn nodi bod diweithdra hirdymor ymhlith pobl ifanc wedi cynyddu bedair gwaith bron dros y flwyddyn ddiwethaf; a

3. Notes that long-term youth unemployment has almost quadrupled over the last year; and

4. Yn galw ar Lywodraeth Cymru i wneud y canlynol er mwyn rhoi hwb i'r economi:

4. Calls on the Welsh Government, in order to boost the economy, to:

a) gwneud polisi caffael yn fwy agored i gwmnïau yng Nghymru; a

a) make procurement policy more accessible to Wales based companies; and

b) cynyddu gwariant ar brosiectau seilwaith.

b) increase spending on infrastructure projects.

The Leader of Plaid Cymru (Leanne Wood): I move the motion.

What can we do in Wales to end the crisis in our economy? Monetary and fiscal policy are not devolved—at least not yet—our budget is fixed and we have no borrowing powers, but we hold one very powerful lever: every year, we pass a budget here that represents just over a third of our total GVA. About a third of that again constitutes the purchasing of goods and services by suppliers in the private and social enterprise sectors, in which over 70% of Welsh employees work. We, in this Chamber, representing the bigger 'we', namely the people of this country, are directly and indirectly the biggest customer in the land, whose purchasing decisions have huge ripple effects. Those decisions have the potential to reinvigorate the Welsh economy. That is why, today, Plaid Cymru is focusing on procurement.

Some may see procurement merely as a source of efficiency savings—and surely there is no-one here who is in favour of inefficiency. However, for us, procurement is not some blunt instrument with which to bludgeon cost reduction out of an already beleaguered public sector, it is a precious tool that has the power to regenerate. Progressive procurement is the foundation of what I will call today 'plan C', the plan to revive the Welsh economy.

As Professor McClelland's excellent report outlines, much progress has already been made on this front, and the 'One Wales' agreement and Ieuan Wyn Jones's economic renewal programme stressed the importance of procurement for economic development. The business procurement taskforce led to important advances such as the supplier qualification information database, or SQuID, and, as the Federation of Small Businesses' research has

confirmed, Wales has pioneered the inclusion of community benefit clauses in procurement contracts. Those results have been tangible: an overall increase in the proportion of Welsh public sector contracts with Wales-based companies, up from around a third in 2003 to a little over half today. That has safeguarded 98,000 jobs in total.

However, so much more can be achieved. Germany sources 98.9% of its public sector contracts domestically, and we wonder why it has managed to weather the storm. France does almost as well, with 98.5%. The UK achieves a self-procurement rate of 97%, yet, in Wales, half the value of our procurement budget is lost through leakage. Therefore, should we not have a goal of matching the Scottish rate of 75% of internal procurement by the time of the next Assembly elections? We should not even be content with that, because the Scots are not. Is it too ambitious to aim towards a goal of 90% by the end of the decade, to be on a par with most other countries? By achieving Scottish levels of self-procurement, the direct and induced employment effects would mean that we would create another 48,000 jobs, potentially reducing Welsh unemployment by 40%, increasing gross value added growth by an additional 0.5% a year and beginning the task of closing Offa's gap. Is that not a goal that we can all unite behind?

To get there, embracing all 28 of the McClelland recommendations would not be a bad start, but I think that we can go one bold step further and do what this Senedd was empowered to do by the people, and that is to legislate. The only way to reform procurement is to mandate it through the passing of a Welsh procurement reform Act. As Professor McClelland details in his report, despite the best of policy intentions, there remains resistance in some parts of the public sector to a progressive approach. He says that in some organisations, policy is received, but not fully accepted and implemented, with some feeling lukewarm about its objectives and others still wedded to the narrow lowest-cost-denominator approach of 20 years ago.

Legislation of the type that the Scottish Government is currently consulting on could make community benefit clauses mandatory above a certain level. Such a law could ensure a single simplified pre-qualification system across Wales, with limits on the level of turnover required and a duty to consider the impact of the tendering process on small and medium-sized enterprises and the third sector. It could mainstream the living wage and environmental sustainability, making Wales the greenest and most pro-social procurer in the whole of Europe.

Welsh procurement legislation would, of course, be tailored to Welsh needs rather than to anyone else's needs. However, if Scottish legislation is anything to go by, there could be opportunities to influence local procurement even by public agencies and bodies that are normally outside the National Assembly's competence. Plaid Cymru has received advice that Scottish procurement law could potentially cover contracts signed in Scotland by non-devolved UK Government agencies, as well as utilities. While this would not affect centralised and specialist UK procurement deals, it could cover the local sourcing of food, for example. Another key plank of Scotland's procurement legislation is to increase the number of apprentices and to reduce youth unemployment. Welsh legislation should interpret these lessons according to our own needs.

Creating our own legal framework and setting our own parameters is the first step, but being creative within those parameters and thinking inside the box is the next. We are constrained by our limited powers, but that just means that we have to become more imaginative. In an age of enforced austerity, economists have begun to talk about the role of unconventional fiscal policy—not cutting taxes or raising spending, but changing the composition of public spending as a catalyst for growth. That is perfectly designed for situations like ours, as our financial straitjacket prevents us from varying taxes or raising additional finance through borrowing. Unconventional fiscal policy involves shifting the balance from revenue spending

to capital expenditure. Why? Because capital expenditure's multiplier is greater, and this investment effect has been confirmed in international studies. For example, we can look at the effect of capital versus revenue expenditure at the regional level in the Japanese economic crisis of the 1990s. Shifting the balance between capital and revenue expenditure in the current Welsh budget by 1% a year would have significant and immediate effects on Welsh economic recovery—all the more so when coupled with a progressive procurement strategy.

My final point is this: we have talked and talked about making the connections, but the silos in Government still prevail and it is time now that we tore them down. The Welsh Government's economic strategy has nine key sectors. Should our procurement strategy not be geared to driving innovation in those key sectors? In other countries and regions across the EU, they call this process pre-competitive procurement, pump-priming research and development by being a demanding customer to locally based firms. It is not just me arguing this: in his advice to this Government in 2002, competitiveness guru Michael Porter said,

'Use public procurement as early/sophisticated demand'.

We probably should have listened because his advice does not come cheap and in the decade since we have slipped further behind. However, we can do something now. Let us ask each of the key sectors what Government can do as a prime customer to act as a test bed, helping to bring pipeline products to market. For all of the constraints and limits on our powers, there are things that we can do. Plan C is for a can-do country and a can-do Assembly. It is for a new consensus, because nothing can be done in this Chamber without that. It is about a new creativity in politics and policy and confidence in our ability to charter a new course.

Gwelliant 1—William Graham

Amendment 1—William Graham

Dileu is-bwynt 4b a rhoi yn ei le:

Delete sub-point 4b and replace with:

gweithio'n agos â Llywodraeth y DU i fanteisio i'r eithaf ar brosiectau seilwaith, fel trydaneiddio'r rhwydwaith rheilffyrdd.

work closely with the UK Government to maximise benefits of infrastructure projects such as electrification of the railway network..

Nick Ramsay: I move amendment 1 in the name of William Graham.

I am grateful to Plaid Cymru for bringing forward this debate on procurement issues and I am pleased to follow that very thought-provoking opening contribution from Leanne Wood. Worryingly, one might say, I actually agreed with many of the comments you made, apart from some at the very end. [*Laughter.*] You made many important points about an important issue that goes to the heart of how we in Wales need to solve many of the economic issues we face. The Enterprise and Business Committee had a sub-group—chaired by Julie James, who I think will speak later on the issue—that looked at this. So, the committee has looked in detail at ways to improve procurement. I am pleased to see that the Government has accepted—I think that I am right in saying—all 13 of the group's recommendations, but we hope to see those being implemented, which is what we would like to see. Too often, we hear the talk, but we have to see the walk as well.

The amendments are all acceptable. The Welsh Conservatives will be accepting Aled Roberts's amendments. We certainly need to promote best practice in procurement and agree that the Welsh construction industry has an important role to play in providing apprenticeships to young people and driving the economy forward. That is common sense and pretty straightforward. Our amendment calls for the Welsh Government to work closely with the UK Government to ensure that they maximise the benefits of infrastructure projects. It was interesting to listen to the previous debate. From some of the Government party speakers'

contributions, you would think that there were no infrastructure projects going on at the moment and that it is all cuts, cuts, cuts. In fact, the UK Government has made an announcement about massive infrastructure projects, such as the electrification of the Great Western line to Swansea. That has been done and is going ahead, and we welcome that, but it is now for the Welsh Government to make sure that the benefits that can be derived from such projects are maximised.

3.30 p.m.

Returning to the committee's work, many stakeholders gave evidence to committee. The Federation of Small Businesses was one set of witnesses. One of the most worrying pieces of evidence that it gave was about a survey that it had done of procuring authorities and councils across Wales, and of businesses trying to win procurement contracts. Six out of 10 businesses reported that there were barriers to accessing public sector procurement opportunities, and that is out of the businesses that responded. That is an incredibly high rate of dissatisfaction with how the system currently works.

The Welsh Government's own review of procurement has highlighted the skills deficit that is faced in terms of public sector procurement officers. Again, I hope that, in response to the Enterprise and Business Committee's recommendations, we will see some action to deal with that. Another point that the FSB made was about a lack of data. We come back to there being a lack of data in the health service, as well as across many aspects of Welsh life; in many of our debates, we mention this issue of not having the data to make informed decisions at the start. More than a third of the councils that responded to the FSB survey noted that they do not record their spend on small and medium-sized enterprises. Time and again, we encounter this problem. If more than a third of councils are not keeping that information, the Welsh Government, and the Minister, is in a difficult position in trying to put the situation right. There was also another issue relating to a lack of data, and that is with regard to the effect of procurement on local economies. It is not just about the effect on the business that might win the procurement contract, but about the spin-off benefits of that for the local community. Unfortunately, there was very little data about those benefits. We need to know what is happening in local communities in order to know how to best influence an improvement in procurement.

One recommendation on which I was very keen was the need to improve dialogue between businesses and procuring authorities. It is important that smaller bodies are not left out of that. Too often in the past, the larger bodies, or those who shout the loudest, are the ones that get the business. Wales is not that big a country—we are 3 million people, with 22 local authorities—so it should not be too difficult to get this right. That has not always happened in the past, but I hope that it can happen in the future.

Finally, it is about getting the balance right. I understand fully that procuring authorities must manage risk, but, at the same time, we need creativity in the system. That was one part of Leanne Wood's opening contribution that I particularly liked—her reference to creativity. That balance needs to be got right, and we are happy to work with the Government to ensure that that happens.

Gwelliant 2—Aled Roberts

Amendment 2—Aled Roberts

Ychwanegu is-bwynt newydd ar ddiwedd Add new sub-point at end of point 4:
pwyt 4:

gwneud prosesau caffael yn fwy agored i make procurement more accessible to SMEs
fusnesau bach a chanolig yng Nghymru drwy in Wales by unbundling contracts for
ddadfwndelu contractau ar gyfer gwaith y Government work.

Llywodraeth.

Gwelliant 3—Aled Roberts

Amendment 3—Aled Roberts

Ychwanegu pwynt newydd ar ddiwedd y cynnig: *Add as new point at end of motion:*

Yn galw ar Lywodraeth Cymru i wneud mwy i hyrwyddo arferion gorau mewn prosesau caffael. *Calls on the Welsh Government to do more to promote best practice in procurement.*

Gwelliant 4—Aled Roberts

Amendment 4—Aled Roberts

Ychwanegu pwynt newydd ar ddiwedd y cynnig: *Add new point at end of motion:*

Yn nodi pwysigrwydd diwydiant adeiladu Cymru wrth roi prentisiaethau i bobl ifanc yng Nghymru. *Notes the importance of the Welsh construction industry in providing apprenticeships to young people within Wales.*

Eluned Parrott: I move amendments 2, 3 and 4 in the name of Aled Roberts.

First, I too thank Plaid Cymru for bringing forward today's debate, on an issue that is at the top of the list of frustrations for many of the businesses that I meet. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank John McClelland, on behalf of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, for his work in producing this comprehensive report and its recommendations, which, on behalf of my party, I formally welcome today.

Public procurement is worth some £4.3 billion a year to the Welsh economy alone. It is a massive sum, and yet, as Nick Ramsay has said, the FSB in Wales shows that my casework postbag is by no means exceptional and that the barriers that we have discussed previously persist. The barriers are well rehearsed: the lack of consistency in processes, the burden of regulation and paperwork to get through, and the bundling together of small contracts into lots by local authorities, making contracts too large for many smaller businesses to bid for. These are all issues that the Government must address urgently if small and medium-sized firms across Wales are to benefit.

The McClelland report contains several constructive recommendations, and I am pleased that they have been accepted. You will be pleased to hear that there are too many of them for me to go into today, but I will highlight a few. Several businesses across Wales highlighted their frustration with the current arrangements, due to this problem of inconsistency among local councils and other public sector bodies. For me, a key recommendation of the McClelland report, and one that I would support without hesitation, is recommendation 6, which calls on local bodies to take action to address the shortage of staff properly skilled in purchasing and procurement. It is vital that the management and staff of public bodies understand both the need for a good procurement policy and the benefits that a good policy brings, not only to the local council itself, but also to the people that they serve.

We need those skilled specialists, whose talent and knowledge is respected and understood, and it is important that both sides of that coin are equally weighted. Only then will we start to see our public authorities taking that creative approach to procurement that we would all like to see. An example that is often cited is that, since 2001, all school meals in the Italian capital, Rome, have been locally sourced, produced or imported under a scheme entitled AllForFood. This programme is responsible for the production of around 140,000 meals a day, some 40%

of all public catering in Rome. It is an example that we have talked about in committees here on a number of occasions, and it is cited as a success in public procurement because it supports a localist policy without breaching EU rules. It does not bar non-local firms from competing, but it sets criteria that makes it very possible for local firms to compete effectively, and that is what is critical. Too often in our public procurement contracts we fail to look at our local economy before we set the criteria by which we will judge a contract, and that is a real change in mindset that we need to make.

The way in which Rome has achieved this is very interesting. It has divided its contracts into 11 areas of varying size and catering companies are forbidden from bidding for more than two of those areas, meaning that small and medium-sized firms are able to bid for one of the smaller areas, producing, say, fewer than 3 million meals per year, while larger, established firms could be awarded two large areas, producing perhaps 8.5 million meals per year. So, there is an opportunity there for flexibility, variety, and for localism to be supported within the rules.

Turning back to the details of the motion before us today, I am very pleased that today's debate will not be a contentious one. With regard to the Conservatives' amendment, we welcome this and will happily support the amendment you have tabled. With regard to our own amendments, in amendment 2 we call on the Welsh Government to do more to enable SMEs in Wales to access Government contracts, where previously they might not have. This issue of bundling has been raised on many occasions, including by the Assembly's own committees, and I know that the Welsh Government takes this very seriously. I would welcome the Minister's comments on progress here, but also a signal of your commitment through your support, Minister.

In amendment 3, we recognise the need to improve awareness and best practice in procurement, and, again, I hope that Members in the Chamber will support that today. Finally, in amendment 4, we seek to recognise the leadership of many of those firms in the construction industry in Wales that, even in these difficult times, are creating apprenticeships. Public procurement provides a great opportunity to encourage training and apprenticeships through social clauses, as has been discussed, and this is something we would very much welcome, as I am sure would all of you.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Yn y lle cyntaf, croesawaf yn fawr y consensws sydd eisoes wedi datblygu ar y pwnc hwn, a'r gefnogaeth gan Nick Ramsay ac Eluned Parrott i'r cynnig a osodwyd gan Plaid Cymru, yn nodi pwysigrwydd y maes hwn. Soniodd Eluned Parrott am y £4.3 biliwn sy'n dod i'r economi o gaffael yn y sector gyhoeddus. I roi hynny yn ei gyd-destun, er mwyn deall maint y swm hwnnw, mae bedair gwaith yn fwy na'r arian a gesglir drwy ardrethi busnes yng Nghymru, a theirgwaith yn fwy na'r arian a gesglir trwy dreth gorfforaethol. Mae'n swm enfawr o arian.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: First of all, I very much welcome the consensus that has already developed on this subject, and the support from Nick Ramsay and Eluned Parrott for the motion laid by Plaid Cymru, noting the importance of this area. Eluned Parrott mentioned the £4.3 billion that comes to the economy from public sector procurement. To put that in context, so that we understand the scale of that sum, it is four times the money collected through business rates in Wales, and three times the money collected through corporation tax. It is a huge amount of money.

Mae cynnydd wedi'i wneud dros y blynyddoedd yn y cyd-destun hwn. Gwnaeth Llywodraeth Cymru'n Un waith da iawn yn cynyddu caffael lleol a chreu sefyllfaoedd lle gellid cael caffael lleol a lle gallai cwmnïau lleol sicrhau eu bod yn gallu cyflwyno'u

Progress has been made over the years in this context. The One Wales Government did excellent work in increasing local procurement and creating situations in which local procurement could take place and local companies could ensure that they could put

henwau ar gyfer y tendrau. Byddwn yn falch iawn o glywed gan y Gweinidog y prynhawn yma yr hyn y mae'r Llywodraeth bresennol yn ei wneud yn awr i adeiladu ar y gwaith a wnaethpwyd gan y Llywodraeth ddiwethaf i sicrhau bod mwy o gwmnïau yn gallu sicrhau tendrau o fewn y system hon. Byddai'n dda iawn gwybod os oes ffigurau sy'n dangos bod y cynnydd hwn yn parhau.

Yn 2002-03, roedd rhyw 35% o'r contractau caffael a oedd yn mynd allan yn y sector gyhoeddus yn mynd i gwmnïau lleol. Mae hynny wedi codi i ychydig dros 50%, ond mae lle i wella ar hyn eto. Fel Eluned Parrott a Nick Ramsay, hoffwn groesawu'n ffigurad adroddiad John McClelland. Mae'n pwysleisio nifer o bwyntiau pwysig. Rwyf yn falch bod y Llywodraeth wedi derbyn yr argymhellion. Fodd bynnag, nid y cwestiwn o dderbyn yr argymhellion yw'r un pwysig, ond a ydych yn bwriadu gweithredu ar yr argymhellion hynny.

Fe'ch cyfeiriaf yn arbennig at argymhelliad 2, sy'n dweud yn glir nad oes angen polisiâu newydd a bod y polisi cyfredol yn ddigonol, ond yr hyn sydd ei angen yw gweithredu'r polisi hwnnw. Yn benodol, mae John McClelland yn dweud fod caffael lleol ar hyn o bryd yn cael ei weld neu'n cael ei gyflwyno fel opsiwn a nid yw'n cael ei weld neu ei gyflwyno fel cyfrifoldeb. Byddai'n dda cael gwybod gan y Gweinidog y prynhawn yma os yw'r Llywodraeth bresennol yn bwriadu newid y pwyslais hwnnw a dweud bod caffael yn lleol, lle mae hynny'n bosibl, yn gyfrifoldeb o fewn y sector gyhoeddus ac, yn arbennig, ar lywodraeth leol o fewn y sector gyhoeddus. Ni wnaaf ailadrodd yr hyn a ddywedodd Eluned Parrott am yr hyn y gellir ei wneud—rydym i gyd yn gwybod yr hyn y gellir ei wneud o ran newid yr amodau a'r system dendro er mwyn caniatáu cwmnïau lleol i ennill y tendrau hynny ac er mwyn sicrhau mai nwyddau lleol sy'n cael eu prwcasu drwy bolisi caffael lleol. Mae'n rhaid sicrhau bod hynny'n digwydd.

Mae hynny o fantais i'r economi, oherwydd mae'n golygu bod yr arian yn symud o fewn yr economi lleol—nid yn unig yr arian sy'n dod yn uniongyrchol o'r polisi caffael, ond yr arian sy'n cael ei gylchredeg gan y cwmnïau lleol sy'n ennill y contractau hyn. Mae hefyd

forward their names for the tenders. I would be very pleased to hear from the Minister this afternoon what the present Government is doing now to build on the work done by the last Government to ensure that more companies can secure tenders within this system. It would be very good to hear if there are figures that show that his progress continues.

In 2002-03, some 35% of procurement contracts that went out in the public sector went to local companies. That has increased to a little over 50%, but there is still room for improvement. Like Eluned Parrott and Nick Ramsay, I would like to formally welcome John McClelland's report. It emphasises a number of important points. I am pleased that the Government has accepted the recommendations. However, the important question is not whether you accept the recommendations, but whether you intend to act upon those recommendations.

I refer you in particular to recommendation 2, which clearly states that new policies are not needed and that the current policy is sufficient, but what is needed is to implement that policy. In particular, John McClelland says that local procurement at present is seen or presented as an option and not seen or presented as a responsibility. It would be good to hear from the Minister this afternoon whether the present Government intends to change that emphasis and say that local procurement, where possible, is a responsibility within the public sector and, in particular, for local government within the public sector. I will not reiterate what Eluned Parrott said about what could be done—we all know what could be done regarding changing the conditions and the tendering system to allow local companies to win those tenders and to ensure that local goods are purchased through a local procurement policy. We must ensure that that happens.

That is of benefit to the economy, because it means the money moves within the local economy—not only the money that comes directly from the procurement policy, but the money that is circulated by the local companies that win these contracts. There are

goblygiadau amgylcheddol eithriadol o bwysig oherwydd bydd yn golygu, o ran milltiroedd bwyd, er enghraifft, fod y pellter o ran cyflenwi yn llawer llai.

also exceptionally important environmental obligations because it will mean, in terms of food miles, for example, that the distance in terms of delivery is much less.

Yr hyn yr ydym am ei wybod y prynhawn yma, Weinidog, yw nid os ydych yn cytuno â John McClelland a'r argymhellion yn ei adroddiad—rydym yn ei chymryd yn ganiataol eich bod yn gwneud hynny—ond sut y byddwch yn gweithredu'r argymhellion hynny, ac, yn benodol, sut y byddwch yn newid y pwyslais o osod pwr casu lleol fel opsiwn o fewn y sector caffael cyhoeddus i'w osod fel cyfrifoldeb yr ydych yn disgwyl iddo gael ei wireddu. Wrth gwrs, os ydych yn gwneud hynny, mae'n rhaid i Lywodraeth Cymru hefyd dangos esiampl yn y ffordd y mae hithau'n caffael yn gyhoeddus.

What we want to know this afternoon, Minister, is not whether you agree with John McClelland and the recommendations in his report—we take it for granted that you do—but how you will implement those recommendations, and, in particular, how you will shift the emphasis from setting local purchasing as an option within the public procurement sector to setting it as a responsibility that you expect to be realised. Of course, if you do that, the Welsh Government also must set an example in the way that it procures publicly.

Julie James: I, too, am pleased to take part in this debate today and I very much welcome the McClelland report and the Government's acceptance of it. I am particularly pleased because that report echoes and complements the report that the Enterprise and Business Committee drafted on this topic.

I wish to highlight a few points today. I would like to highlight the good work on procurement that is under way in Wales. I do not think there needs to be an over-reliance on a comparison with Scotland—we are also cutting edge in Wales and we should take credit where it is due. We have done outstanding work in developing policies, strategies and practices, as the McClelland report points out, and as my own committee task and finish group report acknowledges. We have a really cutting-edge programme on community benefits, which has already had a significant impact on how money is spent in publicly funded projects in Wales.

Those things are all very important indeed, but I would also like to highlight some areas of improvement that I know the Government is already working on but which I would like to emphasise. Recommendation 2, as has already been referred to by others today, proposes that there should be a duty on all public sector procurement organisations to abide by good procurement practice, as set out in these good policies and strategies. I would like to very much add my voice to those who say that a good strategy is all very well, but if you do not implement it, then all it is is a decorative ornament on your shelf. We must absolutely ensure that not only do we have these excellent policies and practices, but that we push them through.

3.45 p.m.

Inside the statistics in the McClelland report, there are a number of interesting ones because, although the overall percentage in Wales of public sector contracts won by local companies is good, particularly compared with England, it is not good across the sectors. For example, in local government, it is around 52%, but in some areas in Wales it goes down to 16%. Therefore, I would like to see the Government concentrating on giving its procurement policies some teeth, requiring public sector organisations that do not comply with good procurement practice—and there are many and varied examples, but I will not add my voice to those who have already stated some of them—to give reasons for that and, in fact, to suffer some penalties for not doing so.

As in recommendation 27 of the McClelland report, as well as in our report, I would very much like to see a monitoring of outcomes and a learning process from every single outcome. Over the summer, for example, I am aware that some infrastructure projects led by the Welsh Government did not go to Welsh companies. There may be good reasons for that, but I think that a learning process for those companies and for the Government should be undertaken every time that happens. I would also like to see an analysis of who bids for some of the infrastructure projects, because if we do not have Welsh firms coming forward to bid, we need to look at that. Therefore, what we are talking about here is a good correlation across departments in the Welsh Government and across all local authorities particularly, as well as health authorities and so on, to get this good practice across the board.

The other thing is to encourage the creativity that we have all spoken about. The Rome example is a very good one. I have banged this drum for many years, and all the Members here will have heard me doing so before, but the proof of the pudding is in the planning. Of course, we welcome infrastructure development. In particular, I am delighted about the electrification announcement, but that has not been procured yet. If it is procured by giving the construction project to a company in Germany, then half the benefit will be lost. There has not been a good record at UK Government level for that. Let us advance on that, but let us put a lot of pressure on to make sure that that procurement is done for the benefit of British firms and Welsh firms where the work is done in Wales. That is the important thing: the planning, the creativity and the set-up of the procurement in the first place, and then the review afterwards, to make sure that we learn the points.

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: When we consider how the £4.3 billion of Welsh public sector procurement money is spent, we have to be clear about what we are using it for. We have already heard references about procurement as a tool to drive through efficiencies, securing better value for money and the highest quality goods and services at the most affordable price. However, procurement is also a tool to grow Welsh business and the Welsh economy. It is a key lever to getting out of the current recession and securing growth and jobs. With today's debate, Plaid Cymru is clearly focusing on procurement as an economic driver.

Of course, we are not starting from a blank canvass. Successive Value Wales initiatives have sought to increase the amount of Welsh procurement spend that stays in Wales. Even within EU legislation, it has been possible for the Welsh public sector to direct more of its expenditure into the Welsh economy. We have heard several references today to the progress achieved by the One Wales Government in ensuring that the majority of Welsh procurement contracts go to Wales-based suppliers. Plaid Cymru believes that this percentage can continue to increase, and the McClelland report also recognises this.

The Federation of Small Businesses has urged the Welsh Government to put economic development at the heart of procurement policy, and this completely reflects Plaid Cymru's thinking. Rhodri Glyn Thomas's emphasis on the focus that now needs to fall on translating that aspiration into tangible action is absolutely key. While recognising the achievements of the One Wales Government in increasing Welsh procurement, we also agree today that there is a lot more to be done. ConstructionSkills Wales, for example, is dissatisfied that half of procurement spend goes to Wales-based companies. In short, what has been achieved so far is not enough. Like the FSB, the construction industry identifies the need for the simplification of procurement processes, a consistency of policy across the public sector, and a standardisation of procedures for buying as being central to moving this agenda forwards. This is in line with the McClelland report's finding, of course, that not all parts of the Welsh public sector are coherently implementing Welsh procurement policy.

There is clearly goodwill across the National Assembly and organisations that represent the private sector towards Plaid Cymru's view that more procurement in Wales should go to

Wales-based companies. The challenge now is for the Welsh Government to translate this goodwill into action. This, as Leanne Wood has said, would be a good opportunity to legislate. Legislation could ensure that a set of standard guidelines are in place for the Welsh public sector to adhere to. We have heard about Scotland undertaking a Procurement Reform Bill; we, in Wales, should seriously consider launching our own procurement legislation linked to Welsh social, economic and environmental needs.

Procurement, as we have heard, is about more than buying nuts and bolts or contracting to have some windows cleaned. When it is done right, it is about meeting a variety of social, environmental and economic aims. Many of you will remember the Beecham review into local service delivery in 2006. At the heart of its approach was putting people first. The mantra was to develop citizen-centred services. That should have opened the door to an avalanche of procurement opportunities for social enterprise, and what better way to ensure citizen-centred services than when the citizens own, manage and run those services through co-operatives, community interest companies, social enterprises and so on? As someone who was working for a social enterprise at that time, looking to take full advantage of the added value and significant multiplier effect that we all know that third sector organisations can bring to the table, I find it disappointing to see the McClelland report highlighting that there are still concerns about the knowledge and experience among procurement staff of the potential contribution of social enterprise.

Increasing the contracts won by business in Wales must be a priority, but the real measure of progress and of success is jobs. Working on the basis that every 1% increase equates to 2,000 jobs, think of the impact that we could have if we hit 10%, 20% or 25% more of the value of those contracts staying in Wales, particularly at this time of high unemployment. That is the difference that we can make if we spend that £4.3 billion right. That is how procurement can become more than just an efficiency tool. That is when it becomes a key driver of economic development in Wales.

Mick Antoniw: I also welcome this timely debate on procurement, which enables us to evaluate the progress that has been made, what more can be done, and the way in which the Welsh Government uses its spending power to support Welsh businesses, to increase job creation and training and, in particular, to support our social policy objectives, such as employment for those with disabilities. It has been my view for some time and, I know, that of many others that, for too long, procurement policy has been held back by a risk-averse culture: thinking of what we cannot do with procurement rather than what we can. The early indicators are that this culture is beginning—and I emphasise that it is only beginning—to be rolled back. At this point, I put on record a recognition of the contribution that the Wales TUC particularly has made to the development of thinking about procurement, its use and procurement policy.

The McClelland report is welcomed and, in particular, its recognition that considerable progress has been made. It finds that 51% of all goods and services were reported as purchased from suppliers with a base in Wales. However, we need to treat these sorts of figures cautiously, and I wish that the report had been far more analytical as regards what the figures mean for Welsh jobs and services.

I agree strongly with the recommendation that public procurement be regarded as a duty and its implementation mandatory. I do not think that legislation is essential, but if we are to go down the legislation road, the sustainability Bill might well be an opportunity to include such clauses in legislation. That would be appropriate, as this is about sustainable development in Wales.

I want to develop this issue of the duty and the mandatory nature of procurement, particularly with regard to Remploy. To use the example of Remploy Porth, it is a major supplier of e-

cleansing and recycling services and it provides valuable employment to disabled workers. Its future under the Tory and Lib Dem Government remains uncertain, but I believe that it is a company that has a viable business and, with the right model and business plan, should be able to survive and, indeed, expand. To take Remploy Porth as an example, only two of the 22 local authorities in Wales procure their e-cleansing and recycling services through Remploy, namely Newport and Rhondda Cynon Taf councils, as compared with 16 English and two Scottish local authorities. Only three of our local health boards use its services, and, on education, only one college, in Pembroke, uses its services. It is very clear, therefore, that, although we are making progress, we are not using procurement to maximum benefit. It is essential that we address this failing in the future.

Procurement certainly has the potential to enable a Welsh business not only to survive, but to expand. It also has the potential to fulfil not only economic objectives, but also the social objectives of Welsh Government. Therefore, although we have made progress, it is clear that there is no room for complacency, and there is still an awful lot more work that needs to be done in this area.

Joyce Watson: I, too, welcome John McClelland's report. As people have said, it comes on the back of the report by the procurement task and finish group, which we debated before the summer break. It reinforces many of the same messages of that inquiry. The Welsh Government enthusiastically embraced the recommendations of that report, which is encouraging. To be fair, it has been backed by a good deal of cross-party support, too. We can all appreciate that the Welsh Government has made great strides in this area over the past decade or so, and the report recognises that.

More than 50% of the £4.3 billion annual public spend now goes to small and medium-sized enterprises, up from 35% in 2003. That is real progress. The report also recognises the wider benefits of local procurement. The social impact of creating work and training opportunities are as important as the bottom line. My colleague, Mick Antoni, has spoken passionately many times, as he did just now, about the potential of public procurement for Remploy as one example. We could look across the border to Bristol. The Bristol pound project was launched a couple of weeks ago. It is a fantastic initiative built on the premise that when we spend more money close to home, the community benefits.

I saw for myself over the summer how procurement can be used to support training. I went to see the Gwynedd housing project in Barmouth. That is in Wales, not in Scotland. Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd is spending £136 million to bring its homes up to the Welsh housing quality standard by 2015. It employs local contractors, it sources local materials, and it provides placements for trainees and apprentices. I had the great pleasure of meeting Harry Turner, a young trainee painter and decorator, who has secured 12 months' training from that project. He is only one of 70 trainees there who are being given a chance to progress and make a career in the building industry. I felt that it was brilliant to see young people being given a chance to build towards their own futures. The point is that every contractor involved in the Gwynedd programme has taken on an apprentice. Where we can, we should make vocational training a deal breaker in those sorts of contracts. We can do that through the community benefit clauses that other Members have talked about. That is why I applaud the final amendment in the name of Aled Roberts.

On Monday, I was reading the great news about the dramatic growth in young entrepreneurs in Wales—outstripping the rest of the UK. Let us ensure that we support start-ups and microbusinesses through procurement, too. The Minister for business, enterprise and technology has recognised the importance of that particular sector. In the construction industry especially, many businesses and one-man outfits and their like rely on small contracts and on picking up sub-contracts. Local authorities could support them by putting lower value jobs out to tender. I never tire of saying that construction fuels growth and creates

jobs. Investment in construction offers a road to recovery, which is why I am looking forward to an update on the infrastructure investment plan.

Nick Ramsay: On that point about local authorities ensuring that they allow a range of business to bid, do you also agree that the Welsh Government needs to address capacity issues, so that smaller businesses can access the expertise to allow them to make competent bids?

Joyce Watson: I agree that anything that can be done to help small businesses to access jobs to keep the money in Wales should be done. It is a matter of refining the process and being strategic.

4.00 p.m.

Money spent in Wales should benefit the people of Wales. It is about looking beyond the bottom line and weighing up the wider benefits that public spending delivers, and it is about doing the groundwork before tendering to ensure that Welsh businesses are best placed to compete for work. The supplier qualification information database, or SQuID, is a good example of how that can work for businesses. We should not be shy to be canny. Since 2000, the European Commission has brought only 10 infringement proceedings against the UK for procurement violations, compared with 63 against Germany and 20 against France. The point, as has already been made this morning, is that other countries look for that competitive edge. It is not a matter of protectionism. German firms win more foreign contracts, for example. It is a matter of us being realistic.

Paul Davies: Rwy'n falch o gael y cyfle i gyfrannu at y ddadl hon y prynhawn yma. Y tymor diwethaf, roedd ffocws ar gaffael drwy adolygiad o'r gwrsi a ddysgwyd a strategaeth microfusnesau. Roedd y ddau adroddiad yn awgrymu bod angen arweiniad i annog cyrff cyhoeddus i wneud cytundebau yn haws i fusnesau llai, a bod cynllunio effeithiol yn hanfodol i sicrhau bod cwmnïau llai yn gallu cynnig am gontractau. Yn wir, yn ystod fy amser ar y grŵp trawsbleidiol ar adeiladu, clywais sut y mae cwmnïau weithiau'n teimlo nad ydynt wedi cael cyfleoedd i gynnig am gontractau. Yn amlwg, mae'n rhaid cael chwarae teg fel y gall busnesau bach gael y cyfle i gystadlu am fusnes. Wrth gwrs, mae'r sector cyhoeddus yng Nghymru yn gwario mwy na thraean o'i gyllideb ar nwyddau a gwasanaethau allanol, ac mae'n hanfodol bod gennym strategaeth gadarn sy'n cael ei gweithredu'n effeithiol os ydym am weld ein system gaffael yn ffynnu yng Nghymru.

Paul Davies: I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this debate this afternoon. Last term, there was a focus on procurement, with the lessons learned review and the microbusiness strategy. The two reports suggested that leadership was needed to encourage public bodies to make contracting easier for smaller businesses, and that effective planning was crucial in ensuring that smaller companies can tender. Indeed, during my time on the cross-party group on construction I have heard how companies occasionally feel that they have not had opportunities to tender for contracts. Clearly, we need a level playing field so that small businesses have an opportunity to compete for business. Of course, the public sector in Wales spends more than a third of its budget on goods and services procured externally, and it is crucial that we have a robust strategy that is effectively implemented if we want to see our procurement system prosper in Wales.

Drwy siarad â busnesau nid yn unig yn fy etholaeth i ond mewn etholaethau ar draws Cymru lle mae fframweithiau caffael wedi cael eu newid yn y gorffennol heb unrhyw rybudd, gwn fod amgylchiadau fel hyn wedi'i gwneud yn anodd i rai busnesau dendro am

By speaking to businesses not only in my constituency but across Wales where procurement frameworks have been changed in the past without any prior warning, I have found that such circumstances have made it difficult for some businesses to tender for

gontractau. Rwy'n gobeithio y bydd y Gweinidog yn dweud wrthym wrth ymateb i'r ddadl pa fesurau y mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn eu dilyn er mwyn diogelu busnesau bach pan mae criteria caffael yn newid, yn enwedig ar fyr rybudd. Yn y pen draw, rydym ni i gyd am weld busnesau llai a lleol yn gallu cystadlu am gontractau.

Mae adroddiad McClelland wedi mynd i'r afael â nifer o faterion y mae busnesau bach fel rhwystrau i ymgysylltu â'r sector cyhoeddus. Yn benodol, mae'r adroddiad yn nodi cymhlethdod y broses gaffael yn y sector cyhoeddus, yr anhawster a brofir wrth gwblhau dogfennau fel yr holiadur cyn-gymhwysu a diffyg tryloywder yn y broses gwerthuso ac adborth. Fodd bynnag, pan edrychodd panel Llywodraeth Cymru ar adeiladu ar y pryderon am broses y PQQ, teimlodd y buasai llawer o'r pryderon am y prosesau hyn yn cael eu hateb gan y SQuID—y gronfa ddata gwybodaeth am gymwysterau cyflenwyr, sef yr offeryn y cyfeiriodd arweinydd Plaid Cymru ati yn gynharach. Efallai y gallai'r Gweinidog, wrth ymateb, gadarnhau a yw hi'n hyderus y bydd yr offeryn hwn yn ddigonol i ddileu pryderon ynghylch proses y PQQ.

Rwy'n croesawu'r ffaith fod Gwerth Cymru yn awyddus i ddatblygu sgiliau a gallu staff presennol ein gwasanaethau cyhoeddus, ac rwy'n derbyn bod Llywodraeth Cymru wedi cyflwyno'r rhaglen Talent Gynhenid. Fodd bynnag, fel y dywed adroddiad McClelland, mae diffyg sgiliau o ganlyniad i adnoddau annigonol ac, fel rhan o hynny, nid yw pobl yn ddigon medrus yn broffesiynol. O ystyried y pwynt hwn, buaswn yn ddiolchgar am y wybodaeth ddiweddaraf gan y Gweinidog ar sut y mae Gwerth Cymru yn datblygu ei agenda fel y gallwn sicrhau bod Gwerth Cymru yn gwneud popeth posibl i gynhyrchu arweinwyr ym maes gwasanaethau caffael cyhoeddus i'r dyfodol.

Rwy'n siŵr fod y Gweinidog yn cytuno y buasai buddsoddi mewn sgiliau caffael yn cryfhau ein sefyllfa yn y dyfodol, ac mae'n hanfodol bod gennym agenda gydweithredol. Rwy'n croesawu'r hyn y mae'r Gweinidog Busnes, Menter, Technoleg a Gwyddoniaeth wedi'i roi ar waith drwy sicrhau bod y bobl iawn yn cael eu hyfforddi yn y ffordd gywir.

contracts. I hope that the Minister will tell us in her response today what steps the Welsh Government is taking to safeguard small businesses when procurement criteria change, particularly at short notice. At the end of the day, we all want to see smaller, local businesses being able to compete for contracts.

The McClelland report has got to grips with a number of issues that small businesses see as barriers in interlinking with the public sector. It notes the complexity of the procurement process in the public sector, the difficulty in completing documents such as the pre-qualification questionnaires, and the lack of transparency in the evaluation and feedback process. However, when the Welsh Government panel on construction looked at concerns about the PQQ process, it felt that a number of the concerns about these processes would actually be dealt with through the SQuID—the supplier qualification information database, which the Plaid Cymru leader referred to earlier. Perhaps the Minister could confirm, in her response, whether she is confident that the SQuID database will be adequate in alleviating concerns about the PQQ process.

I welcome the fact that Value Wales is eager to develop the skills and capacity of current staff within public services, and I accept that the Welsh Government has introduced the Home-grown Talent programme. However, as the McClelland report states, there is a shortage of skills as a result of inadequate resources and, within that, people do not have the necessary professional capabilities. Considering this, I would be grateful for the latest information from the Minister on how Value Wales is developing its agenda so that we can ensure that Value Wales does all that it can to produce leaders within public procurement for the future.

I am sure that the Minister would agree that investment in procurement skills would strengthen the position for the future, and that it is crucial that a collaborative agenda is in place. I welcome what the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science has done in ensuring that the right people are trained in the right way. The

Mae adroddiad McClelland yn galw am adolygiad o Werth Cymru er mwyn sicrhau,

‘bod ei chyfrifoldeb presennol am ddarparu gwasanaethau gweithredol i Lywodraeth Cymru a’r sector cyhoeddus yn ehangach yn gyson â’r ffocws dwys ac annibynnol sydd ei angen ar fabwysiadu a gweithredu polisi.’

Rwy’n derbyn y bydd y Gweinidog yn gwneud datganiad am strategaeth gaffael yn y dyfodol, ond o ystyried yr alwad glir am adolygiad o Werth Cymru, a all ddweud wrthyf heddiw fod Llywodraeth Cymru’n bwriadu cynnal adolygiad yn y dyfodol agos?

Mae’r adroddiad hefyd yn dweud yn glir, fel y dywedodd Eluned Parrott, nad yw polisi caffael yn cael ei gynnal yn gyson, yn enwedig o fewn llywodraeth leol. Mae’r adroddiad yn mynd ymlaen i ddweud y dylai llywodraeth leol gymryd camau brys i fynd i’r afael â’r diffyg sgiliau ac, yn benodol, y diffygion difrifol mewn adnoddau yn rhai o’r awdurdodau.

I gloi, dywedodd y Gweinidog cyllid y llynedd ei bod hi eisiau gweld newid cyflymach. Yn anffodus, rydym yn parhau i glywed sut mae’r system o fidio am gontractau yn rhy fiwrocraataidd, sydd yn amlwg yn dal ein heconomi yn ôl. Rwy’n derbyn bod camau yn cael eu cymryd, a bod adolygiadau’n cael eu gwneud, ond mae’r amser wedi dod i weithredu pellach.

The Minister for Finance and Leader of the House (Jane Hutt): I am very pleased to support this motion, welcoming the report that I commissioned from John McClelland in February. I launched the final report last week in Llandudno at the Open for Business event, where it was well received, as was the summary of his report’s recommendations when we debated it earlier in the summer.

The importance of public procurement to the Welsh economy is well recognised and endorsed in this debate. How we use our annual £4.3 billion of public procurement expenditure has a profound impact on Welsh jobs and businesses. Efficiency savings of course protect public sector jobs and front-line services, but strengthening contract opportunities for Welsh companies leads to growth in private sector jobs and the economy—a key lever for economic renewal. We are in complete accord with the movers of this motion on that point.

The McClelland review had many synergies with the findings of the Enterprise and Business Committee’s inquiry, which was chaired by Julie James, Assembly Member for Swansea West, whose recommendations I also accepted fully. A common theme is the shortfall in skills and capacity and the need for widespread adoption of the Welsh Government policy imperatives. Rightly, Members have made that point to me today in this debate, and we have

McClelland report calls for a review of Value Wales to ensure,

‘that its current responsibility for providing operational services to the Welsh Government and the wider public sector is consistent with the intense and independent focus required on policy adoption and implementation.’

I accept that the Minister will make a statement on a procurement strategy in the future, but bearing in mind the clear call for a review of Value Wales, can she tell us today that the Welsh Government intends to hold such a review in the near future?

The report also makes it clear, as Eluned Parrott said, that procurement policy is not consistent, particularly throughout local government. The report goes on to say that local government should take urgent action to get to grips with the skills shortage and, specifically the serious shortages of resources in certain authorities.

In conclusion, last year, the Minister for finance said that she wanted to see swifter change. Unfortunately, we continue to hear of how the bidding system for contracts is too bureaucratic, which is clearly holding our economy back. I accept that steps have been taken and that reviews have been carried out, but the time has now come to take further action.

to act on this. Lack of investment in procurement resource is directly impacting on some organisations' ability to use procurement as a tool to support economic development, and I am taking these actions forward as a result of the review. I will shortly issue a procurement policy statement to clarify my expectations, as is clearly reflected in recommendation 2. Also, I will be working in collaboration with Carl Sargeant, the Minister for local government, to set out requirements and criteria for all public bodies to adopt in order to deliver our vision for public procurement—to give the teeth, if not the bite, that Julie James called for, as did Mick Antoniw.

I am happy to support the Welsh Liberal Democrats' amendment to do even more to promote best procurement practice. I can assure the Liberal Democrats' spokesperson, Eluned Parrott, that I have already announced my intention to improve capability through the reintroduction of a programme of procurement fitness checks. The Home-grown Talent project is offering professional training and skills, and it will qualify and train more than 22 young people over the next three years. This should lead to the leaders in public procurement that Paul Davies called for in his contribution. We need to develop the skills base as a key contribution to public sector service delivery. Public procurement offers huge potential to create, and contribute to, the Welsh economy through creating opportunities for training in employment and through making contract opportunities accessible to Welsh business, directly or through supply chains. Also, Welsh businesses are forming part of the supply chain, and this is where our cutting-edge community benefits policy is delivering results. I thank Members for welcoming this, along with John McClelland's recognition of it, as it is resulting in a 30% greater local multiplier effect from the expenditure. Over the past two years, it has been applied to projects and contracts worth more than £4 billion.

If we look at the results of the first 13 projects completed, they show over 78% of the value being reinvested in Wales, with 211 people and 71 apprentices receiving training. It is that 78% of the value that I know Leanne Wood would expect us to see in terms of delivery, as she set out in her contribution in moving this motion.

I saw for myself the positive impact of this in Ystradgynlais and Llanelli last week. Meeting apprentices and members of the twenty-first century school construction workforce—because they are the ones who are building and refurbishing those schools, which include Ysgol Gymraeg Dyffryn y Glowyr—recruited by the contractors, including long-term unemployed local people, was a great example of delivery. I saw that again in the regeneration project in Llanelli linked to training providers and Coleg Sir Gâr. Rhodri Glyn Thomas, I am sure, would welcome the good practice evident in authorities like Carmarthenshire, but, as he says, we need consistency across local government and the public sector in Wales. The community benefits scheme is particularly important in giving opportunities to young people, and the Welsh Government is addressing this through our Jobs Growth Wales funding, creating 4,000 new opportunities per year for the next three years. Like the projects that Joyce Watson saw in Gwynedd, contractors are taking on local apprentices, and many of those will become the young entrepreneurs of the future.

The Welsh Government is also intervening to address pre-16 employability, an understanding of work and improving literacy and numeracy. The Pathways to Apprenticeships are providing 2,000 opportunities per year for young people, with 380 having been created in the construction industry. I support the Welsh Liberal Democrat amendment to recognise the importance of the construction sector in providing apprenticeships.

It is equally important that we provide the investment necessary to stimulate the economy. As the motion says, investment in infrastructure is crucial to the recovery of our economy—both in the short term, with job creation, and in the longer term through boosting growth potential. The Wales infrastructure investment plan that I launched in May outlines that pipeline of projects that will support growth and jobs. Next week I will be setting out our spending

proposals for 2013-14, including capital budgets for infrastructure investment.

Given the constraints of the cuts to our capital budget imposed by the UK Government, we need to increase investment either through direct borrowing or other innovative vehicles such as the local government borrowing initiative and Welsh housing partnership, and that is what we are doing.

Ieuan Wyn Jones: This has been a positive debate, and I welcome that, but does the Minister accept that, historically, there has been this difficult and frustrating tension sometimes between those who see public procurement as a policy to drive efficiencies and therefore want to move to framework contracts, and the wish that we all share—and there is great political support for this—to see it as a driver for economic benefit? Will the Minister confirm that she sees the McClelland report as a way of resolving that tension in favour of economic development?

Jane Hutt: I could not put it better myself. The issue about using public procurement appropriately is this tension that we have in terms of delivering the best value for the Welsh pound and also ensuring that it is our local economy that benefits in terms of local jobs and opportunities, not just for young people, but for the construction workforce.

In conclusion, looking at the important points that Members have raised about the Federation of Small Businesses, we are acting on the points that it has made. We are working on SQuID and fair payment in construction contracts, and measurement of outcomes is being addressed. Actually, the FSB concluded in its analysis that local authorities in Wales have greater levels of local spend and are more likely to monitor results than local authorities in, for example, London, or the rest of the UK.

Finally, our procurement approach is based on the principles of openness and accessibility. We have a much better pre-qualification process with SQuID, with early engagement, and although I sympathise with the Liberal Democrat amendment about procurement through contracts, I do not believe that it is through unbundling contracts that we find a way forward—it is through splitting contracts into lots and having wider advertisement of lower value contracts. Now, of course, businesses in Wales are winning 50% of overall annual public procurement expenditure.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. I have been very generous, Minister.

4.15 p.m.

Jane Hutt: Finally, while I believe that the Welsh Conservatives' amendment is not unnecessary—we are of course working with UK Government—I do not wish to amend the full motion. I want to see the delivery in terms of those local contracts, as Julie James said. This has been an instructive debate.

Alun Ffred Jones: Diolch yn fawr i bawb sydd wedi cyfrannu. Nid oes llawer o anghytuno ar y pwnc hwn, gan fod pawb yma yn y Cynulliad am weld cymunedau ledled Cymru yn ffynnu ac yn cynnig amrywiaeth o swyddi i drigolion y wlad. Dyna'r norm mewn gwlad gall, wrth gwrs. Fodd bynnag, nid dyna'r sefyllfa mewn gormod o'n cymunedau, megis mewn ardaloedd ôl-ddiwydiannol—a'r ffaith amdani yw bod y rhan fwyaf o Gymru yn ôl-ddiwydiannol—

Alun Ffred Jones: I thank everybody who has contributed. There is not much disagreement on this subject, as all Members want to see our communities prosper and offer a range of jobs to our citizens. That is, of course, the norm in a sensible country. However, that is not the case in too many of our communities, such as the post-industrial areas—and the fact of the matter is that most of Wales is post-industrial—and some rural areas and in an area like Cardiff south, where

nac ychwaith mewn rhai ardaloedd gwledig ac mewn ardal fel de Caerdydd, lle mae tlodi ac amddifadedd yn byw ochr yn ochr â chyfoeth mawr.

Nid wyf am aros gyda'r darlun digalon cyffredinol hwn, ond rhaid cael *reality check* weithiau ynglŷn â sefyllfa Cymru yn gyffredinol—ac fe'ch anogaf i ddarllen pamffled Adam Price, 'Bwlch Offa'—i ddeall yr her sydd o'n blaenau. Un o'r ffeithiau syml—ac fe'ch anogaf i feddwl am y ffeithiau hyn—yw bod cynnyrch mewnwladol crynswth Cymru yn 1997 93% o'r cyfartaledd ar gyfer Ewrop gyfan. Erbyn 2008, roedd lefel Cymru wedi gostwng i 81% o'r cyfartaledd Ewropeaidd, sy'n cynnwys y gwledydd honedig tlawd hynny yn y dwyrain. Mae canlyniadau hynny i'w gweld yn y lefelau uchel o ddiweithdra ymysg pobl ifanc: mae diweithdra tymor hir pobl ifanc wedi cynyddu bedair gwaith yn ystod y flwyddyn ddiwethaf. Nid yw honno'n ffaith y dylai unrhyw Weinidog fod yn gwenu wrth ei chlywed.

Wrth agor y ddadl mewn ffordd mor gadarnhaol, pwysleisiodd Leanne Wood bod yn rhaid inni weithredu yn y meysydd lle mae gennym ddylanwad tra'n dadlau, ar yr un pryd, yn galed dros bwerau newydd, megis pwerau benthyg.

I droi'n fyr at y gwelliannau, rydym yn derbyn y gwelliannau a gyflwynwyd yn enw Aled Roberts. Maent yn tanlinellu'r hyn sydd yn y cynnig ac felly maent i'w croesawu. Rydym hefyd yn croesawu cyfraniad Eluned Parrott. Rydym yn gwrthod gwelliant y Torïaid. Byddem wedi'i dderbyn fel ychwanegiad, ond mae angen rhagor o gynlluniau cyfalaf—ac rydych yn ceisio tynnu'r cymal hwnnw allan o'n cynnig ni—er mwyn creu swyddi a chyfleoedd hyfforddi. Ychydig iawn o sylwebyddion sydd bellach yn anghytuno â'r angen am y buddsoddiad hwnnw.

The Party of Wales has argued long and hard in the Assembly that George Osborne's approach would stifle growth, which is why we in Wales need the reform of the Barnett formula and those borrowing powers and why the Party of Wales proposed the Build for Wales investment company to build more homes, new schools, health facilities, cyclepaths, roads and what have you. I am encouraged that the First Minister is going to bring to the Chamber a statement about the discussions that he has had with the Treasury. We look forward to seeing what concrete steps are proposed.

poverty and deprivation live alongside vast wealth.

I do not wish to dwell on this depressing general picture, but we sometimes need a reality check about the general situation in Wales—and I encourage you to read Adam Price's leaflet, 'Offa's Gap'—in order to understand the challenge that we face. One simple fact—and I would encourage you to think about these facts—is that Wales's gross domestic product in 1997 was 93% of the European average. By 2008, the level in Wales had fallen to 81% of the European average, which includes the allegedly poor eastern European countries. The results of that can be seen in the high levels of unemployment among young people: long-term unemployment among young people has increased fourfold over the last year. No Minister should be smiling at a fact like that.

In opening the debate in such a positive way, Leanne Wood emphasised that we must act on the issues over which we have influence, while arguing robustly for new powers, such as borrowing powers.

Turning briefly to the amendments, we accept the amendments tabled in the name of Aled Roberts. They underline what we say in the motion, so they are to be welcomed. We also welcome Eluned Parrott's contribution. We will not support the Tory amendment. We would have accepted it as an addition, but we need more capital schemes—and you seek to delete that clause from our motion—in order to create jobs and training opportunities. Not many commentators disagree nowadays with the need for that investment.

Plaid Cymru also calls on the Government, despite all the real difficulties of the financial settlement, to convert more revenue spend into capital. That is one of the few levers that we have to boost the Welsh economy, relatively quickly and effectively. The Party of Wales believes that we have to be bold and radical; carrying on and hoping that something will turn up is not an option. If we are serious about being a small, clever nation, let us act like one.

This added spend will come to nothing unless that spend benefits companies based in Wales. I stress ‘companies based in Wales’—not those with a front door with a name plaque and a sham address, with the serious work and profit going elsewhere. If we increase the share of public contracts going to Wales-based companies by 25%, that is an extra £1 billion, with an estimated extra 50,000 jobs. This is serious stuff. However, the devil is in the detail. There are huge differences between the performances of local authorities, with the best achieving 70% of public tenders going to locally based companies, while the worst barely achieve 38%, according to the report that I read—16% according to Julie James.

SMEs have major concerns about the public procurement process. The massive pre qualification questionnaire documents are daunting and favour big companies, often from across the border. Framework agreements and bundling also often work against SMEs—a sector that employs a high percentage of the Welsh workforce.

Nick Ramsay: On that point regarding SMEs, in Northern Ireland, the figure of spend by councils with SMEs is 71%—here, it is 61%. Would you agree that that 71% would at least be an initial target for the Government to aim for in the medium term?

Alun Ffred Jones: Certainly, and that is already achieved by a few local authorities, as I said. However, there are other sections of the public sector that also need to pull their socks up.

I think that I need to address the issue that was raised by Ieuan Wyn Jones. The Government has to get its own house in order. The Government is already pushing local authorities to work across boundaries—for example, across north Wales—in the field of procurement, in order to get economies of scale. This can lead, inevitably, to bigger contracts that will favour the larger multinationals, often from outside Wales, while the crumbs, minus the profits, will be handed down to our SMEs. That is why we need a focus on these tenders and the commitment to train apprentices locally. I was pleased to hear Joyce Watson’s comments about Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd; that is an example, if I may say so, of the Party of Wales in action on the ground, ensuring that Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd put its tenders out in a favourable manner.

Competitive tendering is a good thing. We need to train our SMEs to go for it. However, the Government and local government need to ensure that actions and rhetoric go hand in hand. We in the Party of Wales believe that we have to aim high. While the UK economic climate is challenging, we need to be proactive and make our own weather.

Y Dirprwy Lywydd: Y cwestiwn yw a ddylid derbyn y cynnig heb ei ddiwygio. A oes unrhyw wrthwynebiad? Gwelaf fod Felly, gohiriaf y bledlais o dan yr eitem hon tan y cyfnod pleidleisio.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The proposal is that the motion without amendment be agreed. Does any Member object? I see that there are objections. Therefore, I will defer voting under this item until voting time.

*Gohiriwyd y pleidleisio tan y cyfnod pleidleisio.
Voting deferred until voting time.*

**Dadl Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru
Welsh Liberal Democrats Debate**

**Rheoleiddiwr Cymwysterau ac Arholiadau Annibynnol i Gymru
An Independent Qualifications and Examination Regulator for Wales**

Y Dirprwy Lywydd: Rwyf wedi dethol gwelliant 1 yn enw William Graham.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have selected amendment 1 in the name of William Graham.

Cynnig NDM5048 Aled Roberts

Motion NDM5048 Aled Roberts

Cynnig bod Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru:

To propose that the National Assembly for Wales:

Yn galw ar Lywodraeth Cymru i sefydlu rheoleiddiwr cymwysterau ac arholiadau annibynnol i Gymru.

Calls on the Welsh Government to establish an independent qualifications and examination regulator for Wales.

Aled Roberts: I move the motion.

I am pleased to be proposing this debate on behalf of the Welsh Liberal Democrats. In many ways, the backdrop to the debate are the events of the past month or so, but I think that it is right at this time that we consider whether an independent regulator is the best way forward. I thank the Conservatives for tabling their amendment, and I confirm that we will be supporting it.

I hope that the debate does not focus entirely on regrading GCSEs. We should not be taking the opportunity to vent our feelings on whether it was right or wrong to regrade, on how England should have acted or on how politicians have behaved. The real purpose of this debate is to talk about the future role of the regulator in Wales, and how we can ensure that the range of processes in place provides qualifications for Wales's young people that are rigidly, scrupulously and objectively maintained.

We all agree that we have some great teachers in Wales, and we also believe that we have talented and motivated youngsters ready to learn from them. Many of us here have been involved in local government. Many of us are, or have been, school governors. More importantly, as we heard yesterday, many of us are parents with a personal understanding of what this means to individual pupils, away from the political discussion regarding qualifications. Many of our memories of our school days and examination experiences, and perhaps the relief, in some instances, of a good pass mark, at times colour our judgment as far as that discussion is concerned.

In the cold light of day, the unseemly war of words that developed regarding the grading disparity did nothing, on either side, to help the pupils who had taken the exams. With the benefit of hindsight, it may be important that people work together, and I hope that the Minister does not take this motion as a criticism of his actions. I think that Kirsty made it perfectly clear on Monday that we believed, having considered the evidence, that the actions taken by the Minister in regrading were right. The difficulty that we have is that, given the discussions on both sides, and given the problems that we have, we need to consider, in the cold light of day, whether the arguments on both sides of the M4 will lead to greater problems in the medium to long term.

Bethan Jenkins: Will Nick Clegg make an apology with regard to this particular policy?

Aled Roberts: Nick Clegg is entitled to have a view on education in Wales, and to have a view on the WJEC, because—let us not forget—as far as this one particular subject is concerned, 34,000 students took the English language WJEC exam in Wales, but 84,000 students took that qualification in England. Therefore, it is quite right that English Ministers have a view with regard to the credibility of the WJEC.

I hope that we achieve a greater understanding today of the basis upon which we found ourselves in the situation that we did in July, because press releases and correspondence from the WJEC show that Ofqual and the Welsh Government, as regulator, instructed the WJEC following discussions in the early part of 2012 to make the marking more severe.

As I indicated yesterday, when agreement was reached between the Welsh Government and Ofqual in early 2012, the report released by the Minister indicated that the view of the Welsh Government at that stage was that there would be no significant impact on results. We need to understand on what basis that decision was reached. We also need to understand what work was carried out by Welsh Government officials acting as regulators—because we are discussing the role of an independent or Government regulator here today—between the early part of 2012 and July, when it would appear that they started to raise significant concerns regarding the agreement that had been reached in the early part of the year.

As Simon Thomas indicated yesterday, there is no reason why an independent regulator involved in discussions with Ofqual, as the English regulator, could not recommend to the Government, in the scenario that occurred in August, what it would recommend as far as actions are concerned. Surely, the separation of powers is to the benefit of everyone concerned, even the Minister, who has assumed responsibilities in this particular case. Putting the whole raft of education provision in the hands of the Government, and one department represented by one Minister, can create problems.

We have to accept that we, as parties across the Chamber in 2005, when the independent regulator in Wales was removed, expressed little concern. The concerns raised were with regard to the use of the finances in that particular case. However, there are difficulties when a Minister can create the policy, implement the curriculum, set the exams for that curriculum, set the standards for grading those exams and, this year, suggest in the first place to an exam board that it should tighten up the grade boundaries and then give an order to regrade the students' papers when there is concern about the impact of the agreement reached between the regulators.

Given the political pressure on any Minister to ensure improvements in grades in Wales, we have to ask, would the situation have been the same had the percentage points shown a difference the other way? Would a Minister for education, as regulator, have directed or ordered a regrade in those circumstances? The crux of the matter is the absence of a system that allows for checks and balances. I believe that the GCSE regrading incident might very well be the trigger for change. The current system fails to present a sense of detached even-handedness. Integrity of grades and qualifications for the future must be paramount.

It is extremely disappointing that the anomaly with the grade boundaries in English was not addressed sooner. It is clear that there were problems between the two systems. It was also reported last month that the former Ofqual chief regulator, Isabel Nisbet, raised the problem first in October 2009, when modular GCSEs were first introduced.

4.30 p.m.

I accept that the review of qualifications is currently under way. As Members, it is

important—as we have all indicated—that we should not try to tell the review board how to go about its business, nor should we prejudge the outcomes of its deliberations. We will have the opportunity to discuss its report later in the year, and I look forward to reading the consultation responses on the Government’s website as quickly as possible.

I hope that the debate today will not turn into a political game, but will be a serious attempt within a mature institution to debate whether or not the most reasonable step forward is to establish a truly arm’s-length regulator for the examination and qualification system in Wales for the benefit of all of our children.

Gwelliant 1—William Graham

Amendment 1—William Graham

Ychwanegu pwynt newydd ar ddiwedd y cynnig: *Add as new point at end of motion:*

Yn nodi pwysigrwydd didueddrwydd gwleidyddol wrth reoleiddio cymwysterau ac arholiadau. *Notes the importance of political impartiality in the regulation of qualifications and examinations.*

Suzy Davies: I move amendment 1 in the name of William Graham.

I thank the Welsh Liberal Democrats for managing to table this motion in the first week of term, especially as there was such a short time to respond to the Minister’s statement yesterday. In that statement, the Minister made a point of saying that the controversial mechanism to ensure comparable outcomes had been introduced at Ofqual’s insistence. Over the last year or so, the Minister has shared his amusement with us at being characterised as a cross between Stalin and Margaret Thatcher, so I hope that he will forgive me for finding it difficult to believe that he would have countenanced anybody, even one of an equal regulatory status, insisting on a process to which he took a contrary view. It makes me wonder how much he knew about what his officials were signing up to.

The WJEC, regardless of the location of its examinees, is clearly a Welsh institution, embedded in the landscape of a devolved area of competence. I find it unlikely that the Minister, even in his regulatory capacity, would meekly allow bullies from across the border to throw their weight around in this core component of the Welsh education system—and bullies from outside the Government, at that. Ofqual, the independent regulator from outside the Government, is of course a creation of the UK Labour Government. I am not suggesting for a minute that a Welsh Minister has to replicate the ideas of a UK Minister, but at least it clarifies for us that the Labour Party philosophy does not close the door on the principle of independent regulators. I therefore look forward to some thoughtful contributions from the Labour backbenchers in this debate.

Indeed, while Ofgem and Ofwat might have been set up by a Conservative Government, their responsibilities were extended by the subsequent Labour Government, which went on to create Ofcom—and all three of these identifiably independent regulators operate here. Welsh citizens do not seem to be asking for their powers to be transferred to the Government. That is just the tip of the iceberg. In England, or England and Wales and, in some cases, Wales only, there are already a large number of independent regulators in education, health, energy, law, finance, social care and telecoms. While England may historically have led on accepting the role of independent regulators, Members may be aware of the growing trend towards independent or at least arm’s-length regulators across the globe. India and Australia have embraced the independent regulation of higher education, for example. Scotland has just established its independent housing regulator. As we know, Scotland’s exams are already regulated by a separate non-departmental public body, albeit one that is sponsored by the Scottish Government’s learning directorate. In the case of energy, telecoms and even finance,

just about any major non-communist country you can think of has been listening to the likes of the International Telecommunication Union, which, while recognising that some regulators were more independent than others, said that,

‘Effective regulators are normally associated with being to some degree independent...Independence stimulates...confidence and reduces regulatory risk.’

This is a point that is echoed by the United Nations task force, which has also looked at regulators.

Of course, independent regulators can fail, most notably due to failures in Government scrutiny. However, independent regulators inspire confidence because as the United Nations has said, they are still subject to Government oversight, but are insulated from political intervention, or, more importantly, perhaps, being open to accusation of political intervention, and this is what underlines our amendment today. That is the cleft stick in which you find yourself, Minister. However adept you are at separating your regulatory role, there will always be room for doubt. Instead of a scrutiny role, you have chosen to directly police your own curriculum, exams and policies, and that does not allow for the level of public confidence that you need in the calibre of Welsh qualifications—whatever they are called or whatever they look like in the future.

Simon Thomas: I am grateful to Suzy Davies for giving way. Briefly, I hear what she says about independence, and I will be supporting the amendment that she has brought forward, but it is possible to have independence and not have political impartiality. I would like to hear her views on what Ofqual said and did before the committee in London in the last few weeks. Does she believe that Ofqual acted in a politically impartial way, although it is an independent regulator, and what lessons does she have for this debate from that?

Suzy Davies: I will concede that there are lessons to be learnt on both sides of the border on this and, although I would not want to give a particular view on what Ofqual said, I certainly think that the possibility of an independent inquiry should be considered.

This is a penalty that modern Government pays if it insists on drawing all the power to the centre when the climate is increasingly about independent delivery, subject to check through Government scrutiny. Labour was responsible for the absorption into Government of the functions of the Wales Tourist Board and the Welsh Development Agency, which led to a downturn in results and a downturn in public perceptions of creativity, credibility and confidence in those sectors in Wales. When this Assembly agreed to replace the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales as the regulator six years ago, it sowed the seeds for the same sad mistake for education. I now think that we should revisit that decision, and I welcome the Welsh Liberal Democrat motion for that reason.

Peter Black: On 22 November 2005, the Welsh Liberal Democrats supported the transfer of the functions of Education and Learning Wales and ACCAC to the Welsh Assembly Government. The rationale for the transfer was recurring savings of £10 million a year from 2009. I spoke in the debate that day and the Record shows that we, as Welsh Liberal Democrats, expressed reservations about the way in which the transfer was done, and the lack of detail about the future structures. When the idea of ACCAC being absorbed into the Government was first mooted, Anna Brychan of NAHT Cymru said,

‘We would want to be certain that there continues to be a robust qualifications and assessment service.’

There were concerns that the independence and perceived credibility of Wales’s exam awarding bodies, including the WJEC, could be undermined if they were regulated directly by

Government. That was said by ACCAC's council. The *Times Education Supplement* said that ACCAC's recognised and acknowledged independence was seen as beneficial, and that it protected Ministers from perceptions of excessive interference in areas which called for substantial professional inputs and judgments. Most notable were the views that the arm's-length arrangements also protected the Government from any possible accusations.

At the time, we were reassured that savings would be made and that further information would be available. Based on those assurances, we supported the Government. However, the regrading issue has highlighted the need to maintain an independent regulator in Wales. Despite the Minister's assurances in recent press reports that intervention would only occur in rare and exceptional circumstances, and that the Minister's role as regulator was at arm's length, it has nonetheless been difficult to watch the events that have been unfolding since the end of July without a sense of concern.

Let me reiterate the point that my colleague, Aled Roberts, made earlier: this is absolutely nothing to do with the rights or wrongs of the regrading. We believe that it was right to regrade in the present circumstances. However, that decision raises a number of questions and has longer term consequences. What was the role of the Welsh Government, for example, in the decision to move the goalposts in the first place? Did officials work with Ofqual on that, or worse, did they fail to provide an input, leaving the Minister to intervene at a later stage to correct the grading mechanisms for Welsh pupils?

Where do the Minister's actions and his subsequent war of words leave us now? We are, of course, awaiting a review of examinations in Wales, but it seems that we are on a course to go it alone in terms of qualifications at the age of 16. If that is the case, do we have the resources and the capacity to do that? Can the WJEC or its successor body sustain a Wales-only exam system for less than a third of the number of pupils who sat the WJEC GCSE English exam this year? How will that new regime be regulated? I expect that all of those questions will return when the review finally reports, but clearly the issue is now a moot one.

The regrading of GCSEs, in my view, has been used as a political football, and it is harming Wales's reputation. The use of social media in particular by the Minister to continuously harangue the UK Government—I am not disputing that it has responded in kind—has undermined the entire debate. The events of the past few weeks have been extremely difficult for everyone concerned, but the abiding memory is of a Minister who ordered the regrading of exam results in Wales. The events leading up to that direction show the need for a much more robust system of checks and balances in Wales, and I believe that that can be achieved only through the vigilance and scrutiny of a fully independent regulator. I hope that this motion will open up that debate and that, if the Government is not prepared to accept the motion now, we can look at the issue again when the review comes back. I hope that we would certainly be able to reopen the debate because, clearly, if we are to have a separate system in Wales, there is a much greater need for an independent regulator.

Simon Thomas: Hoffwn ddiolch i'r Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol am ddod â'r ddadl hon ger ein bron a dweud, wrth gychwyn, y byddwn ni ym Mhlaid Cymru yn cefnogi cynnig y Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol a gwelliant y Toriaid. Rwy'n arbennig o falch o weld y Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol yn dod â'r ddadl hon ger ein bron achos buont yn dawel iawn yn ystod yr helynt rhwng y Gweinidog yn y fan hon ac Ofqual a'r Gweinidog yn Llundain. Mae gennym benodiad newydd, Baroness Randerson, yn Swyddfa Cymru.

Simon Thomas: I thank the Liberal Democrats for bringing this debate forward this afternoon. At the outset, I want to say that we, the Party of Wales, will be supporting the Liberal Democrat motion and the Conservative amendment. I am particularly pleased to see the Liberal Democrats bringing this debate forward because they have been very quiet during the dispute between the Minister here and Ofqual and the Minister in London. We have a new appointment in Baroness Randerson in the

Mae ganddi hi gyfrifoldeb arbennig dros addysg yng Nghymru, mae'n debyg, ond tawelwch pur a gawsom ni gan Jenny Randerson yn ystod y cyfnod hwnnw. Yn anffodus, roedd ymyrraeth Nick Clegg yn ddiinstriol ac yn negyddol iawn. Beth bynnag oedd natur y ddadl, roedd yr ymyrraeth honno yn anffodus, a dweud y lleiaf, ac arweiniodd at sefyllfa a oedd yn fwy tanbaid nag a oedd angen iddi fod.

Eglurais i ddoe beth oedd teimlad Plaid Cymru ynglŷn â gweithredoedd y Gweinidog. Rydym ni'n eu cefnogi nhw 100%. Dyma gyfle i ddweud ychydig mwy ynglŷn â beth yr ydym ni'n teimlo fel plaid yw'r ffordd ymlaen i'r Llywodraeth. Hoffwn i ddechrau gyda'r ffaith ein bod ni eisiau gweld canlyniad yr adolygiad mae'r Llywodraeth wedi ei gynnal ar y pwnc hwn. Mae Plaid Cymru, yn sicr, wedi cyflwyno ei ddadleuon i'r adolygiad. Fel Aled Roberts, rwy'n edrych ymlaen at weld yr holl gyflwyniadau ar y wefan yn fuan iawn. Rwy'n edrych ymlaen yn arbennig at ddarllen cyflwyniad y Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol ar y wefan achos rwy'n siŵr eu bod nhw wedi cyflwyno ymateb ffurfiol, cynhwysfawr i'r adolygiad, onid ydych, Aled?

Yn y cyfamser, mae cyfle i edrych ar yr egwyddorion a ddylai fod tu ôl ac o dan unrhyw system gynhwysfawr o arholi yng Nghymru a rheoli arholi yng Nghymru. Yma, ym Mhlaid Cymru, rydym am weld system gyfundrefn arholi sy'n berthnasol i bobl ifanc; hynny yw, system na fydd yn gadael—yn wahanol i'r hyn sy'n cael ei gynnig yn Lloegr ar hyn o bryd—rhai pobl ifanc heb gymwysterau o gwbl achos nid ydynt yn gallu sefyll un arholiad, ar ôl dwy flynedd, am dair awr. Rydym eisiau system sy'n cynnwys pobl, yn annog pobl ifanc i fod yn rhan o'r system, ac sy'n asesu eu gwaith wrth iddynt ddysgu ac wrth iddynt ymarfer sgiliau—ac nid yn unig y sgil o sefyll arholiad. I fod yn glir, mae sgiliau'r gymdeithas fodern yn cynnwys y gallu i gydweithio â phobl eraill, y gallu i gydweithio ar brosiectau gyda phobl eraill, a'r gallu i ddangos eich bod yn gallu gweithredu yn rhan o dîm. Mae'n wahanol iawn i fod yn gallu dal yn eich pen gwybodaeth gwerth tair awr o arholiad. Dyna'r sefyllfa sydd gyda ni nawr. Mae

Wales Office. Apparently, she has a special responsibility for education in Wales, but there was nothing but silence from Jenny Randerson during that period. Unfortunately, Nick Clegg's intervention was very destructive and negative. Whatever the nature of the debate, that intervention was extremely unfortunate to say the least and led to a situation that was more contentious than was required in these circumstances.

Yesterday, I explained what Plaid Cymru's views are on the actions of the Minister. We support them 100%. This is an opportunity to say a little more about what we as a party feel is the way forward for the Government. I would like to start with the fact that we want to see the outcome of the Government's review of this issue. Plaid Cymru has certainly put forward its views to that review. Like Aled Roberts, I look forward to seeing all the submissions on the internet very soon. I am particularly looking forward to reading the Liberal Democrat submission on the website because I am sure that they will have responded formally in a comprehensive manner to this review, have you not, Aled?

In the meantime, there is an opportunity to look at the principles that should underpin any comprehensive system of examination in Wales and regulation of examinations in Wales. Here, in Plaid Cymru, we want to see an examination system that is relevant to young people; that is, a system that would not—unlike the system that is currently being proposed in England—leave some young people without any qualifications at all because they cannot take one three-hour exam after a period of two years. We want a system that includes people, that encourages young people to be part of it, and that assesses their work as they learn and as they practice skills—and not just the skill of sitting an examination. Let us be clear that, in a modern society, skills include the ability to collaborate with others, the ability to collaborate on projects with others, and the ability to show that you can work as part of a team. It is very different to being able to retain three hours-worth of information in your head when sitting an exam. That is the situation that we have currently. We need a

angen system sydd yn datblygu'r sgiliau sydd gan ddysgwyr sy'n drosglwyddadwy—yn drosglwyddadwy o weithle i weithle, o goleg i goleg, ac o genedl i genedl. Felly, mae'n bwysig bod y system arholi yng Nghymru yn cael ei derbyn gan rieni a disgyblion yng Nghymru, ond hefyd gan bobl y tu hwnt i Gymru, yn Lloegr a gweddill Prydain, ac Ewrop yn wir. Mae'n bwysig eu bod yn derbyn bod gennym system arholi yng Nghymru sydd gyfwerth ag unrhyw system yng ngorllewin Ewrop. Mae'n rhaid i'r system honno feddu ar y balans cywir o addysgu dysgwyr a gwneud yn siŵr bod dysgwyr yn dysgu eu hunain. Rhaid gwneud yn siŵr ein bod yn mesur cyrhaeddiad disgyblion mewn ffordd teg—dyna oedd wrth wraidd y sefyllfa yr ydym wedi bod ynddi yn ystod yr wythnosau diwethaf—a gwneud yn siŵr bod gan bob disgybl y sgiliau sylfaenol wrth adael coleg neu ysgol i fynd ymlaen i waith pellach.

Rwy'n croesawu, er enghraifft, lansiad y cynllun rhifedd gan y Gweinidog heddiw yn Abertawe, achos mae gwaith difrifol gyda ni i'w wneud i sicrhau bod y sgiliau sylfaenol hynny gan bob un o'n pobl ifanc ni. Yn ôl ym mis Mai, a dyfynnaf fy hunan yn Saesneg i fod yn glir, dywedais:

4.45 p.m.

'Here in Wales, the Minister sets the curriculum, the Minister sets the banding and the Minister will decide on qualifications. Doesn't market regulation demand a Welsh examination regulator?'

Dyna, i mi, y peth mawr sydd wedi digwydd ers i ACCAC ddod i ben. Mae marchnadeiddio'r system arholi wedi cynyddu yn aruthrol ac mae gwerthu arholiadau y tu hwnt i Gymru ac o fewn Cymru wedi bod yn rhan eithaf newydd o'r system yn ystod y degawd diwethaf. Nid wyf yn credu bod neb wedi rhagweld cymaint o fusnes fyddai hyn. Pan fo busnes fel hyn yn gadael pobl ifanc i lawr, mae'n adeg i gael *regulator* cryf ar y busnes. Dyna egwyddorion sosialaeth a'r blaidd Lafur o ran unrhyw fath o farchnad a dyna'r hyn yr hoffwn weld yn y cyd-destun hwn hefyd.

system that develops the skills that learners have that are transferable—transferable from workplace to workplace, from college to college, and from nation to nation. Therefore, it is important that the examination system in Wales is accepted by parents and pupils in Wales, but also by people beyond Wales, in England and the rest of the UK, and Europe. It is important that they accept that we have an examination system in Wales that is as good as any system in western Europe. That system must also have the correct balance between teaching learners and ensuring that learners learn on their own. We should ensure that we measure pupil attainment in an equitable manner—that was the root cause of the situation that we have been facing over the past few weeks—and ensure that every pupil has basic skills as they leave school or college and move on into the workforce.

I welcome, for example, the Minister's numeracy programme, launched today in Swansea, because we have a great deal of work to do to ensure that all young people have those basic skills. Back in May, and I will quote myself in English to be clear, I said:

That, for me, is the major thing that has happened since ACCAC came to an end. The marketisation of the examination system has increased significantly and the selling of examinations beyond Wales and within Wales has been a relatively new part of the system during the past decade. I do not think that anyone had anticipated how much of a business this would be. When such a business lets young people down, it is time for a strong regulator of the business. Those are the principles of socialism and the Labour Party with regard to any kind of market and that is what I would like to see in this context also.

William Powell: I am delighted to take part in this important debate today, but, in doing so, I have several interests to declare. First, our eldest son sat GCSEs this year, including English with the WJEC, although he was not directly affected by the regrading exercise. Secondly, it

has been my privilege for over 25 years to be involved in education—I first taught GCSE and A-level back in 1987. Finally, I regret to inform colleagues that I am an OCR-accredited examiner, although I have not practiced in the last few years.

Throughout my teaching career I have done my best to invest time and effort into guiding young people through the education system to the best of my ability and out into the world with the qualifications that will best equip them for the future. Critical at all times was the credibility and the very currency of the exams that each cohort of pupils was sitting. For the most part, that credibility was never in doubt, although the emergence of new-fangled and hybrid subjects has to an extent, in the view of some, eroded entries for more challenging subjects, for which it is perceived that it is more difficult to obtain those crucial high grades. Critically, the distance between what Sir Robin Day memorably described as here-today-and-gone-tomorrow politicians and the examinations process was key to maintaining the integrity of the whole system. I witnessed at first hand the soul-destroying effects on young people of throwaway remarks reported in the tabloid press back in June by the English Secretary of State on the status of GCSEs. Rarely has a ministerial intervention been more ignorant or ill-timed, as most of the class of 2012 were coming to the end of their GCSE marathon and others were still in the exam hall. We are all too familiar with the denouement of events since midsummer, and particularly since Thursday 23 August, a day that is etched in some of our memories.

I am not standing here today, any more than my colleagues Aled Roberts or Peter Black are, to challenge the decision to initiate the regrading exercise in Wales. However, in this area of policy, as elsewhere, perception is everything. The political profile and the very zeal of the Welsh Government response on this issue is not without cost and it seems to me that a line has been crossed, however sincere the motivation may have been. This is a time for cool heads and calm reflection. It is a time for an appropriate distance to be placed between the qualifications themselves and those at the head of the political process. In short, it is time to make the case for an independent, arm's-length regulator for qualifications and examinations here in Wales. That would serve to protect our students, our teachers and our educational institutions from the distorting effects of the marketplace in competing qualifications, which has done us few favours over recent years. At the same time, it would help us uphold confidence in qualifications and examinations in Wales, which is so vital to our future success. For all these reasons, but most of all for the sake of our young people, I urge you to support the motion today.

The Minister for Education and Skills (Leighton Andrews): We will not be supporting the motion, but we will be supporting the 'independent'. The events of the past few weeks have shown that the regulatory arrangements in Wales have enabled prompt action to be taken in the interests of our students. England has a regulator that sits outside Government, but I have seen no evidence that the structure there has helped students or schools this summer. I understand that local authorities, teaching unions and schools have begun a legal challenge against Ofqual's refusal to regrade GCSE English papers in England. A month after provisional grades were issued, the uncertainty for thousands of students in England is not resolved, and the local authorities taking legal action include two Conservative local authorities and one Liberal Democrat authority. The cabinet member for education in Kent County Council, a Mr Mike Whiting, said that regarding

'the papers, as they are planning to do in Wales, would avoid asking Kent's young people to go through the stress of another exam'.

He is a Conservative.

The Conservative cabinet member for education in Suffolk, Councillor Graham Newman, said

‘From the evidence we have, it seems clear that the goal posts have been moved without warning’.

I think that there are serious questions about Ofqual’s independence from Government, and we have seen that in recent weeks, particularly under the new chair appointed by the Secretary of State in England in 2010. Interestingly, in April 2010, the leader of the Liberal Democrats said that Ofqual was not fully independent. On that, at least, I agree with Nick, and I think that we have seen it become less independent in recent years.

Peter Black was right to say that the Liberal Democrats supported ACCAC coming into the Government when the Welsh Labour Government in the second Assembly took the decision to reduce the number of quangos in Wales and to merge the functions of several into Government. However, I would say that there are significant benefits to having ministerial involvement in regulation. As elected Members, Ministers have political accountability for qualifications. We do not need to hide behind an external regulator. There is separation. While the Welsh Ministers have responsibility for functions relating to relevant qualifications under section 30 of the Education Act 1997, those functions are fulfilled on a day-to-day basis by officials. Ministers are involved only with decisions at the highest level and take direct action only on an exceptional basis. This summer’s GCSE English was an exceptional case, on which we were able to respond quickly and decisively to correct an injustice to learners in Wales. We learned yesterday that another of the political parties in the Chamber supported the regrading action that I took. This afternoon, we have learned that the Welsh Liberal Democrats support the regrading action that I took. That suggests not that the system has failed, but that it has succeeded.

I am not discounting further development in the future, but, before we decide on the most appropriate means of regulation, we need to know what we will be regulating, that is, whether it is to remain a market or to become a monopoly. Last December, partly in response to allegations regarding awarding body examination seminars, I set up an external review panel to consider the structure of the general qualifications market in Wales. That reported to me before the summer, and I issued a written statement. I am surprised that none of the other speakers in this debate so far have referred to the work of that review panel. I was concerned about the impact of those allegations on the security of examinations and on public confidence in our qualifications. My main concern was, and remains, that the structure should deliver for our young people and contribute to driving up standards. The panel’s report was published in May. It highlighted the complexity of the issues involved and the contrasting views of stakeholders in relation to key issues, such as the impact of competition within the examination system.

The panel’s recommendations at that time did not lead me to believe that any immediate changes to the market structure for general qualifications in Wales were needed. I am considering whether any changes are needed for the future. The report and recommendations of that review will feed into the review of 14-19 qualifications in Wales, which is being chaired by Huw Evans OBE and led by my colleague, the Deputy Minister for Skills, who set up the review a year ago. That review has been considering how we can achieve our vision of qualifications that are understood and valued and that meet the needs of young people and the Welsh economy. It has involved months of extensive stakeholder engagement and evidence-gathering, including a 12-week consultation on a broad range of issues, including the future of regulation in Wales. Our priority is to ensure that the best interests of our young people are the focus in any decisions that we take. We will base our review of 14-19 qualifications in Wales on evidence, and this consultative approach has been welcomed by professions in the field, by teaching unions, and by employer organisations. It contrasts markedly with the approach that has been taken elsewhere. These decisions cannot be rushed and Welsh Ministers are committed to avoiding significant changes to our qualifications or regulatory

arrangements until after the outcomes of the review are known. We believe that GCSEs are good qualifications. We support GCSEs, just as the Minister for Education in Northern Ireland supports them, and we deplore the talking down of those qualifications, particularly at the time when many thousands of young people across Wales, England and Northern Ireland were taking them. The review of qualifications will report to Ministers in November this year. We will formally respond to that report and the report on the structure of the general qualifications market in Wales at the same time early next year.

I said that three parties now support my action in directing WJEC to regrade GCSE English language. Now is the opportunity for the fourth party in this Chamber to say what its position is. Would the leader of the Welsh Conservatives now like to say whether or not his party supports my action on regrading?

Andrew R.T. Davies: What I will not support is you abdicating your role as regulator and denigrating the cooperation that you had from the regulator in England. Today, you are trying to distance yourself. You are the regulator in Wales, and you are responsible.

Leighton Andrews: He will not say what is position is, although he said on the radio, on BBC Wales on 11 September, that, if there was an injustice, it should be addressed. He went on the radio and attacked the report that my officials had produced, despite the fact that he had not read it, and admitted so on the radio. He also denied that I had published a written statement on the previous day, when I had. What kind of bumbling idiot goes on the BBC and attacks a report he has not even read? [ASSEMBLY MEMBERS: ‘Oh.’]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Andrew R.T. Davies *rose*—

Leighton Andrews: It is that kind of bumbling idiot. [ASSEMBLY MEMBERS: ‘Oh.’]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. [*Interruption.*] Order. I will have quiet and I will not have Members calling each other ‘idiot’. Please withdraw that remark, Minister.

Leighton Andrews: I withdraw the ‘idiot’.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please deliver your final sentence, Minister. Sit down, Mr Davies, please.

Leighton Andrews: I was giving way to the leader of the opposition.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You do not have time. Please conclude.

Leighton Andrews: We are very clear today that the action that we took was the right action for Welsh students. We are also clear today that the regulatory system in Wales has worked; in England, it has not.

Kirsty Williams: I thank Members for their contributions to the debate this afternoon. The last exchange between the leader of the Conservatives and the Minister was just a repeat of what we have seen all summer. Sometimes, I think that a little less testosterone and member-waving in politics would go a long way towards addressing some of the serious consequences of that behaviour. Regardless of who is shouting and calling each other names, whichever politicians they are, it does nothing to enhance the reputation of politics or the ability of politicians to do the right thing by their constituents. The right thing to do by our young people and learners is to provide them with the opportunity to study for and acquire a qualification that has real currency—a qualification that allows them to go on to further study,

if that is what they wish to do, and a qualification that sends a very clear signal to a potential employer, whether in Wales, across the border in England or anywhere across the world, that that student has been able robustly to acquire skills and knowledge that they will be able to apply to the job.

5.00 p.m.

It is clear that, since the decision to abolish the regulator in 2005—a decision that was supported across the board—things have moved on. Concerns were raised about that decision in 2005 but, on balance, it was decided that it was the right step forward. Of course, since 2005, we have seen a growing divergence between the English and Welsh systems. It is a natural and not unwelcome consequence of devolution and the ability of the Chamber to make the right decisions on behalf of the education system in Wales. That very divergence, it seems, was the cause of part of the problem that created this situation in the first place.

The ongoing qualifications review, under the auspices of the Deputy Minister, will no doubt make that divergence even greater, although I was somewhat bemused by the fact that the Minister for education should call for it to be evidence based and for us to wait to see what the review has to say, only to go on to be fulsome in his praise for the current GCSE system. If it is all about the evidence that the review will receive and consider, let us wait and see what it comes up with.

Leighton Andrews: I was supporting the remarks of your colleague, William Powell, who spoke up for GCSEs in the course of his speech and criticised the Secretary of State in England for his attacks on GCSEs when young people were taking them. I think that it is important to stand up for the quality of the GCSE qualifications that young people in Wales have taken since the 1980s.

Kirsty Williams: You were not re-quoting my colleague; what you were doing, not unreasonably, was stating your view. What I am saying is that if this review of qualifications is to be evidence based, and is to look afresh at what is best for Welsh students, then maybe we should all wait, including you, Minister, to see what the review has to say. Whichever qualifications our students sit in the future, we need to know that they have been overseen and regulated by an independent body.

As outlined by Simon Thomas on behalf of Plaid Cymru, the fact that the Minister at present sits at the top of the entire Welsh education system presents us with some real problems. Whether those problems manifest themselves as they have done this summer, or whether in future they do not, the perception will be that there is an unholy alliance between the regulation and the prospect or fear of political interference. There is a simple way to get rid of that, and it is to create a robust, independent, Welsh regulator of this system. Just because the English system is not, in the eyes of the Minister, robust or free from political interference, that is not an argument to say that we in Wales are incapable of creating one that is free from political interference and can be independent.

Following the debacle that we have gone through this summer, when we are looking at what qualifications in Wales will look like in the future, I think that now is the time to revisit that decision of 2005 and to really think about the best way of ensuring the currency of qualifications. On behalf of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, we feel that the best way of achieving that is by re-establishing an independent regulator. It would give us the confidence that we need and the confidence that children, teachers and parents need in the robustness of that system. I hope that the Minister will be as good as his word and will use this opportunity to reflect and to see what the best way forward is, and not simply rule things out in the heat of the circumstances, as seen in recent weeks. I hope that the Chamber will support the Liberal Democrat motion day.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The proposal is to agree the motion without amendment. Does any Member object? I see that there is an objection. I therefore defer voting until voting time. Voting time will now follow. Before we proceed, are there three Members who wish for the bell to be rung? I see that there are not.

*Gohiriwyd y pleidleisio tan y cyfnod pleidleisio.
Voting deferred until voting time.*

Cyfnod Pleidleisio Voting Time

*Cynnig NDM5049: O blaid 19, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 32.
Motion NDM5049: For 19, Abstain 0, Against 32.*

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

Asghar, Mohammad
Davies, Andrew R.T.
Davies, Byron
Davies, Jocelyn
Davies, Paul
Davies, Suzy
Finch-Saunders, Janet
George, Russell
Graham, William
Gruffydd, Llyr Huws
Isherwood, Mark
Jenkins, Bethan
Jones, Alun Ffred
Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Millar, Darren
Ramsay, Nick
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Thomas, Simon
Wood, Leanne

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

Andrews, Leighton
Antoniw, Mick
Black, Peter
Chapman, Christine
Cuthbert, Jeff
Davies, Alun
Davies, Keith
Drakeford, Mark
Evans, Rebecca
Gething, Vaughan
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Griffiths, Lesley
Hart, Edwina
Hedges, Mike
Hutt, Jane
James, Julie
Jones, Ann
Jones, Carwyn
Lewis, Huw
Mewies, Sandy
Morgan, Julie
Parrott, Eluned
Powell, William
Price, Gwyn R.
Rathbone, Jenny
Rees, David
Roberts, Aled
Skates, Kenneth
Thomas, Gwenda
Watson, Joyce
Williams, Kirsty

*Gwrthodwyd y cynnig.
Motion not agreed.*

*Gwelliant 1 i NDM5049: O blaid 51, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 0.
Amendment 1 to NDM5049: For 51, Abstain 0, Against 0.*

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

Andrews, Leighton
Antoniw, Mick

Asghar, Mohammad
 Black, Peter
 Chapman, Christine
 Cuthbert, Jeff
 Davies, Alun
 Davies, Andrew R.T.
 Davies, Byron
 Davies, Jocelyn
 Davies, Paul
 Davies, Suzy
 Drakeford, Mark
 Evans, Rebecca
 Finch-Saunders, Janet
 George, Russell
 Gething, Vaughan
 Graham, William
 Gregory, Janice
 Griffiths, John
 Griffiths, Lesley
 Gruffydd, Llyr Huws
 Hart, Edwina
 Hedges, Mike
 Hutt, Jane
 Isherwood, Mark
 James, Julie
 Jenkins, Bethan
 Jones, Alun Ffred
 Jones, Ann
 Jones, Carwyn
 Jones, Elin
 Jones, Ieuan Wyn
 Lewis, Huw
 Mewies, Sandy
 Millar, Darren
 Morgan, Julie
 Parrott, Eluned
 Powell, William
 Price, Gwyn R.
 Ramsay, Nick
 Rathbone, Jenny
 Rees, David
 Roberts, Aled
 Skates, Kenneth
 Thomas, Gwenda
 Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
 Thomas, Simon
 Watson, Joyce
 Williams, Kirsty
 Wood, Leanne

*Derbyniwyd y gwelliant.
Amendment agreed.*

Cynnig NDM5049 fel y'i diwygiwyd:

Motion NDM5049 as amended:

Mae Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru:

The National Assembly for Wales:

Yn gresynu nad yw 'Rhaglen Lywodraethu' Llywodraeth Cymru yn cyflawni i bobl Cymru.

Regrets that the Welsh Government's 'Programme for Government' is not delivering for the people of Wales.

Yn nodi mai un o nodau'r Rhaglen Lywodraethu yw 'lleihau effaith amddifadedd ar gyrhaeddiad addysgol', ac yn credu y

Notes that an aim of the Programme for Government is 'to reduce the impact of deprivation on educational achievement' and

dylai hyn fod yn flaenoriaeth dros y flwyddyn nesaf. *believes this should be a priority over the next year.*

Cynnig NDM5049 fel y'i diwygiwyd: O blaid 24, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 27.
Motion NDM5049 as amended: For 24, Abstain 0, Against 27.

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

Asghar, Mohammad
 Black, Peter
 Davies, Andrew R.T.
 Davies, Byron
 Davies, Jocelyn
 Davies, Paul
 Davies, Suzy
 Finch-Saunders, Janet
 George, Russell
 Graham, William
 Gruffydd, Llyr Huws
 Isherwood, Mark
 Jenkins, Bethan
 Jones, Elin
 Jones, Ieuan Wyn
 Millar, Darren
 Parrott, Eluned
 Powell, William
 Ramsay, Nick
 Roberts, Aled
 Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
 Thomas, Simon
 Williams, Kirsty
 Wood, Leanne

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

Andrews, Leighton
 Antoniw, Mick
 Chapman, Christine
 Cuthbert, Jeff
 Davies, Alun
 Davies, Keith
 Drakeford, Mark
 Evans, Rebecca
 Gething, Vaughan
 Gregory, Janice
 Griffiths, John
 Griffiths, Lesley
 Hart, Edwina
 Hedges, Mike
 Hutt, Jane
 James, Julie
 Jones, Ann
 Jones, Carwyn
 Lewis, Huw
 Mewies, Sandy
 Morgan, Julie
 Price, Gwyn R.
 Rathbone, Jenny
 Rees, David
 Skates, Kenneth
 Thomas, Gwenda
 Watson, Joyce

Gwrthodwyd cynnig NDM5049 fel y'i diwygiwyd.
Motion NDM5049 as amended not agreed.

Cynnig NDM5050: O blaid 36, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 16.
Motion NDM5050: For 36, Abstain 0, Against 16.

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

Andrews, Leighton
 Antoniw, Mick
 Chapman, Christine
 Cuthbert, Jeff
 Davies, Alun
 Davies, Jocelyn
 Davies, Keith
 Drakeford, Mark
 Evans, Rebecca
 Gething, Vaughan
 Gregory, Janice
 Griffiths, John
 Griffiths, Lesley
 Gruffydd, Llyr Huws
 Hart, Edwina
 Hedges, Mike
 Hutt, Jane
 James, Julie

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

Asghar, Mohammad
 Black, Peter
 Davies, Andrew R.T.
 Davies, Byron
 Davies, Paul
 Davies, Suzy
 Finch-Saunders, Janet
 George, Russell
 Graham, William
 Isherwood, Mark
 Millar, Darren
 Parrott, Eluned
 Powell, William
 Ramsay, Nick
 Roberts, Aled
 Williams, Kirsty

Jenkins, Bethan
Jones, Alun Ffred
Jones, Ann
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Lewis, Huw
Mewies, Sandy
Morgan, Julie
Price, Gwyn R.
Rathbone, Jenny
Rees, David
Skates, Kenneth
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Thomas, Simon
Watson, Joyce
Wood, Leanne

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Cynnig NDM5048: O blaid 14, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 38.
Motion NDM5048: For 14, Abstain 0, Against 38.*

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

Black, Peter
Davies, Jocelyn
Gruffydd, Llyr Huws
Jenkins, Bethan
Jones, Alun Ffred
Jones, Elin
Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Parrott, Eluned
Powell, William
Roberts, Aled
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Thomas, Simon
Williams, Kirsty
Wood, Leanne

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

Andrews, Leighton
Antoniw, Mick
Asghar, Mohammad
Chapman, Christine
Cuthbert, Jeff
Davies, Alun
Davies, Andrew R.T.
Davies, Byron
Davies, Keith
Davies, Paul
Davies, Suzy
Drakeford, Mark
Evans, Rebecca
Finch-Saunders, Janet
George, Russell
Gething, Vaughan
Graham, William
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Griffiths, Lesley
Hart, Edwina
Hedges, Mike
Hutt, Jane
Isherwood, Mark
James, Julie
Jones, Ann
Jones, Carwyn
Lewis, Huw
Mewies, Sandy
Millar, Darren
Morgan, Julie
Price, Gwyn R.
Ramsay, Nick
Rathbone, Jenny
Rees, David
Skates, Kenneth
Thomas, Gwenda
Watson, Joyce

*Gwrthodwyd y cynnig.
Motion not agreed.*

*Gwelliant 1 i NDM5048: O blaid 51, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 0.
Amendment 1 to NDM5048: For 51, Abstain 0, Against 0.*

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

Andrews, Leighton
Antoniw, Mick
Asghar, Mohammad
Black, Peter
Chapman, Christine
Cuthbert, Jeff
Davies, Alun
Davies, Byron
Davies, Jocelyn
Davies, Keith
Davies, Paul
Davies, Suzy
Drakeford, Mark
Evans, Rebecca
Finch-Saunders, Janet
George, Russell
Gething, Vaughan
Graham, William
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Griffiths, Lesley
Gruffydd, Llyr Huws
Hart, Edwina
Hedges, Mike
Hutt, Jane
Isherwood, Mark
James, Julie
Jenkins, Bethan
Jones, Alun Ffred
Jones, Ann
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Lewis, Huw
Mewies, Sandy
Millar, Darren
Morgan, Julie
Parrott, Eluned
Powell, William
Price, Gwyn R.
Ramsay, Nick
Rathbone, Jenny
Rees, David
Roberts, Aled
Skates, Kenneth
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Thomas, Simon
Watson, Joyce
Williams, Kirsty
Wood, Leanne

*Derbyniwyd y gwelliant.
Amendment agreed.*

Cynnig NDM5048 fel y'i diwygiwyd:

Motion NDM5048 as amended:

Cynnig bod Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru:

To propose that the National Assembly for Wales:

Yn galw ar Lywodraeth Cymru i sefydlu rheoleiddiwr cymwysterau ac arholiadau annibynnol i Gymru.

Calls on the Welsh Government to establish an independent qualifications and examination regulator for Wales.

Yn nodi pwysigrwydd didueddrwydd gwleidyddol wrth reoleiddio cymwysterau ac arholiadau.

Notes the importance of political impartiality in the regulation of qualifications and examinations.

Cynnig NDM5048 fel y'i diwygiwyd: O blaid 25, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 27.

Motion NDM5048 as amended: For 25, Abstain 0, Against 27.

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

Asghar, Mohammad
Black, Peter
Davies, Andrew R.T.
Davies, Byron
Davies, Jocelyn
Davies, Paul
Davies, Suzy
Finch-Saunders, Janet
George, Russell
Graham, William
Gruffydd, Llyr Huws
Isherwood, Mark
Jenkins, Bethan
Jones, Alun Ffred
Jones, Elin
Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Millar, Darren
Parrott, Eluned
Powell, William
Ramsay, Nick
Roberts, Aled
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Thomas, Simon
Williams, Kirsty
Wood, Leanne

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

Andrews, Leighton
Antoniw, Mick
Chapman, Christine
Cuthbert, Jeff
Davies, Alun
Davies, Keith
Drakeford, Mark
Evans, Rebecca
Gething, Vaughan
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Griffiths, Lesley
Hart, Edwina
Hedges, Mike
Hutt, Jane
James, Julie
Jones, Ann
Jones, Carwyn
Lewis, Huw
Mewies, Sandy
Morgan, Julie
Price, Gwyn R.
Rathbone, Jenny
Rees, David
Skates, Kenneth
Thomas, Gwenda
Watson, Joyce

Gwrthodwyd cynnig NDM5048 fel y'i diwygiwyd.

Motion NDM5048 as amended not agreed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Will those Members who are now leaving please do so quickly and quietly?

Dadl Fer Short Debate

Lles Anifeiliaid Adeg eu Lladd Animal Welfare at the Time of Slaughter

Rebecca Evans: I am grateful to Members for their interest in this debate, and I am pleased

to offer Byron Davies, William Powell, Mohammad Asghar and Ken Skates the opportunity to contribute.

I spent the summer recess canvassing widely for views on how we can promote good practice and ensure high standards of animal welfare at the time of slaughter in Wales. I want to record my thanks to all those individuals who shared their views with me, as well as the organisations, including Animal Aid, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Freedom Food, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, Hybu Cig Cymru, the National Farmers Union Cymru and the Farmers Union of Wales, which collected the views of its members. I am also grateful to the staff of Dunbia abattoir in Llanybydder for hosting a very comprehensive visit of its Freedom Food-accredited abattoir and meat-processing facility.

This debate on animal welfare at the time of slaughter is timely. From 1 January next year, a new European Council regulation will come into force laying down the main requirements to protect animals at the time of killing. I am aware that the Welsh Government is currently consulting on how it will implement this regulation, so I appreciate that the Minister will be very limited in how he is able to respond to the debate today. I do hope, however, that he will take the issues raised in this debate into account when determining the way forward. If there are issues that fall outside the scope of the Welsh Government, I would be grateful if the Minister could raise them with his colleagues at Westminster or with his European colleagues.

I will begin by saying that I want to see a strong and robust slaughter industry in Wales. The industry is an important employer, directly employing thousands of people and often providing vital jobs in our rural communities, and supporting many hundreds of other local jobs, for example in Welsh haulage firms. It is also important for animal welfare that livestock travels for as short a time as possible between farm and slaughter.

Growing up, it was the horrible practice of live animal exports that first ignited my passion for animal welfare. Like others, I celebrated when, a couple of weeks ago, Thanet District Council finally put a stop to live exports from the Port of Ramsgate after 43 sheep had to be destroyed because of poor welfare standards. At the time, it was the last port in Britain to be part of this trade, but I put on record my deep disappointment that, in the past few days, the Port of Ipswich has now opened its gates to live exports. I hope that Members will agree that this ugly and unnecessary trade will never be welcome in Wales.

Between 2009 and 2011, Animal Aid secretly filmed inside nine slaughterhouses in England, and found serious breaches of animal welfare laws inside eight of them. I have watched the distressing footage, which includes acts of outright cruelty, such as animals being kicked in the face, stamped on, picked up by their ears or fleeces and thrown, as well as the malicious use of electric tongs. It also shows negligence, whereby animals are improperly stunned, or stunned and allowed to regain consciousness before killing.

I want to make it clear that none of the filming took place in Welsh abattoirs, but since the breaches documented were so widespread, and since Wales operates under the same regulatory system, it does challenge us to explore how we can ensure that welfare standards across Wales are as high as we want them to be. I will focus my contribution today on how we can ensure that abuse and negligence are never features of the slaughter industry here in Wales, namely through the use of closed-circuit television cameras and appropriate training and recruitment.

The Food Standards Agency and animal welfare organisations across the board have endorsed the use of CCTV cameras as a valuable way in which animal welfare can be protected and monitored. The FSA's official veterinarians are neither required nor expected to observe the

slaughter of every animal. Indeed, their role spans the whole process, from inspecting animals arriving for slaughter to checking carcasses. Thousands of animals can pass through an abattoir every day.

Animal welfare organisations suggest that the biggest risk to animal welfare at slaughter takes place at the point of stunning. However, many stun pens are inaccessible to vets, so they simply cannot see what is going on. On my visit to Dunbia abattoir, I saw how CCTV is being used to very good effect in crucial areas of the abattoir, including during stunning and killing. I heard how slaughter staff do not feel threatened by it. In fact, it offers good slaughter staff protection in carrying out their work. Increasing numbers of slaughterhouses are already using CCTV, and this is driven in part by individual businesses and in part by the major retailers, both independently and through their assurance schemes.

This is a situation in which we politicians are playing catch-up to the major supermarkets. Supermarkets know that CCTV makes economic sense, because consumer confidence is hard won and easily lost. I am pleased that the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and European Programmes has stayed in the Chamber for this debate. Speaking at a conference ahead of the recent Abergavenny Food Festival, he said that

‘Consumer confidence in our excellent produce is currently riding high, and I intend to build on that confidence and enable our food and drinks industries to strengthen and thrive.’

5.15 p.m.

I welcome that statement, because we are making some world-class produce here, and we are really finding our place on the global food map. Making CCTV mandatory in all slaughterhouses would safeguard that confidence, and send a clear message to consumers here and abroad that Wales is serious about delivering excellence at every step of the process. The new EU regulation will require the compulsory monitoring of loss of consciousness when an animal is stunned or ritually slaughtered. Mandatory CCTV would be the cheapest, most practical and most effective way of complying with the regulation. I have listened to concerns that this may be costly. Figures from the FSA show that an average system with a hard-disk recorder would typically cost around £2,000. On this basis, it would cost very little to introduce, and the Welsh Government could consider grants for the smaller slaughterhouses.

Not only are cameras good deterrents against cruelty and poor practice, they also have positive uses as a security measure and a training aid for slaughter staff, vets, and meat hygiene inspectors, and, if necessary, can be used as evidence in court. Of course, CCTV has to be used, reviewed and secured properly. I commend to the Minister the RSPCA’s welfare standards in this regard as they provide simple, clear guidelines. I know that the Food Standards Agency has also been developing good work in this regard.

Having the right equipment for good animal welfare is crucial, so is having the right people, properly trained. At present, however, once licensed, slaughter staff never have to undergo any further training. In fact, much is wrong with the system. Currently, one official veterinarian can be the sole trainer, issuer of the competency certificate and enforcement officer in the same slaughterhouse. This clearly puts them in a difficult situation and may impact on animal welfare when we consider that surveys of vets and meat hygiene inspectors who work within abattoirs reveal tensions. In a UK-wide Unison survey, 57% of vets and inspectors said that they had been bullied at work. The presence of CCTV could help to prevent bullying and give staff the confidence to report animal welfare or hygiene breaches, because they would have the hard evidence they need. I would like to see all licensed slaughter staff being retested and retrained annually to ensure the maintenance of competence and to enable them to stay on top of developments over time.

The EU regulations will require the appointment of an animal welfare officer in slaughterhouses and certificates of competence for all staff. It is vital that this is backed up by requirements on retesting and retraining. Registered licences may be suspended or revoked if the holder is no longer considered to be a fit and proper person to hold a slaughter licence. In my view, a fit-and-proper-person test should be applied before a person is granted a licence. Anyone with an outstanding criminal conviction for violence, sexual assault or animal cruelty should not be permitted to stun or slaughter animals. Currently, there is no requirement for a Criminal Records Bureau check and no requirement to disclose convictions for violent or sexual offences when applying for slaughter work, despite the well-established link between those behaviours and animal cruelty. This is a serious weakness in the current system.

As I conclude, I should again make it clear that there is very good practice here in Wales. I have seen some of it for myself, and I want to put in place safeguards to ensure that excellence becomes the norm. The Welsh Government has a good track record on animal welfare issues, and one of which we can be proud. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Minister's personal commitment to delivering and promoting high standards of animal welfare. The new EU regulation offers us an exciting opportunity to raise our game again, and I hope that we will grasp the opportunity.

Byron Davies: I am grateful to Rebecca Evans for giving me this opportunity to contribute. In Wales, we are proud to be called an agricultural nation, where we breed and nurture animals for our tables. These are captive animals, bred and confined by us in pens, stables and fields, and totally controlled by us. Eventually, we take life away from these animals, be they cattle, sheep, pigs or whatever, to satisfy our needs. This ensures a livelihood for many tens of thousands of people in the industry. I believe that the very least that we can do is ensure that as we take an animal's life from it, we make certain that this is done in the most humane and professional manner possible.

I have no doubt that, in the vast majority of cases, this happens, but it does not always happen—that 'not always' is not good enough for me. Injured or sick animals being dragged to their deaths or frenzied creatures being forced into submission through beatings as they near the end of their lives—none of this is acceptable. I fully support, therefore, the introduction of video cameras as a form of recording and monitoring the slaughter of animals. The footage could then be available for inspection on disk or online, and would serve in the prosecution of offenders or would act as a defence against inaccurate allegations. I believe that this would not only help to eradicate the mentality of the cowboy slaughterhouse, where it exists—I am sure that these slaughterhouses are few and far between—but most importantly, with proper training, it would help to ensure a decent exit for these animals at the point of slaughter.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. You have gone over a minute, Byron.

Byron Davies: I will also quickly mention the British Veterinary Association, which supports stunning prior to slaughter and wants to see any food that has not been stunned for religious reasons labelled. I agree and fully support that view and ask the Minister to give it due consideration.

William Powell: I would like to thank Rebecca Evans very much for bringing forward this debate today. It is critical that our considerations of animal welfare do not end at the abattoir gate, and indeed, those of us who make the choice to consume meat have a moral obligation to ensure that it is not produced in a way that would not conform to standards of safety and animal welfare. In particular, I welcome the comments she made around the importance of being aware of the fragility of the small abattoir sector. It would be extremely helpful, if CCTV cameras are to come forward—and, in principle, we favour that as the next step—to have a programme that will enable them to come in without bringing additional burdens,

because we remember how important these abattoirs are in reducing food miles and any cruelty and difficulty caused through longer transportation. I welcome this debate today and I strongly support the proposal.

Kenneth Skates: I thank Rebecca Evans for allowing me to speak in this debate. I would like to make a point regarding the farming sector, specifically the pig sector. We face significant problems globally with regard to the supply of pork and bacon products, and, as a consequence of that, because of the rising costs of the pork-based farming sector, it is likely that an extra 7,000 pigs will be slaughtered every month in the UK as farmers look to leave this sector.

There are two important points that we must be mindful of. We need to ensure that the additional numbers that will be going to slaughter do not put too great a pressure on the slaughtering process and do not compromise standards in the industry. Also, as we see farmers leaving that sector in the UK, any increase in imports must comply with decent statutory regulations, and that includes regulations from not just the EU, but further afield.

Mohammad Asghar: I am grateful to Rebecca for giving time to this important topic of a high standard of animal welfare at the time of slaughter. My point is about Halal meat. There is a very wrong public perception that animals are treated inhumanely in slaughterhouses in order to produce Halal meat. However, it has been scientifically proven by a German university, which took an electroencephalogram and electrocardiogram of animals, that slaughtering in the Halal way causes the least pain to animals. We produce 15 million sheep here and thousands of cattle. My main concern is that our economy is losing money. Most sheep are taken to England to be slaughtered and come back here for consumption, because there are not very many Halal slaughterhouses in Wales. Therefore, we have a great opportunity in Wales for economic development. We must not listen to other lobby groups, such as the vegetarian and animal right groups, because it has been proven that Halal meat is the best to be consumed by human beings.

The Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development (John Griffiths): I congratulate Rebecca Evans on bringing this timely debate before the Assembly today. Rebecca takes a very keen interest in animal welfare issues in general, and there are important animal welfare issues relating to the time of slaughter. As Rebecca said, it is timely, given that we launched a consultation on Monday 24 September, which seeks views about the implementation of the provisions of the new EU regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing, which comes into force across all member states on 1 January 2013. Members have mentioned some very important issues, which are very germane and relevant to that consultation, including issues around the economy, jobs and transport, as well as the crucial matter of welfare standards, recruitment, training, closed-circuit television. I am sure that those matters will form a large part of this consultation process.

The regulation applies to the killing of all animals bred and kept for the production of food, wool and skin and other products in slaughterhouses, on farms and in relation to depopulation for disease control purposes. The regulation acknowledges that some member states have higher animal welfare standards than others and allows member states to maintain existing national rules where they offer higher welfare standards of protection than the requirements in the regulation. That will be an important aspect of this exercise.

The consultation seeks views about the retention of national rules relating to handling operations, construction, layout and equipment, the use of restraining equipment and stunning methods. Other areas that the consultation will address include the replacement of existing welfare of animals, (slaughter or killing) slaughter licences by certificates of competence, for all slaughter-related operations. That is obviously relevant to some of the matters that Rebecca mentioned in relation to training, retraining, and the proper persons to carry out these

important duties.

There will be an opportunity for stakeholders and interested parties to provide comments on non-stun methods of slaughter. The Welsh Government will obtain views and gain evidence for the development of discussions with faith communities, which can take place following the implementation of the EU regulations. Therefore, the matters that Mohammad Asghar mentioned and concerns and views from faith communities in Wales will, I am sure, be a part of the discussions that the Welsh Government will be keen to have. We will say more about the timetable that will apply to the regulation and those subsequent conversations.

CCTV has been mentioned by a number of Assembly Members in this short debate, and Rebecca mentioned a number of matters relating to CCTV and the aspects that are well-rehearsed and the standards that are required by different organisations and customers of the slaughterhouses. It is important that CCTV is comprehensively considered as a part of this debate and these regulations. We know that many organisations that take a keen interest in these matters put CCTV at the heart of ensuring appropriate welfare standards. I have been struck by what Members have said about the pride that we rightly take in our rural communities and our farm produce in Wales, our pride in having the highest welfare standards, and the perception of Welsh agriculture. This gives us many marketing and competitive advantages compared with other countries. As Rebecca said, my colleague Alun Davies is here for this debate, and I know that he is very keen that Welsh agriculture and produce is seen to meet the highest possible standards, because they are the right standards for us and are highly valued by customers and potential customers, and we want to put Wales at the forefront of the image of the highest standards and quality of produce.

In conclusion, I warmly welcome the comments that Members have made today and I invite Members to look at our consultation document and to provide their comments by the conclusion of that consultation, which is 5 November of this year. I will provide an update on the development of the policy once the consultation responses have been analysed. I look forward to continuing this debate as we move forward with these important matters.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes today's proceedings.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 5.30 p.m.
The meeting ended at 5.30 p.m.*

**Aelodau a'u Pleidiau
Members and their Parties**

Andrews, Leighton (Llafur – Labour)
 Antoni, Mick (Llafur – Labour)
 Asghar, Mohammad (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
 Black, Peter (Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru – Welsh Liberal Democrats)
 Burns, Angela (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
 Butler, Rosemary (Llafur – Labour)
 Chapman, Christine (Llafur – Labour)
 Cuthbert, Jeff (Llafur – Labour)
 Davies, Alun (Llafur – Labour)
 Davies, Andrew R.T. (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
 Davies, Byron (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
 Davies, Jocelyn (Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales)
 Davies, Keith (Llafur – Labour)
 Davies, Paul (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
 Davies, Suzy (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
 Drakeford, Mark (Llafur – Labour)
 Elis-Thomas, Yr Arglwydd/Lord (Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales)
 Evans, Rebecca (Llafur – Labour)
 Finch-Saunders, Janet (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
 George, Russell (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)

Gething, Vaughan (Llafur – Labour)
Graham, William (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
Gregory, Janice (Llafur – Labour)
Griffiths, John (Llafur – Labour)
Griffiths, Lesley (Llafur – Labour)
Gruffydd, Llyr Huws (Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales)
Hart, Edwina (Llafur – Labour)
Hedges, Mike (Llafur – Labour)
Hutt, Jane (Llafur – Labour)
Isherwood, Mark (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
James, Julie (Llafur – Labour)
Jenkins, Bethan (Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales)
Jones, Alun Ffred (Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales)
Jones, Ann (Llafur – Labour)
Jones, Carwyn (Llafur – Labour)
Jones, Elin (Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales)
Lewis, Huw (Llafur – Labour)
Melding, David (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
Mewies, Sandy (Llafur – Labour)
Millar, Darren (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
Morgan, Julie (Llafur – Labour)
Neagle, Lynne (Llafur – Labour)
Parrott, Eluned (Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru – Welsh Liberal Democrats)
Powell, William (Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru – Welsh Liberal Democrats)
Price, Gwyn R. (Llafur – Labour)
Ramsay, Nick (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
Rathbone, Jenny (Llafur – Labour)
Rees, David (Llafur – Labour)
Roberts, Aled (Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru – Welsh Liberal Democrats)
Sandbach, Antoinette (Ceidwadwyr Cymreig – Welsh Conservatives)
Sargeant, Carl (Llafur – Labour)
Skates, Kenneth (Llafur – Labour)
Thomas, Gwenda (Llafur – Labour)
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn (Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales)
Thomas, Simon (Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales)
Watson, Joyce (Llafur – Labour)
Whittle, Lindsay (Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales)
Williams, Kirsty (Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru – Welsh Liberal Democrats)
Wood, Leanne (Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales)