

First Minister's address - programme for Public Service

A clear direction for a modern Wales and an absolute commitment to improving public services are the central themes for the Government of the National Assembly for the next year.

In his address to the first Assembly Plenary of the new session, First Minister Rhodri Morgan presented the Annual Government Business Programme and his review of the administration's achievements over the past year. The programme sets out the main business that the Cabinet will bring before Plenary from October 2001 to July 2002.

In the First Minister's Address, Mr Morgan said that the Business Programme would markedly improve public services and implement distinctive policies to meet the needs of the people of Wales.

Mr Morgan said: "It is a programme made possible by the greater certainty gained from the Partnership Government which enables us to set the agenda in the confident knowledge that we can deliver it. That partnership is underpinned by a shared goal of spreading prosperity to all parts and all people in Wales, bringing government closer to the people and making Wales a fairer place to live."

Mr Morgan highlighted some of the Government's main aims as: -

- Bringing forward measures to implement our radical vision for the future of Education and Training in Wales;
- Implementing our strategy Improving Health in Wales, which will put in place planned structural reforms in the health service.
- Streamline and focus support for business and the policies that will foster an enterprise economy;
- Continue our programme of local government modernisation;
- Implement the Communities First Strategy to help those in need help themselves out of poverty;
- Develop the range of strategies which underpin goals set by the Sustainable Development Scheme;
- Implement our strategy for the future of farming and continue to support communities adversely affected by foot-and-mouth;
- Finalise and implement Wales' first Culture Strategy.

Mr Morgan said: "The Assembly Government will strengthen our key public services and lay a firm foundation for major long-term improvement in the economic, social and environmental health of Wales."

His Annual Report, highlighted the objectives of the past year - to build on the distinctive Welsh values of community, universal support and public service and reflecting those aims in policy innovations.

- Extending entitlement – a new approach to youth services in Wales which puts the needs of young people first;

- The Learning Country, which sets out the way forward for education and training to 2010 and puts the needs of those we serve first – the learners.
- Policy agreements with local government to ensure delivery in the most important services while allowing local government to respond to local needs;
- Communities First which will enable our most deprived communities to help themselves out of poverty.

Mr Morgan said that where the Assembly Government does not have powers to act, success had been achieved in getting primary legislation in Whitehall. This had enabled the creation of a unified system of post-16 education via the national council for education and training (ELWA); the Children's Commissioner and to take forward proposals for reform of the NHS in Wales.

"This Assembly is less than two-and-a-half years old." Mr Morgan said.
"Neither Rome nor the new Wales was built in a day. I firmly believe that the Partnership Government is delivering for Wales."

Full details of the First Minister's Annual Report can be found on the website at :

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubannualreport2001/>

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