

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 1 May 2001

[R] signifies that the Member has declared an interest.

[W] signifies that the question was tabled in Welsh.

Questions to the First Minister

The Administration's Policies for Partnership with Business

Q11 John Griffiths: Will the First Minister give a report on the development of the administration's policies for partnership with business? (OAQ11067) *Withdrawn.*

Conditions in Welsh Prisons

Q12 Janet Davies: Has the First Minister had any discussions with the Home Office regarding conditions in Welsh prisons? (OAQ11055)

The First Minister: I have not entered into any discussions with the Home Office regarding conditions in Welsh prisons but my officials have been in touch with the prison department in Wales. I am informed that conditions in Welsh prisons are monitored regularly by prison service managers, including the operational managers for Wales. Prisons are also subject to independent scrutiny by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales and by a range of other bodies, including the boards of visitors and the standard audit teams. The evidence is that conditions for prisoners in Wales are as good as conditions elsewhere in the prison estate. We would have to acknowledge that Swansea, Cardiff and Usk prisons are overcrowded. HM Chief Inspector, Sir David Ramsbotham, recently visited all prisons in Wales and responded positively on all of them. The prison service has indicated that it very much welcomes visits by Assembly Members.

Budget Announcements to Help Vulnerable People in Wales

Q13 Christine Gwyther: What discussions has the First Minister had with his Westminster colleagues regarding recent budget announcements to help vulnerable people in Wales? (OAQ11086) *Withdrawn.*

Strengthening Relations with the Rest of the World (Foot and Mouth Disease)

Q14 Nick Bourne: What steps can the First Minister take to strengthen relations between Wales and the rest of the world following the foot and mouth disease outbreak in parts of Wales? (OAQ11069)

The First Minister: We are working with a range of other public sector bodies to develop a co-ordinated approach at an all-Wales level to enhance our international profile.

Much misinformation has been generated in some of our primary overseas tourism markets due to the foot and mouth disease outbreak. The Wales Tourist Board, working with the British Tourist Authority, has launched a communications campaign to correct that. The Deputy First Minister has given interviews on CNN and the BBC World Service, met key overseas travel executives and visited the Netherlands and Germany to reinforce the message that Wales is very much open for business. In addition, we are taking steps to ensure that key export markets for Welsh agricultural produce remain available once the outbreak is over.

Joint Ministerial Committee

Q15 Richard Edwards: Will the First Minister give a progress report on the Joint Ministerial Committee? (OAQ11078) *Withdrawn.*

State of the Economy

Q16 Delyth Evans: What discussions has the First Minister had with his Westminster colleagues on the state of the economy in Wales? (OAQ11054)

The First Minister: I am in regular discussion with the Secretary of State for Wales on a range of topics, including the economy. Given the current situation with Corus, I have also been in regular contact with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and his colleagues. The Deputy First Minister is a member of the UK rural taskforce, chaired by Michael Meacher, which has representatives from a range of Government departments to discuss the effects of foot and mouth disease on rural areas. When the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry visited Wales last week, I discussed with him and the Secretary of State for Wales the opportunities for further investment in industry and commerce, to bring unemployment levels down further.

Consultations with Others

Q17 Alun Cairns: Will the First Minister make a statement on the National Assembly's policy on taking forward its consultations with others? (OAQ11085)

The First Minister: The Assembly is committed to making policy in an open and inclusive environment. We are engaging our partners in developing new consultation tools and guidance, and we have already had significant successes. For example, the draft 'Planning Policy Wales' was produced in partnership with local authorities, the voluntary sector and business and the information and communications technology strategy enabled respondents to use the latest information technology to engage with the Assembly.

'Putting Wales First'

Q18 David Melding: Will the First Minister list the parts of 'Putting Wales First: A Partnership for the People of Wales' that have been implemented to date? (OAQ11065) *Withdrawn.*

'Cabinet's Proposals for Primary Legislation 2001-02'

Q19 Jonathan Morgan: Will the First Minister make a statement on the scope and content of the 'Cabinet's Proposals for Primary Legislation 2001-02'? (OAQ11066) *Withdrawn.*

Non-devolved Issues that Affect Wales

Q20 Glyn Davies: When did the First Minister last discuss non-devolved issues that affect Wales with the Secretary of State for Wales? (OAQ11082)

The First Minister: I have regular discussions with the Secretary of State for Wales on a range of issues, including non-devolved issues that affect Wales.

Raising the Profile of Wales Internationally

Q21 Rhodri Glyn Thomas: How will the First Minister raise the profile of Wales internationally? (OAQ11051) *Withdrawn.*

Sustainable Development Scheme

Q22 Pauline Jarman: What steps can the First Minister take to ensure that the sustainable development scheme provides the overarching framework for all policy development within the Assembly? (OAQ11079) *Withdrawn.*

Review of Public Spending Levels in Wales

Q23 Jocelyn Davies: What discussions has the First Minister had with the UK Government regarding a review of public spending levels in Wales? (OAQ11056) *Withdrawn.*

Improving the Public Perception of the National Assembly

Q24 David Lloyd: What actions does the First Minister intend to take to improve the public perception of the National Assembly? (OAQ11052) *Withdrawn.*

Engaging Youth in National Assembly Activities

Q25 Brian Hancock: Will the First Minister make a brief statement on his commitment to engaging the youth of Wales in all activities of the National Assembly? (OAQ11080) *Withdrawn.*

Detention of Asylum Seekers in Welsh Prisons

Q26 Helen Mary Jones: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Home Office regarding the detention of asylum seekers in Welsh prisons? (OAQ11049) *Withdrawn.*

Review of Public Sector Ombudsman Services

Q27 Alison Halford: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Secretary of State for Wales about the proposed review of public sector ombudsman services in Wales? (OAQ11087)

The First Minister: I wrote to the Secretary of State in October, and again in January, proposing that we jointly carry out a review of public sector ombudsmen in Wales. The main purpose of the review is to ensure that we have in place a service that meets the needs of Wales in the new century. The review is now commencing.