

## Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 5 November 2002

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

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

### Questions to the First Minister

#### Government of Wales Computer System

**Q11 Phil Williams:** What discussions has the First Minister had on the advantages of using a free, open-source operating system for all Government of Wales computers? (OAQ19879)

**The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan):** The use of open source software in government has been recently been addressed at a UK national level by the Office of Government Commerce. The guidance which has been produced is helpful and we will take it into account in evaluating the proposals on software solutions which suppliers will put forward as part of the Merlin procurement to replace the OSIRIS contract. As the procurement is at a very early stage it would be inappropriate to comment further on it.

#### Defence Equipment Testing

**Q12 Glyn Davies:** Has the First Minister met with the Secretary of State to discuss problems faced by employees in the defence equipment-testing sector in Meirionnydd and west Wales? (OAQ19889)

**The First Minister:** I meet the Secretary of State for Wales on a regular basis to discuss matters of a common interest, including the implications of the rationalisation of the test and evaluation air range capability operated for the Ministry of Defence by QinetiQ.

The Welsh Assembly Government is aware of the importance of these facilities to the communities in Llanbedr and Aberporth, and we will do everything we can to assist. Assembly officials, along with representatives from the Welsh Development Agency, Aerospace Wales and the Defence Diversification Agency, have visited the QinetiQ sites in both Llanbedr and Aberporth. The workers at both of the ranges are very highly skilled and our aim is to be able to identify civil and alternative military opportunities which the range as a whole could access, so maintaining employment at both sites.

#### Economic Inactivity in the South Wales Valleys

**Q13 Huw Lewis:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the strategy of the Welsh Assembly Government to tackle economic inactivity in the south Wales Valleys? (OAQ19886)

**The First Minister:** 'A Winning Wales' underlines the importance of helping more people into jobs and, together with the skills and employment action plan, sets out measures which will address economic inactivity in the south Wales Valleys and elsewhere. This includes the targeting of Objective 1 funds, the various New Deal programmes and a range of skills initiatives.

Latest labour market data show the rate of both economic inactivity and unemployment falling across Wales and this improvement within the Objective 1 area over the last year demonstrates that our policies are being targeted in the right place.

The Cabinet's strategic policy unit engaged stakeholders in a discussion on barriers to workforce participation and measures to raise economic activity at a consultation event at Swansea Guildhall on 26 June and further research work has now been commissioned.

### **North Wales Police**

**Q14 Alun Pugh:** Has the First Minister had any discussions with the Home Office regarding the funding of North Wales Police? (OAQ19882)

**The First Minister:** I have not had discussions but Edwina Hart has responded to Home Office Ministers in relation to the recent review of the police funding formula. Her response highlighted the extra costs of policing rural areas and areas of high deprivation.

### **Ombudsman Services**

**Q15 Alison Halford:** Would the Minister make a statement on the progress of the review into ombudsman's services in Wales? (OAQ19883)

**The First Minister:** A consultation paper, for publication jointly with the Secretary of State for Wales, will issue before the end of November.