

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 7 March 2000

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

Questions to the First Secretary

Guidance Regarding Councillors' Allowances

Q7 David Melding: Has the Partnership Council discussed the implementation of guidance regarding councillors' allowances in Wales? (OAQ3872)

The First Secretary (Rhodri Morgan): The Partnership Council has not to date considered councillors' allowances in Wales.

Welsh Affairs Select Committee Report on Objective 1

Q8 Kirsty Williams: What discussions has the First Secretary had with the Secretary of State for Wales concerning the Welsh Affairs Select Committee report on Objective 1? (OAQ3886)

The First Secretary: I have regular discussions with the Secretary of State for Wales on a range of issues affecting Wales. He is fully aware of my views on the content of the Select Committee's report on European structural funds.

Promoting Social Inclusion (Supporting Voluntary Organisations)

Q9 Jane Davidson: How can the Assembly offer support to voluntary organisations that promote social inclusion in our local communities? (OAQ3877)

The First Secretary: The Assembly supports voluntary organisations by encouraging public bodies to develop local compacts within the voluntary sector. These compacts provide a firmer base to work in partnership to address local issues.

The National Assembly for Wales circular 13/99, which was issued on 29 October 1999, invited voluntary organisations, in partnership with local authorities, to nominate a socially excluded community to participate in the second round of the People in Communities programme, which is the Assembly's innovative response to tackling social exclusion. Applications have been received and are currently being assessed.

Social Exclusion (Young People in Care)

Q10 Richard Edwards: How will the First Secretary ensure that young people in care in Wales are not socially excluded? (OAQ3876)

The First Secretary: The Children First programme includes a number of objectives aimed at addressing social exclusion among children and young people in care. Concentrating on improving life chances for looked-after children, Children First includes specific objectives aimed at promoting inclusion at school and academic performance; reducing the rate of offending by children in care; promoting their individual healthy development and minimising unemployment upon leaving care.

In addition to Children First, the Children (Leaving Care) Bill provides for promoting the social inclusion of young people leaving care. The main provisions of the bill include a duty on local authorities to meet the needs of 16 and 17 year olds formerly in their care; and pathway plans, which will take over from an

individual's existing care plan upon leaving care and run at least up to the individual's twenty-first birthday

Ymateb i 'Gwell Cymru'

C11 Cynog Dafis: A yw'r Prif Ysgrifennydd wedi derbyn ymateb gan Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru i'r cynllun strategol, 'Gwell Cymru'? (OAQ3896) *Tynnwyd yn ôl.*

Response to 'A Better Wales'

Q11 Cynog Dafis: Has the First Secretary received the Secretary of State for Wales's response to the strategic plan, 'A Better Wales'? (OAQ3896) *Withdrawn.*

Adroddiad y Pwyllgor Dethol ar Faterion Cymreig ar Amcan 1

C12 Mick Bates: Pa drafodaethau a gafodd y Prif Ysgrifennydd ynghylch adroddiad diweddar y Pwyllgor Dethol ar Faterion Cymreig ar gyllido Amcan 1 yng Nghymru? (OAQ3874)

Y Prif Ysgrifennydd: Yr wyf yn cael trafodaethau rheolaidd ag Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru ar amrediad o faterion sydd yn effeithio ar Gymru. Mae'n gwbl ymwybodol o'm teimladau ynglŷn â chynnwys adroddiad y Pwyllgor Dethol ar gronfeydd strwythurol Ewropeaidd.

Welsh Affairs Select Committee Report on Objective 1

Q12 Mick Bates: What discussions has the First Secretary had regarding the Welsh Affairs Select Committee's report on Objective 1 funding in Wales? (OAQ3874)

The First Secretary: I have regular discussions with the Secretary of State for Wales on a range of issues affecting Wales. He is fully aware of my views on the content of the Select Committee's report on European structural funds.

Asylum Seekers

Q13 Helen Mary Jones: What discussions has the First Secretary had with the Home Secretary about the situation of asylum seekers in Wales? (OAQ3898) *Withdrawn.*

Exclusion of Disabled People from the Workforce

Q14 Dafydd Wigley: What steps will the First Secretary take to ensure that disabled people are not excluded from the workforce? (OAQ3896) *Withdrawn.*

Protocol on Freedom of Information

Q15 Jenny Randerson: What discussions has the First Secretary had regarding the possibility of the Assembly establishing its own protocol on freedom of information? (OAQ3873)

The First Secretary: In accordance with Section 70 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 and Standing Order No. 17, the National Assembly for Wales has adopted its code of practice on public access to information.

The Freedom of Information Bill currently before Parliament places a duty on every public authority covered by the Bill to adopt and maintain a publication scheme which relates to the publication of information by the authority and to review the scheme from time to time. Like all public authorities covered by the freedom of information legislation, the National Assembly for Wales's publication scheme will be approved by the information commissioner appointed under the provisions of the same legislation.

The National Assembly for Wales will wish to review its existing code in the light of the requirements of the legislation, once enacted.

Information and Communications Technology Strategy

Q16 Val Feld: Are there any plans to examine the benefits for the promotion of active citizenship in Wales of the production and implementation of an overarching information and communications technology strategy for Wales? (OAQ3900)

The First Secretary: The Wales Information Society project, co-funded by the Welsh Development Agency and the European Commission, has already done this. In its strategy and action plan for taking Wales forward into the information age, published in March 1999, it identified the benefits the information society offered in fostering openness in the democratic process, thereby enabling social inclusion and community involvement. In developing a corporate information and communications technology strategy for the Assembly, full account will be taken of the WIS strategy and the need for these technologies to support the delivery of the Assembly's founding principles of openness and inclusivity.

Closer Links with the Scottish Parliament

Q17 John Griffiths: What steps will the First Secretary take to forge closer links with the Scottish Parliament? (OAQ3887)

The First Secretary: We already have strong political and official-level links with the Scottish Executive on many issues. Relations between the Assembly and the Scottish Parliament are not primarily a matter for me, but I would welcome any moves to strengthen them.

Socially Excluded Young People

Q18 Pauline Jarman: How does the First Secretary plan to encourage socially excluded young people into the workforce? (OAQ3892) *Withdrawn.*

EU Intergovernmental Conference

Q19 Ieuan Wyn Jones: Does the Assembly have any input into the process of the European Union intergovernmental conference on reform for enlargement launched under the Portuguese presidency in February? (OAQ3903) *Withdrawn.*

Opportunities of Objective 1 Status

Q20 Nick Bourne: What progress is the First Secretary and the Welsh Cabinet making to ensure that the opportunities of Objective 1 status are fully utilised? (OAQ3901)

The First Secretary: Ensuring that the opportunities of Objective 1 are fully utilised requires us to have projects and programmes brought forward that effectively deliver our objectives of creating jobs and raising gross domestic product. The major bodies involved in economic development activities have been asked to develop effective plans for using structural funds in partnership with the private sector, local government and the voluntary sector, to ensure that we are ready to implement the programme as soon as it is agreed with the European Commission.

Financing the Objective 1 Programme

Q21 Janet Davies: Can the First Secretary report on any progress in his recent discussions with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury regarding the financing of the Objective 1 programme? (OAQ3902) *Withdrawn.*

Adroddiad y Pwyllgor Dethol ar Faterion Cymreig ar Amcan 1

C22 Christine Humphreys: Pa drafodaethau a gafodd y Prif Ysgrifennydd gydag Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru ynghylch adroddiad diweddar y Pwyllgor Dethol ar Faterion Cymreig ar gyllido Amcan 1 yng Nghymru? (OAQ3897)

Y Prif Ysgrifennydd: Yr wyf yn cael trafodaethau rheolaidd ag Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru ar amrediad o faterion sydd yn effeithio ar Gymru. Mae'n gwbl ymwybodol o'm teimladau ynglŷn â chynnwys adroddiad y Pwyllgor Dethol ar gronfeydd strwythurol Ewropeaidd.

Welsh Affairs Select Committee Report on Objective 1

Q22 Christine Humphreys: What discussions has the First Secretary had with the Secretary of State for Wales regarding the Welsh Affairs Select Committee's recent report on Objective 1 funding in Wales? (OAQ3897)

The First Secretary: I have regular discussions with the Secretary of State for Wales on a range of issues affecting Wales. He is fully aware of my views on the content of the Select Committee's report on European structural funds.

Effect of Poor Air Quality

Q23 Alun Cairns: Will the First Secretary make a statement on the effect that poor air quality has on social exclusion and deprivation? (OAQ3905)

The First Secretary: Air pollution is a serious problem that affects us all. It hits the more vulnerable in our society hardest—those suffering from asthma and heart and lung diseases, and also elderly people. The air quality strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that was launched in January provides a framework to achieve cleaner air that will benefit all communities in Wales.

The Assembly's published values include promoting social inclusion. During the Plenary debate on 18 January we endorsed a social inclusion action plan which will include challenging targets for economic development and the improvement of public services in Wales

Social Exclusion (Education Policies)

Q24 Jonathan Morgan: Will the First Secretary outline how his administration's education policies will reduce social exclusion? (OAQ3884) *Withdrawn.*

Promoting the Benefits of EU Membership

Q25 Jocelyn Davies: What plans does the First Secretary have for the Assembly, in response to encouragement from the Foreign Office to organise regional roadshows to promote the benefits of our membership of the EU? (OAQ3904) *Withdrawn.*

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Q26 Glyn Davies: When did the First Secretary last discuss the Cardiff Bay barrage with the leader of Cardiff City and County Council? (OAQ3899)

The First Secretary: At the meeting of the Economic Development Committee held on 1 March.

Eliminating Social Exclusion

Q27 Peter Rogers: What steps is the First Secretary taking to eliminate social exclusion in north Wales? (OAQ3906)

The First Secretary: The People in Communities programme operates in eight deprived areas throughout Wales, including three communities in north Wales: Peulwys Estate, Conwy; Southsea and Brynteg, Wrexham and Deiniolen, Dinorwig and Clwt-y-Bont, Gwynedd. A total of £301,500 has been provided in grant aid.

For 2000-01 and 2001-02, £42.7 million has been allocated to promote social inclusion. This will include programmes to help to develop sustainable communities that can be targeted at urban and rural areas, in line with local strategies. In line with the outline action plan endorsed by the Assembly on 18 January, we are looking at the potential to join together existing policies and programmes to most effectively target those who are socially excluded.

Statement of Opinion OPIN-2000-0006

Q28 Michael German: Will the First Secretary formally draw the Chancellor of the Exchequer's attention to the content of statement of opinion OPIN-2000-0006? (OAQ3927)

The First Secretary: Yes.