

## **Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 12 December 2000**

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

### **Questions to the First Minister**

#### **Plans to Confer City Status on Towns**

**Q10 Christine Humphreys:** What discussions has the First Minister had with the Home Office about plans to confer city status on towns in Wales? (OAQ8406)

**The First Minister:** The grant of city status is a matter for the Queen, but it is Her Majesty's practice to seek the advice of UK Government Ministers on any applications submitted.

It is for the Secretary of State for Wales to contribute to this advice and, whereas I have discussed this with him, I have had no formal discussions with the Home Office on this matter.

#### **Implementing the Promises in the Partnership Agreement**

**Q11 Dafydd Wigley:** What consideration has been given to the primary legislation required to implement the promises included in the partnership agreement? (OAQ8416) *Withdrawn.*

#### **The Administration's Forward Work Programme for 2000-01**

**Q12 Jonathan Morgan:** Would the First Minister make a statement on the administration's forward work programme for 2000-01 as announced on 21 November? (OAQ8399) *Withdrawn.*

#### **Ensuring Co-ordination of Policy**

**Q13 David Davies:** What is the Cabinet doing to ensure co-ordination of policy to provide the best possible services to the people of Wales at a local level? (OAQ8401)

**The First Minister:** We are committed to delivering modern, effective local government and to strong local communities. In 'Putting Wales First' we promised to modernise local government with distinctive Assembly legislation. This legislation will be in place by the summer. Through our proposals for community planning and best value, local services will be constantly tested on a service by service basis and in the round. Our Communities First programme will assist and empower the most disadvantaged communities.

#### **The Assembly's European Policy**

**Q14 Alun Cairns:** Will the First Minister make a statement on how the Assembly's European policy is developing? (OAQ8402)

**The First Minister:** The European dimension impacts on policies across a broad range of the Assembly's work. Establishing our own office in Brussels and the relationship with the Wales European Centre means that we are now well placed to deal with this work. Assembly Cabinet Ministers have participated in UK Council of Ministers delegations and on one occasion on 8 November led the UK delegation at the Council of Ministers.

#### **Implementing 'Putting Wales First'**

**Q15 David Melding:** Will the First Minister make a statement on progress towards implementing 'Putting Wales First'? (OAQ8398) *Withdrawn.*

### **The UK Government's Legislative Programme**

**Q16 Jocelyn Davies:** What discussion has the First Minister had with the Secretary of State for Wales about introducing legislation affecting Wales in the UK Government's legislative programme? (OAQ8614) *Withdrawn.*

### **Representing Mid and West Wales in the Cabinet**

**Q17 Glyn Davies:** Will the First Minister make a statement about the representation of mid and west Wales in the Cabinet? (OAQ8424)

**The First Minister:** Ministers do not represent their constituencies or regions in the Cabinet. They are selected on the basis of suitability for the posts they hold. All of my colleagues take into account the needs of the whole of Wales in their work.

### **Openness and Accountability**

**Q18 Brian Hancock:** How does the First Minister intend to secure more effective openness and accountability in the relationship between the Assembly Cabinet and the people of Wales? (OAQ8410) *Withdrawn.*

### **Policy Development Regarding Climate Change**

**Q19 Phil Williams:** Could the First Minister make a brief statement on Wales's contribution to policy development regarding climate change at a European level? (OAQ8425) *Withdrawn.*

### **St David's Day**

**Q20 Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Would the First Minister make a brief statement explaining why the promise to designate St David's day as a national holiday in Wales was excluded from the annual Government business programme? (OAQ8408) *Withdrawn.*

### **Responsibilities relating to North Wales**

**Q21 Ann Jones:** Will the First Minister make a statement on how he has discharged his responsibilities in relation to north Wales since the formation of the partnership Cabinet? (OAQ8418) *Withdrawn.*

### **The Council of Ministers**

**Q22 David Lloyd:** Will the First Minister make a brief statement on developments affecting Wales resulting from decisions made by the Council of Ministers? (OAQ8423) *Withdrawn.*

### **Expansion of the European Union**

**Q23 Mick Bates:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the implications for Wales of the expansion of the European Union? (OAQ8405) R

**The First Minister:** Thirteen new countries aspire to join the European Union and are in various stages of preparation. Expansion could add over a hundred million new customers to an enlarged single market. The removal of trade barriers on this scale will create new opportunities for Welsh business and expertise.

### Tackling Racism in Wales

**Q24 Richard Edwards:** In his role as policy development co-ordinator, what discussion has the First Minister had with the Secretary of State for Wales about tackling racism in Wales? (OAQ8420) *Withdrawn.*

### The Limited Availability of Private Business

**Q25 Alison Halford:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the limited availability of private business to fulfil the contractual needs of the Assembly? (OAQ8421)

**The First Minister:** It is the Assembly's policy to make the maximum use of quality Welsh products, services, and expertise within the procedures set down in the European regulations on procurement. This means that Welsh companies need to compete and be able to demonstrate their 'added value' and 'competitiveness'. The regulations require that there can be no discrimination for or against a particular nation's products or services. It is our policy, in line with UK Government policy, to obtain best value for money from publicly funded projects in Wales.

The Assembly is investing heavily in developing Welsh firms to be more competitive and in enhancing the skills of the local workforce. Various initiatives are already in place, such as the WDA's Source Wales scheme, whose aims include increasing profitability, competitiveness and the growth of companies based in Wales. Source Wales is a buyer-driven initiative aimed at helping Welsh companies win more business. It works with Welsh business to ensure that their performance meets the high standards expected by today's leading companies.

Each of our public bodies has its own initiatives to help local suppliers. For example the Assembly is currently undertaking a review of procurement across the public sector in Wales. The review is addressing, among other things, how we can best assist our small and medium sized enterprises to successfully compete for publicly funded business.

### Assessing the New Assembly Cabinet

**Q26 Geraint Davies:** What assessment has the First Minister made so far of the new Assembly Cabinet? (OAQ8415) *Withdrawn.*

### Introducing a 'Protocol on the Freedom of Information'

**Q27 Elin Jones:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the introduction of a 'Protocol on the Freedom of Information' by the end of 2000? (OAQ8409) *Withdrawn.*

### The Hague Climate Change Conference

**Q28 Kirsty Williams:** What discussions has the First Minister had with the UK Deputy Prime Minister about the outcome of the Hague climate change conference? (OAQ8405)

**The First Minister:** An opportunity has not arisen for me to speak to the Deputy Prime Minister personally. It is unfortunate that the Conference was unable to reach agreement. There will nevertheless be opportunities to build on the considerable progress made in these talks between now and when they resume in May next year, when we will hopefully ensure a positive outcome.

### Mesur Hynt a Chyflawniad Amcanion

**C29 Owen John Thomas:** Pa ddulliau sydd mewn grym i fesur hynt a chyflawniad yr amcanion a nodir yn rhaglen waith flynyddol y Llywodraeth yn ystod y flwyddyn? (OAQ8417)

**Prif Weinidog Cymru:** Mae'r rhaglen yn nodi blaenoriaethau'r Llywodraeth yn glir ar gyfer y flwyddyn i ddod. Bydd Cyfarfodydd Llawn a Phwyllgorau Pwnc yn cael cyfle i fonitro cynnydd yn ystod y flwyddyn.

### **Measuring the Progress and Attainment of Objectives**

**Q29 Owen John Thomas:** What methods are in place to measure the progress and attainment of the objectives in the Government's annual work programme during the year? (OAQ8417)

**The First Minister:** The programme clearly sets out the Government's priorities for the coming year. Plenary sessions and Subject Committees will have the opportunity to monitor progress during the year.