

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 13 March 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 Representation of Wales Abroad

Q13 David Lloyd: Will the First Minister make a statement on his recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Wales on the representation of Wales abroad? (OAQ10245)

The First Minister: As I explained in a written reply to your earlier question on 6 March, this issue has been discussed in general terms with the Secretary of State for Wales though not at a specific meeting.

Improving Workers' Rights

Q14 Brian Gibbons: Has the First Minister had any discussions with the Secretary of State for Wales on possible methods of improving workers' rights to be consulted on major company decisions that will affect them? (OAQ10244)

The First Minister: The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 18 January 2001, a review of our domestic laws on consultation, particularly in the context of our existing provisions on collective redundancies and European works councils. There are concerns about the lack of consultation, particularly in relation to redundancies that are suddenly announced in the media. This review will address those concerns, and focus on how multinationals can improve their operations in redundancy cases.

It is envisaged that the review will take around four to five months, and during this period the National Assembly will be involved in the consultation along with other interested parties including the Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress. This issue has been a topic in the meetings I have had with the Secretary of State for Wales.

The Business Partnership Council

Q15 Pauline Jarman: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Business Partnership Council on stronger relations with the National Assembly for Wales? (OAQ10246)

The First Minister: We are currently considering a proposal to establish a business support unit to strengthen links between our partners and the Assembly. The proposal has been discussed with the Business Partnership Council.

Developing Relations Between Wales and Ireland

Q16 John Griffiths: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Taoiseach on his recent visit about developing relations between Wales and Ireland? (OAQ10243) *Withdrawn.*

'Betterwales.com' Targets for Job Creation

Q17 Glyn Davies: Will the First Minister make a statement on targets for job creation as set out in 'Betterwales.com'? (OAQ10262)

The First Minister: 'Betterwales.com' was published in May 2000 and included short and long-term targets. A full year has therefore not passed since the targets were set. We will report progress against the targets in the Assembly's annual report and performance report this autumn.

Wales European Centre

Q18 Nick Bourne: Will the First Minister report on any discussions that he has had with the Wales European Centre on its priorities set out in its annual lobbying strategy? (OAQ10241)

The First Minister: The Wales European Centre lobbying strategy is currently in draft form. The Assembly is among the partners being consulted on it. Its lobbying strategy is subject to revision throughout the year in the light of changing priorities.

In addition, the Assembly is undertaking its own exercise examining the implications of the European Commission's work programme.

Annual Government Business Programme

Q19 David Melding: Will the First Minister make a statement on progress towards achieving the goals set out in his annual Government business programme made to the Assembly on 21 November 2000? (OAQ10254) *Withdrawn.*

Role as Policy Development Co-ordinator

Q20 Richard Edwards: Will the First Minister make a statement on his role as policy development co-ordinator? (OAQ10255) *Withdrawn.*

Wales's Representation in the European Union

Q21 Ieuan Wyn Jones: As Minister in charge of the European dimension of Assembly policy, what is the First Minister doing to ensure that Wales is represented fully and adequately in the EU? (OAQ10247)

The First Minister: Within the institutions of the EU Wales is currently represented by five Welsh Members of the European Parliament and also has representation on the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee.

It is important for Wales to participate fully in the development of EU policy and we are continually looking for ways to achieve this. This includes the attendance of Assembly Ministers at EU councils. Over recent months Assembly Ministers have attended the Agriculture, Education, Youth and Health Councils including leading the UK delegation at the Youth and Education Councils on 9 November. As well as representation within the various institutions, we continue to explore new opportunities and exploit existing ones in order to promote the interests of Wales.

Achieving 'Betterwales.com' Targets

Q22 Alun Cairns: Will the First Minister make a statement on the progress being made towards achieving 'Betterwales.com' targets? (OAQ10237)

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer I gave to Rhodri Glyn Thomas's oral question (OAQ9323) on 6 February.

Promoting Transparency in the Government of Wales

Q23 Elin Jones: Will the First Minister make a brief statement on how he is seeking to promote transparency within the Government of Wales? (OAQ10248)

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer that I gave to your question on 6 March (OAQ10071).

Cross-Cutting Issues

Q24 Cynog Dafis: Will the First Minister make a brief statement on his role as policy development co-ordinator for cross-cutting issues? (OAQ10251)

The First Minister: I refer to you to my previous answer to your similar question (OAQ10070), on 6 March.

Raising the Profile of Wales in Europe

Q25 Helen Mary Jones: Will the First Minister make a statement on any discussions he has had with EU representatives on raising the profile of Wales in Europe? (OAQ10250)

The First Minister: As First Minister and Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, I meet regularly with representatives from a variety of EU institutions to discuss European issues, including how the Assembly can raise its profile in Europe. On 28 February, I visited Brussels for a series of meetings relating to the Assembly's profile and policy agenda in the EU. Among other duties I hosted a reception at the European Parliament to mark St David's day. The St David's day event at the Celtic Manor Hotel, also provided an opportunity for a wide-ranging debate on Wales, Europe and the wider world. Representatives from EU institutions and other EU member states attended along with members of the London-based diplomatic corps and members of the Assembly's Committee on European Affairs. The event was adjudged a great success.

Improving the Profile of Wales in the United States

Q26 Owen John Thoms: What discussions have there been between the First Minister and the Government Ministers at Westminster concerning improving the profile of Wales in the United States? (OAQ10276)

The First Minister: None specifically. However, relations between Wales and the United States are very good and are getting better. The US Embassy has opened a consular office in Cardiff and a Welsh Affairs Officer has been appointed specifically charged with promoting closer ties between the United States and Wales.

We are continuing to develop trade links through WalesTrade International and its international business opportunities division and through Trade Partners UK—the UK Government's international trade arm.

The WDA currently has seven offices in the United States actively promoting links between Wales and North America. The Wales Tourist Board is also actively involved in promoting Wales abroad.

I intend to visit California later this year to attend the Festival of Wales 2001.