

## Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 17 July 2001

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

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

### Questions to the First Minister

#### Tackling Racism in Wales

**Q13 Peter Black:** Will the First Minister make a statement on his contribution towards tackling racism in Wales? (OAQ12664)

**The First Minister:** I am committed to tackling racism. This morning, I addressed a conference organised by the Commission for Racial Equality on the legal, ethical and political implications of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which requires public authorities to promote race equality. I would like the Assembly to be in the lead on this issue and to set an example that other public bodies will wish to follow.

#### Bringing Together the Proposals in 'Putting Wales First' and 'Betterwales.com'

**Q14 Jonathan Morgan:** Does the Liberal Democrat-Labour administration plan to bring together the proposals in 'Putting Wales First: A Partnership for the People of Wales' and 'Betterwales.com' in a single document? (OAQ12652)

**The First Minister:** Yes. I understand that the Minister for Assembly Business will make a statement to that effect on Thursday.

#### European Union Enlargement

**Q15 Lynne Neagle:** What meetings has the First Minister had with the Secretary of State for Wales regarding the enlargement of the European Union? (OAQ12673)

**The First Minister:** I have regular meetings with the Secretary of State on a variety of issues, including the effects of EU enlargement on Wales. My officials are also in regular contact with their Whitehall colleagues on enlargement issues.

#### Effectiveness of Consultation between the Assembly and the UK Government

**Q16 Nick Bourne:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the effectiveness of consultation between the National Assembly for Wales and the UK Government via the Secretary of State for Wales? (OAQ12674)

**The First Minister:** Our relationship with the UK Government is generally close and productive, both with the Secretary of State for Wales or via the Secretary of State with other Ministers.

#### Public Inquiry into the Foot and Mouth Disease Crisis

**Q17 Peter Rogers:** What discussions has the First Minister had with the Prime Minister on co-ordinating a full and independent public inquiry into the foot and mouth disease crisis and its effects on all sectors of society, once the disease has been eliminated? (OAQ12653) [R]

**The First Minister:** I have had no such discussions with the Prime Minister.

### **Monitoring Cabinet Ministers' Work over the Summer Recess**

**Q18 Janet Davies:** What procedures are in place to allow the Assembly to monitor Cabinet Ministers' work over the summer recess? (OAQ12657)

**The First Minister:** My Cabinet colleagues and I will continue to make decisions and publicise them appropriately. How Assembly Members act on that information is a matter for them.

### **Official Engagements over the Summer Recess**

**Q19 David Lloyd:** How many official engagements will the First Minister and his Cabinet Ministers fulfil over the summer recess? (OAQ12667)

**The First Minister:** I and other members of my Cabinet will continue to exercise our ministerial responsibilities, including extensive official engagements, throughout the summer recess, with the exception of periods when individual Cabinet members take family holidays.

### **Improving Wales's Profile Abroad**

**Q20 Kirsty Williams:** What discussions has the First Minister had with the Secretary of State for Wales regarding improving Wales's profile abroad? (OAQ12679)

**The First Minister:** There have been ongoing discussions with the Secretary of State for Wales and his officials on Wales in the world and the role of the UK Government in promoting Wales abroad.

Raising the profile of Wales overseas is a key priority for the Cabinet. 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.

The Cabinet sub-committee that we have established on Wales in the world will develop and drive forward a full programme of activities in this area.

We will continue to explore new opportunities and exploit existing ones to promote Wales.

### **Relationship between Wales and the Candidate Countries for EU Enlargement**

**Q21 Richard Edwards:** Can the First Minister make a statement on the relationship between Wales and the candidate countries for European Union enlargement? (OAQ12666) *Withdrawn.*

### **Darpariaeth Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus yng Nghanol De Cymru**

**C22 Owen John Thomas:** A wnaiff Prif Weinidog Cymru ddatganiad ynghylch y modd y mae darpariaeth gwasanaethau cyhoeddus yng Nghanol De Cymru wedi datblygu o dan y Llywodraeth bartneriaeth? (OAQ12651) [W]

**Prif Weinidog Cymru:** Mae'r cynigion sydd yn 'Rhoi Cymru'n Gyntaf' wedi arwain at ddarparu gwasanaethau cadarn a sicr ar gyfer pobl Canol De Cymru, a phobl ym mhob cwr o Gymru.

Yr ydym wedi datblygu cynigion radical ar gyfer cyfeiriad y gwasanaeth iechyd yn y dyfodol. Yr ydym hefyd wedi penodi Comisiynydd Plant Cymru ac wedi ennill deddfwriaeth i roi mwy o bwerau iddo. Yr ydym yn targedu gweithredu yn ein cymunedau mwyaf difreintiedig drwy Roi Cymunedau'n Gyntaf. Yr ydym wedi cyflwyno llaeth ysgol am ddim ar gyfer plant pump i saith oed, archwiliadau deintyddol a phresgripsiynau am ddim i bobl ifanc o dan 25 oed a mynediad am ddim i amgueddfeydd yng Nghymru.

Yr ydym hefyd wedi dechrau'r broses o gynllunio'r strategaeth datblygu economaidd genedlaethol newydd.

### **Provision of Public Services in South Wales Central**

**Q22 Owen John Thomas:** Will the First Minister make a statement on how the provision of public services has developed in South Wales Central under the partnership Government? (OAQ12651) [W]

**The First Minister:** The proposals contained within 'Putting Wales First' have provided for a firm and certain delivery of services for the people of South Wales Central, and all the people of Wales.

We have developed radical proposals for the future direction of the health service. We have also appointed the Children's Commissioner for Wales and have won legislation to provide him with more powers. We are targeting action on our most disadvantaged communities through Communities First. We have introduced free school milk for five to seven-year-olds, free dental checks and prescriptions for young people under 25 years of age and free entry to museums in Wales. We have also begun the process of devising the new national economic development strategy.

### **Consultation Documents issued by the Assembly**

**Q23 Brian Gibbons:** What steps is the First Minister taking to ensure that external organisations have a reasonable amount of time to study and respond to consultation documents issued by the Assembly? (OAQ12661) *Withdrawn.*

### **WalesTrade International Trip to South America**

**Q24 Alison Halford:** Would the First Minister make a statement about his recent WalesTrade International trip to South America? (OAQ12678)

**The First Minister:** I made a statement to Plenary on 20 June regarding the purpose of my visit. That purpose was to accompany a WalesTrade International trade mission to Argentina and Chile, to establish formal links with the Welsh colony in Patagonia, and to exchange views with senior figures in Argentinian and Chilean politics, including Presidents de la Rúa and Lagos.

When a trade mission of Welsh businesses is led by a senior Minister, the publicity surrounding the group is heightened, resulting in exporters benefiting from more doors being opened to their products and services. The feedback that I have had confirms that that was the case. The trade mission was successful, with orders won topping £56,000 and prospective orders totalling £4.2 million.

### **Co-ordinating Policy in North Wales**

**Q25 Christine Chapman:** Would the First Minister make a statement on progress regarding the co-ordination of policy in north Wales? (OAQ12672)

**The First Minister:** We have made significant progress on the co-ordination of policies in north Wales. For example, 54 offers of regional selective assistance were made in north Wales in the 12 months to 1 July. That, combined with private investment, is forecast to create 2,360 new jobs and has safeguarded a further 1,300 jobs. The A55 is now open as a transport and information communications technology link, and the Assembly is funding a direct passenger rail service between north and south Wales

I will continue, in my role as Minister with responsibility for co-ordinating policy for north Wales, to ensure that the region is properly represented and that it benefits fully from the excellent progress that we are making throughout Wales.

### **Monitoring the Cabinet over the Summer Recess**

**Q26 Jocelyn Davies:** How will the First Minister monitor the performance of his Cabinet colleagues over the summer recess? (OAQ12658)

**The First Minister:** Although only one Cabinet meeting has been scheduled for the recess period, there will be no shortage of opportunities for meetings with groups of, or individual, Cabinet Ministers.

### **Developing Relations between Wales and Ireland**

**Q27 John Griffiths:** What strategy will be followed to further develop relations between Wales and Ireland? (OAQ12677)

**The First Minister:** Relations between Wales and Ireland are excellent.

The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD, addressed the Assembly on St David's day this year. He also addressed the forum on Wales, Europe and the world at the Celtic Manor and his presence contributed greatly to the considerable success of the event.

The opening of the Irish Consulate in Cardiff has helped to cement the close historical and cultural links between Wales and Ireland, and recognises Wales's new position within the UK following devolution.

The British Ambassador to Ireland, Sir Ivor Roberts, also visited Wales in March and emphasised the opportunities for trade and co-operation between the two nations. As a result, a trade, investment and tourism mission to Ireland is being planned for early next year.

In addition, there have been a range of official-level contacts, and a WalesTrade International trade mission, including 27 Welsh companies, visited Ireland in November last year. WTI will also be involved in two sector-related events later this year.

We will continue to explore all opportunities to further develop relations between Wales and Ireland.