

## Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 18 March 2003

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

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

### Questions to the First Minister

#### Outstanding Government Commitments

**Q9 Elin Jones:** What discussions have you had with your Cabinet colleagues regarding any outstanding commitments to be achieved by your Government by the end of this Assembly term? (OAQ23284)  
*Transferred for written answer.*

**The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan):** I have had numerous discussions with colleagues about the Government commitments highlighted in 'Plan for Wales 2001'.

*Question 10 (OAQ23319) was answered in Plenary.*

#### Guidance for Local Authorities (Compensation Claims)

**Q11 William Graham:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the guidance that the National Assembly offers local authorities, to help them reduce the number of compensation claims against them? (OAQ23315) [R]

**The First Minister:** It is a matter for local authorities themselves to assess the likelihood of compensation claims against them and put in place arrangements to deal with such claims.

#### North Wales Policy Priorities

**Q12 Janet Ryder:** Will the First Minister make a statement on his Government's policy priorities, with regards to north Wales, for the next month? (OAQ23274)

**The First Minister:** The Welsh Assembly Government's policy priorities are set out in 'Plan for Wales 2001'—the continued improvement of public services, tackling social exclusion and promoting sustainable development. These are delivered in north Wales in accordance with the needs of local areas.

For example, north Wales will benefit from £16.5 million of transport grant over the next financial year, starting in April, for a range of projects including the improvement of bus services, better facilities for walkers and cyclists, and some major road improvements.

#### Achievements in Montgomeryshire

**Q13 Mick Bates:** What has been achieved by the Welsh Assembly Government in Montgomeryshire since the partnership Government was established? (OAQ23343)

**The First Minister:** Since the partnership Government was established, the Welsh Assembly Government has delivered on its commitments in 'Plan for Wales 2001'. This has brought benefits for Montgomeryshire and for all of Wales. For example, unemployment is down by almost 40 per cent in Montgomeryshire, which compares well to the all-Wales reduction of over 30 per cent.

### **Increasing Voter Participation (Assembly Elections)**

**Q14 Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the role his Government will have in increasing voter participation in the forthcoming Assembly elections? (OAQ23275)

**The First Minister:** The Assembly works closely with the Electoral Commission, which has the prime responsibility for promoting voter awareness for all elections. The Welsh Assembly Government has already taken steps to encourage voter participation for the elections on 1 May by introducing a scheme to assist local authorities with the funding of ramps for polling booths, and by engaging with the Welsh Local Government Association to encourage local authorities to promote rolling registration and postal voting.

### **The Effect of the Government's Transport Policies**

**Q15 Geraint Davies:** Will the First Minister make a statement on how his Government's transport policies have affected the people of the south Wales Valleys? (OAQ23283)

**The First Minister:** A programme of major investment is already taking place and more is planned over the next five years in road and integrated transport development. These include the construction of the Cwm bypass, the Porth Lower Rhondda Fach relief road, the Bargoed regeneration scheme and major rail improvements on the Valley lines and including access to and from Queen Street station together with the re-opening of the Ebbw valley railway. Taken together, these will improve access to valley communities and introduce better public transport. The availability of free local bus travel to pensioners and disabled people will also provide enhanced opportunities for travel and improve quality of life.