

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 19 June 2001

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

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

Questions to the First Minister

Assembly Relations with Business

Q13 Christine Chapman: What discussions has the First Minister had with the relevant bodies about further developing Assembly relations with business? (OAQ11987)

The First Minister: Discussions are continuing with the main business organisations and the Wales Trades Union Congress with the aim of establishing a business and social partners support unit. That will assist the business community in engaging more effectively with the Assembly and other public agencies in Wales and provide better quality input into decision-making. That unit will also help to support business involvement in the European structural fund programmes. Officials from the Welsh European Funding Office have held discussions with business and social partners about providing co-ordinators/facilitators at a regional level and proposals will be considered at the next Objective 1 monitoring committee meeting.

Combating Poverty in the Developing World

Q14 John Griffiths: How can the Assembly contribute towards policies to combat poverty in the developing world? (OAQ12010)

The First Minister: Policies to combat poverty in the developing world are not devolved matters. The Government is committed to the internationally-agreed target of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. My colleagues and I support that aim.

Public Accountability of the Cabinet

Q15 Jocelyn Davies: What plans does the First Minister have to increase the public accountability of his Cabinet? (OAQ11989) *Withdrawn.*

International Summits (Promoting Wales)

Q16 Brian Hancock: Does the First Minister plan to attend any international summits in the next year to promote Wales in the wider world? (OAQ11991) *Withdrawn.*

The Partnership Agreement (Monmouthshire)

Q17 David Davies: Will the First Minister make a statement on how the partnership agreement has affected Monmouthshire? (OAQ12003)

The First Minister: The proposals contained in 'Putting Wales First: A Partnership for the People of Wales' are aimed to benefit the people of Monmouthshire, and people throughout Wales.

Since making the agreement, 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.

‘Betterwales.com’ and ‘Putting Wales First’

Q18 Ieuan Wyn Jones: Will the First Minister give an update on the relationship between proposals contained in ‘Betterwales.com’ and the programme outlined in ‘Putting Wales First’? (OAQ11996) *Withdrawn.*

The Future Formation of the House of Lords

Q19 David Melding: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Secretary of State for Wales about steps towards ensuring that, in any debate on the future formation of the House of Lords, the case for direct representation of Wales will be made? (OAQ12006)

The First Minister: I have had no such discussions. The Wakeham report in January 2000 recommended that a reformed House of Lords should provide a direct voice for all the nations and regions of the UK. I support that principle and will urge the UK Government to incorporate it as and when it brings forward firm proposals for further reform of the Lords.

‘Putting Wales First’ (Revision of Targets)

Q20 Cynog Dafis: Does the First Minister have plans to revise the targets contained in ‘Putting Wales First’? (OAQ12000) *Withdrawn.*

Joint Ministerial Committee

Q21 Richard Edwards: Will the First Minister give a progress report on the Joint Ministerial Committee? (OAQ11998) *Withdrawn.*

Assembly’s European Union Policy

Q22 Alun Cairns: How will the First Minister approach the Assembly’s European Union policy in light of difficulties experienced by Welsh public sector organisations in handling their European matters? (OAQ12012)

The First Minister: The Assembly is responsible for its EU policy and I feel positive about our engagement in that. We aim to work closely in partnership with other public bodies, but they are responsible for their policies. I am not aware of any specific difficulties.

Implementing Commitments in ‘Putting Wales First’

Q23 Gareth Jones: What recent action has the First Minister taken to ensure that the commitments in ‘Putting Wales First’ are implemented? (OAQ12005) *Withdrawn.*

International Summits (Promoting Wales)

Q24 Geraint Davies: Does the First Minister plan to attend any international summits during the next year to promote Wales? (OAQ12004)

The First Minister: I have no specific plans to attend any international summits over the next year, but I regularly attend meetings in Europe with my counterparts from other regional European governments and influential and high profile personalities from further afield. Both aspects are important in developing and raising the profile of Wales globally, which is one of the Cabinet’s key priorities.

The Queen's Speech

Q25 William Graham: Will the First Minister make a statement outlining any discussions that he has held with representatives of the Westminster Government concerning the inclusion of policies that relate specifically to Wales in the next Queen's Speech? (OAQ12011)

The First Minister: I have had several discussions with UK Ministers regarding the Government's forward legislative programme and how it relates to Wales.

National Assembly Performance Report 1999-2000 (New Measures)

Q26 David Lloyd: Will there be any new measures introduced following on from the findings of the 'National Assembly for Wales Performance Report 1999-2000'? (OAQ11993) *Withdrawn.*

Overseas Summits

Q27 Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the First Minister represent the National Assembly in any overseas summits in the next year? (OAQ11992) *Withdrawn.*

Partnerships with Business

Q28 Nick Bourne: How is the First Minister monitoring the effectiveness of partnerships with businesses established in the mid and west Wales area? (OAQ11997)

The First Minister: The Business Partnership Council is an advisory body that promotes joint working and co-operation between the Assembly and the business community in all parts of Wales. Council business and evaluation is facilitated by annual reports and all meetings are open to the public. As such, the council is open to scrutiny from the public and Assembly Members. Business organisations are also encouraged to raise any specific concerns about policy development with Cabinet members, officials and through the Assembly's Subject and Regional Committees.