

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 19 December 2000

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

Questions to the First Minister

The Queen's Speech (Benefits for Wales)

Q9 Kirsty Williams: Will the First Minister make a statement on the specific benefits for Wales contained in the recent Queen's Speech in the Westminster Parliament? (OAQ8592)

The First Minister: I will make a statement on the Queen's Speech's effect on Wales and the specific benefits contained in it during this afternoon's Plenary debate.

The Wrexham URBAN II Bid (Discussions)

Q10 Karen Sinclair: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions about the Wrexham URBAN II bid? (OAQ8594)

The First Minister: The Department of Trade and Industry, rather than DETR, is responsible for submitting all the UK URBAN II programmes to the European Commission together. The Commission's guidelines suggested that there should be nine URBAN II programmes for the UK and I have agreed with DTI Ministers that there should be one such programme for Wales. West Wrexham has been selected. Although the DTI is currently discussing the total number of programmes in the UK with the Commission, the position remains that the west Wrexham programme will not be affected.

Protocol on the Freedom of Information

Q11 Brian Hancock: Will the First Minister make a statement on the introduction of a protocol on the freedom of information by the end of 2000? (OAQ8609)

The First Minister: I am committed to maximising openness in the National Assembly. Earlier this year I asked officials to undertake a review of the Assembly's Code of Practice on Public Access to Information. That review is looking at how the code meets the new open style of government that we are developing within the Assembly.

The partnership agreement included the commitment that there would be a protocol on freedom of information by the end of 2000. The protocol will carry forward the best elements of the existing code and fully embrace the principles on open government that I outlined in my statement on 21 March. The protocol will anticipate and address, as appropriate, the legislative requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, which will, in due course, have statutory force as far as the Assembly is concerned. Substantial delays in the Parliamentary passage of the Freedom of Information Bill, and proposed amendments, late in the day, to important clauses within the Bill, have held up the development of the protocol. It will be finalised as early and as quickly as possible in the new year. In the meantime, we will continue to adhere to the promotion of openness whenever and wherever possible.

Progress with Constitutional Review

Q12 Ieuan Wyn Jones: Will the First Minister make a brief statement on progress with constitutional review? (OAQ8608)

The First Minister: I assume that this refers to the review of Assembly operations. The review group, of which you are a member, met for the first time on 6 December.

Assembly Policies (Crosscutting Issues)

Q13 Jocelyn Davies: How will the First Minister ensure that policies developed by the Assembly address cross-cutting issues, such as sustainability, equal opportunity and lifelong learning? (OAQ8618)

The First Minister: I refer Jocelyn Davies to the answers that I gave to questions from Rhodri Glyn Thomas on 31 October and 14 November on our cross-cutting themes. In addition, 'Putting Wales First: A Partnership Agreement for the People of Wales' contains a wide series of measures that will promote lifelong learning in all its forms.

Assembly Policies (Environmental Policy)

Q14 Elin Jones: How will the First Minister ensure that all Assembly policies take environmental policy into account? (OAQ8611)

The First Minister: 'Putting Wales First: A Partnership Agreement for the People of Wales' committed us to the full integration of environmental and socially sustainable development throughout all Government policies. Within the framework of the Assembly's sustainable development scheme, we will establish a green audit of the Assembly's policies and current spending commitments, and ensure that all new policies and programmes take sustainable development into account. To underpin this, we shall develop appropriate review and appraisal tools urgently.

Where an assessment of environmental policy implications (rather than a full sustainable development assessment) is required, use can be made of guidance entitled 'Policy Appraisal and the Environment', which was published in 1998 by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions to help officials across Government and the public sector more generally ensure that environmental issues are considered as part of the policy-making process. The document offers a straightforward explanation of when and how to carry out an environmental appraisal. A copy is available to all Assembly staff on the OSIRIS bulletin board.

Co-ordinating Policy for North Wales

Q15 Nick Bourne: Can the First Minister report on his progress in the co-ordination of policy for north Wales? (OAQ8590)

The First Minister: As part of the partnership agreement, I have taken on personal responsibility for co-ordinating policy in north Wales. This involves a commitment to ensuring that the views of the people of north Wales are directly represented in the policies adopted by the Assembly.

Gweithredu Rhaglen Lywodraethu y Glymblaid Lafur-Ryddfrydol

C16 Dafydd Wigley: Pa ymgynghoriad a fu rhwng Prif Weinidog Cymru a Phrif Weinidog Prydain ynglŷn â'r camau y bydd angen eu cymryd i weithredu rhaglen lywodraethu y glymblaid Lafur-Ryddfrydol yng Nghymru? (OAQ8622)

Prif Weinidog Cymru: Nid wyf wedi trafod rhoi'r cytundeb partneriaeth ar waith yn benodol gyda'r Prif Weinidog. Cytundeb oedd hwn i ddarparu rhaglen ar faterion sydd wedi'u datganoli i Gymru. Rhoddais wybod i'r Prif Weinidog am y cytundeb wedi iddo gael ei wneud a chredaf ei fod yn deall bod angen cytundeb.

Bydd angen gwneud deddfwriaeth sylfaenol ar gyfer rhai rhannau o'r cytundeb maes o law, ar ôl i'r Cynulliad Cenedlaethol adolygu'r pynciau trafod. Unwaith y bydd y Cynulliad wedi pennu ei amcanion

bydd y Llywodraeth bartneriaeth yn pwysu am ddeddfwriaeth sylfaenol. Nid oes angen gwneud deddfwriaeth sylfaenol ar gyfer unrhyw ran o'r cytundeb ar hyn o bryd ac nid wyf felly wedi trafod angen y Cynulliad am ddeddfwriaeth.

Byddaf yn trafod y mater pan fydd angen gwneud hynny.

Implementing the Labour-Liberal Coalition's Programme for Government

Q16 Dafydd Wigley: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Prime Minister regarding the action required to implement the Labour-Liberal coalition's programme for government in Wales? (OAQ8622)

The First Minister: I have had no specific discussions with the Prime Minister on the implementation of the partnership agreement. This was an agreement to deliver a programme on matters that have been devolved to Wales. I informed the Prime Minister of the agreement once it had been made and I believe that he understands the need for the agreement.

Some parts of the agreement will, in due course, require primary legislation after a review of the issues by the National Assembly. Once the Assembly has determined its objectives, the partnership Government will press for primary legislation. There is no part of the agreement that requires primary legislation at this time and, therefore, I have not discussed the Assembly's need for legislation. I will do so when the time is right.

The Representation of North and West Wales in the Cabinet

Q17 Richard Edwards: Will the First Minister make a statement about the representation of north and west Wales in the Cabinet? (OAQ8588) *Withdrawn.*

The Civil Service's Relationship with the National Assembly

Q18 David Davies: Will the First Minister make a statement on any action taken to promote discussion with the civil service in Wales on its relationship with the National Assembly? (OAQ8606)

The First Minister: I am, of course, in contact with the Assembly's civil service daily. As I made clear in my recent letter to the chair of the Assembly's trade unions, I regard the Assembly's staff as its key resource. Members of the Assembly's civil service are also in regular contact with Government departments and agencies in Wales in the normal course of business.

Communities First (Co-ordinating Policy in North Wales)

Q19 Alison Halford: What actions are to be taken to co-ordinate policy in north Wales to ensure the success of the Communities First proposals? (OAQ8595)

The First Minister: The Assembly's proposals for implementing Communities First are set out in the consultation paper launched on 6 December by the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities. One of the issues raised in the paper is how areas are to be selected for inclusion in the programme. We are seeking views on how this can be undertaken and how we can ensure that we target the communities in most need throughout the whole of Wales, including north Wales. Once the programme is set up and local action plans have been agreed, we and the community partnerships will be monitoring the programme and measuring progress. We will be ensuring that the Communities First programme links closely with other major programmes, including those from Europe so that our primary objectives are achieved. The Assembly has the overview of all these programmes and will be able to co-ordinate them effectively, regardless of whether a community is based in north, south or mid Wales.

European Policy Development Regarding Climate Change (Wales's Contribution)

Q20 Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the First Minister make a brief statement on Wales's contribution to policy development regarding climate change at a European level? (OAQ8616) *Withdrawn.*

Implementing 'Putting Wales First'

Q21 Jonathan Morgan: Will the First Minister make a statement on progress towards implementing 'Putting Wales First: A Partnership Agreement for the People of Wales'? (OAQ8583) *Withdrawn.*

The Rural White Paper (Impact for Wales)

Q22 Christine Gwyther: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Secretary of State for Wales on the impact for Wales of the rural White Paper? (OAQ8593) *Withdrawn.*

UK Government Bills (Greater Input by Assembly)

Q23 Peter Black: What action has the First Minister taken to ensure that the National Assembly has greater input into UK Government Bills? (OAQ8587)

The First Minister: I refer you to the answers that I gave on this matter in Plenary on 19 December.

Hwyluso'r Broses o Ddefnyddio Deddfwriaeth Eilaidd

C24 Owen John Thomas: Pa drafodaethau y mae Prif Weinidog Cymru wedi eu cael gyda Gweinidogion San Steffan ynghylch hwyluso'r broses o ddefnyddio deddfwriaeth eilaidd er mwyn ymdrin ag anghenion Cymru? (OAQ8586)

Prif Weinidog Cymru: Mater i'r Cynulliad yw defnyddio'i bwerau i wneud is-ddeddfwriaeth er lles Cymru. Byddaf i a'm cydweithwyr yn dal i bwysu ar y Cynulliad i dderbyn pwerau priodol o'r fath ym mhob Mesur.

Facilitating the Process of Using Secondary Legislation

Q24 Owen John Thomas: What discussions has the First Minister had with Ministers in Westminster regarding facilitating the process of using secondary legislation in order to deal with the needs of Wales? (OAQ8586)

The First Minister: It is for the Assembly to use its powers of subordinate legislation in the interests of Wales. I and my colleagues will continue to press for the Assembly to receive appropriate such powers in all Bills.

Increased Profile for Wales within the United Kingdom

Q25 Pauline Jarman: What plans does the First Minister have regarding an increased profile for Wales within the United Kingdom? (OAQ8615) *Withdrawn.*

Policy Consultation between the Assembly and Westminster

Q26 Helen Mary Jones: Will the First Minister make a brief statement on policy consultation between the Assembly and Westminster? (OAQ8612) *Withdrawn.*

The Administration's Forward Work Programme for 2000-01

Q27 David Melding: Will the First Minister make a statement on the administration's forward work programme for 2000-01, as announced on 21 November? (OAQ8585) *Withdrawn.*

Development of Assembly Policy (Social Inclusion)

Q28 Gareth Jones: How will the First Minister ensure that social inclusion is addressed in the overall development of Assembly policy? (OAQ8620) *Withdrawn.*

The Queen's Speech (Implications for Wales)

Q29 Mick Bates: Will the First Minister make a statement on the implications for Wales of this year's Queen's Speech? (OAQ8589)

The First Minister: I will make a statement on the implications for Wales of this year's Queen's Speech during the Plenary debate on 19 December.

The First Minister's Responsibilities for North Wales

Q30 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? (OAQ8584)

The First Minister: I am committed to ensuring that north Wales is properly represented in the work of the Assembly. Since the announcement of the partnership agreement, I have made clear that I will endeavour to attend meetings of the North Wales Regional Committee when invited. I attended the last meeting on 8 December, where I was able to respond to the views of local representatives and people.