

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 26 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

‘National Assembly for Wales Performance Report 1999-2000’

Q11 Cynog Dafis: What action does the First Minister propose to take to deal with the findings of the ‘National Assembly for Wales Performance Report 1999-2000’? (OAQ12148)

The First Minister: The performance report covers the full 1999–2000 financial year and, consequently, covers a period that pre-dates the Assembly. The Government of Wales has set out in the partnership agreement the actions that it proposes to take over the remaining period of the present term of the National Assembly for Wales.

Promoting Wales in the Wider World

Q12 Pauline Jarman: Does the First Minister plan to attend any international summits in the next year to promote Wales in the wider world? (OAQ12143)

The First Minister: I have no specific plans to attend any international summits over the next year but, from time to time, I attend meetings in Europe with my counterparts from other regional tier European governments and others.

I have recently returned from leading an Assembly trade mission to Argentina and Chile, where I met the presidents of both countries.

Implementing Commitments in ‘Putting Wales First’

Q13 Janet Davies: What recent action has the First Minister taken to ensure that the commitments in ‘Putting Wales First: A Partnership for the People of Wales’ are implemented? (OAQ12142)

The First Minister: A statement on the progress of the partnership agreement commitments was made in Plenary on 20 March 2001. I am pleased to say that, since then, we have introduced free dental checks and prescriptions for young people under the age of 25.

My plans are that all commitments will be honoured and implemented by 1 May 2003. We will update the Assembly periodically on our achievements.

Policy Co-ordination between Westminster and the National Assembly for Wales

Q14 Richard Edwards: What effect will the newly reformed Cabinet Office in Whitehall have on policy co-ordination between Westminster and the National Assembly for Wales? (OAQ12156) *Withdrawn.*

Establishing Relations with the National Assembly for Wales

Q15 Christine Gwyther: What discussions has the First Minister had with the newly appointed members of the Westminster Cabinet to establish relations with the National Assembly for Wales? (OAQ12161) *Withdrawn.*

Development of Assembly Policy

Q16 Alun Cairns: What impact has the partnership agreement had on the development of Assembly policy? (OAQ12137)

The First Minister: The partnership agreement has provided for firm and certain delivery for the people of Wales. A statement on the achievements so far with regard to 'Putting Wales First' was made on 20 March 2001.

Improving the Quality of Life for the People of Monmouthshire

Q17 David Davies: How has the implementation of the policies set out in the partnership agreement improved the quality of life for people in Monmouthshire? (OAQ12153)

The First Minister: I refer you to my answer to a similar question on 19 June 2001. The proposals contained in 'Putting Wales First' 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. All these policies will benefit the people of Monmouthshire.

Promoting Wales

Q18 Geraint Davies: Does the First Minister plan to attend any international summits during the next year to promote Wales? (OAQ12146)

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. Both aspects are important in developing and raising the profile of Wales globally, which is one of the Cabinet's key priorities.

I have recently returned from leading an Assembly trade mission to Argentina and Chile, where I met the presidents of both countries.

Public Accountability of the Cabinet

Q19 Dafydd Wigley: What plans does the First Minister have to increase the public accountability of his Cabinet? (OAQ12141)

The First Minister: The Assembly's Cabinet is accountable to the Assembly in respect of all its actions and, ultimately, to the people of Wales at the ballot box. My commitment to open government is part of this process. That is why I decided, on becoming First Minister, to publish minutes of Cabinet meetings and why I have now decided that Cabinet papers should also be published.

North Wales Economic Forum

Q20 Alison Halford: What discussions has the First Minister had with the North Wales Economic Forum about its application to the European Union innovative actions programme? (OAQ12154)

The First Minister: I have had no such discussions. However, following the proposals outlined in the consultation paper, 'Towards A Sustainable Wales', an independent steering committee was established—including representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors—to prepare the Welsh application for funding under this new European programme. The Deputy First Minister has written separately to the chairs of the skills group and the competitive business group at the North Wales Economic Forum about their project proposal.

Revising the Targets in 'Putting Wales First'

Q21 Jocelyn Davies: Does the First Minister have plans to revise the targets contained in 'Putting Wales First'? (OAQ12150) *Withdrawn.*

Delivering Proposals Contained in 'Putting Wales First'

Q22 Gareth Jones: What discussions has the First Minister had with the business community in north Wales in relation to the delivery of the proposals contained in 'Putting Wales First'? (OAQ12147)

The First Minister: I met the North Wales Business Club on the evening of Thursday 21 June at St Georges Hotel, Llandudno. We discussed a number of issues related to the Assembly and north Wales.

Effects of EU Enlargement on Wales

Q23 Christine Chapman: What discussion has the First Minister had with relevant bodies regarding the effects of European Union enlargement on Wales? (OAQ12158) *Withdrawn.*