

## Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 27 March 2001

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

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

### Questions to the First Minister

#### EU Structure

**Q12 Elin Jones:** Can the First Minister make a brief statement on the National Assembly for Wales's involvement in the debate about the future structure of the European Union? (OAQ10564) *Transferred for written answer.*

**The First Minister:** The European Commission White Paper on governance, publication of which is planned for July, heralds a wide-ranging debate on how the EU is governed. In the first instance, the White Paper will be considered by the Committee on European Affairs. It is too early yet to predict the agenda for the 2004 intergovernmental conference but I will monitor these developments closely.

#### 'Putting Wales First'

**Q13 Jonathan Morgan:** Would the First Minister give a progress report on the implementation of 'Putting Wales First: A Partnership for the People of Wales'? (OAQ10573) *Withdrawn.*

#### European Single Currency

**Q14 Christine Gwyther:** What discussions has the First Minister had with his ministerial colleagues at Westminster about the potential implications to Wales of the euro when it becomes fully operational in 2002? (OAQ10575) *Withdrawn.*

#### Health and Social Inclusion

**Q15 Janet Davies:** Can the First Minister make a statement on how the Assembly, through the development and co-ordination of health, social care and social inclusion issues, plans to help the 40 per cent of adults in Wales whose health interferes with their daily social activities? (OAQ10559) *Withdrawn.*

#### The Welsh Language

**Q16 Helen Mary Jones:** Can the First Minister make a brief statement about how the Welsh language affects all areas of Assembly policy, including health care, education and economic development? (OAQ10552) *Withdrawn.*

#### North Wales

**Q17 Gareth Jones:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the recent progression of the National Assembly for Wales's policy and strategy in north Wales? (OAQ10554) *Withdrawn.*

#### International Policy

**Q18 Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the strength of relations between Wales, the United Kingdom and the rest of the European Union regarding international policy? (OAQ10555) *Withdrawn.*

### **Links between Wales and Europe**

**Q19 Brian Hancock:** Can the First Minister make a statement on recent efforts to develop closer links between Wales and the rest of Europe? (OAQ10558) *Withdrawn.*

*Questions 20 and 21 were answered in Plenary.*

### **The Wales European Centre**

**Q22 Glyn Davies:** Will the First Minister outline the role of the Wales European Centre? (OAQ10579)

**The First Minister:** The Wales European Centre is a partnership, based in Brussels, which provides to its members a range of services relating to the European Union. Its central function is to provide intelligence and assistance on lobbying in Brussels. The National Assembly is one of the Wales European Centre's partner organisations.

### **Voter Awareness**

**Q23 Richard Edwards:** What discussions has the First Minister had with his Westminster colleagues about developing ways of increasing voter awareness in Wales? (OAQ10576) *Withdrawn.*

### **Cross-sector Business Partnerships**

**Q24 Alun Cairns:** What progress has been made towards developing business partnerships across all sectors of Wales? (OAQ10582)

**The First Minister:** Since its inaugural meeting on 16 December 1999, the Business Partnership Council has met five times. Originally intended to meet twice yearly, it now meets three times a year. The fifth meeting was an extra meeting to consider four key documents presented by the Assembly for consultation, including the review of business support. We have agreed, in principle, to fund a social partners unit, to facilitate statutory consultations and assist the processes surrounding Objective 1. Four regional economic fora now exist, which, together, cover the whole of Wales. Their task is to support regional priorities for economic growth and inform the strategies of business development organisations. We also support a range of industry fora, bringing together companies, academic groups and business support organisations in specific technological areas.

### **Improving Relations between Wales and Europe**

**Q25 Nick Bourne:** Will the First Minister make a statement on his efforts to improve relations between Wales and the rest of Europe? (OAQ10574)

**The First Minister:** I have regular meetings with representatives from a variety of European Union institutions to discuss European issues, including ways in which the Assembly can strengthen links between Wales and the rest of Europe. Last month, I visited Brussels for a series of meetings to discuss Wales's profile and the policy agenda in the EU.

The St David's Day event at the Celtic Manor Hotel also provided an opportunity for a wide-ranging debate on Wales, Europe and the wider world. The Prime Minister of Ireland, one of our nearest EU neighbours, delivered a key address at that event, which was attended by UK-based diplomats representing European countries and much further afield.

Our Brussels office is now a well-established part of the UK Permanent Representation family and we are a key partner of the Wales European Centre.

In addition, our membership of the Committee of the Regions and the willingness of Assembly Members to engage at a European level is raising the profile of Wales in Europe.

I shall welcome President Pujol of Catalonia to Wales on 6 April.

### **The Foot and Mouth Crisis**

**Q26 Peter Black:** How is the First Minister co-ordinating policy initiatives to help the areas of Wales that have been particularly affected by the foot and mouth crisis? (OAQ10546)

**The First Minister:** Overall responsibility rests with the Cabinet. The Deputy First Minister and the Minister for Rural Affairs are leading on the day-to-day co-ordination of the National Assembly's response to foot and mouth disease.

### **Intergovernmental Conference**

**Q27 Phil Williams:** Can the First Minister make a brief statement on the role that the National Assembly for Wales will play in preparations for the next United Kingdom delegation to the intergovernmental conference? (OAQ10563) *Withdrawn.*

### **Environmental, Cultural, and Social Policy**

**Q28 Dafydd Wigley:** What measures is the First Minister using to ensure that community participation is promoted in all areas of environmental, cultural, and social policy? (OAQ10553) *Withdrawn.*