

## Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 30 January 2001

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

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

### Questions to the First Minister

#### Independent Commission into the Assembly's Powers

**Q12 Jocelyn Davies:** Will the First Minister make a statement on his plans to establish an independent commission into the powers of the National Assembly? (OAQ9165)

**The First Minister:** The plans for an independent commission remain as set out in the partnership agreement. The commission will need to take account of the full first term of the Assembly in reaching recommendations for the future. Arrangements for the membership of the commission, its terms of reference and working practices will be agreed closer to the time when it will begin work, in 2002-03. It will report soon after the next Assembly elections.

#### Implications of the Euro for Wales

**Q13 Christine Gwyther:** What discussions has the First Minister had with his ministerial colleagues at Westminster about the potential implications for Wales of the euro when it becomes fully operational in 2002? (OAQ9168) *Withdrawn.*

#### Rising Levels of Violent Crimes

**Q14 Dafydd Wigley:** What discussions has the First Minister had with the Secretary of State for Wales regarding the rising levels of violent crimes in Wales? (OAQ9155)

**The First Minister:** I have not discussed the recent British crime survey figures with the Secretary of State.

#### Changes to the Assembly's European Policy

**Q15 Alun Cairns:** Will the First Minister make a statement on any changes that he has made to the Assembly's European policy? (OAQ9160)

**The First Minister:** The most recent change is that Tom Middlehurst has replaced me as one of the Assembly's representatives on the board of the Wales European Centre. There have been several developments in implementing the Assembly's existing policy of closer engagement with European institutions, including Assembly Ministers' attendance at three recent Council of Ministers meetings and my attendance at a meeting in Barcelona of representatives of important European regional governments.

#### Policy Development of Cross-cutting Issues

**Q16 Nick Bourne:** Can the First Minister make a statement on the latest developments as regards policy development of cross-cutting issues for Wales? (OAQ9167)

**The First Minister:** On combating social disadvantage, the second consultation exercise on the Communities First programme is currently being undertaken and is due to end on 16 March 2001. A new community regeneration and social inclusion unit was recently established to implement the Communities First programme and to drive forward the social exclusion agenda.

The sustainable development action plan is scheduled for Plenary debate on Thursday 15 February. 'Towards a Sustainable Wales', a consultation paper, is now on the Assembly website. The paper seeks comments on its content and potential bids for the European innovative actions programme.

On equality of opportunity, we have established networks with three major voluntary sector equality organisations—the All-Wales Ethnic Minority Association, Disability Wales and Wales Women's National Coalition—to assist our dialogue with voluntary sector equality organisations. The equality policy unit continues to co-ordinate the equality audit of Assembly practices and policies.

### **Policy Consultation between the Assembly Cabinet and Westminster**

**Q17 Geraint Davies:** Will the First Minister make a brief statement on how policy consultation is conducted between the Assembly Cabinet and Westminster? (OAQ9153)

**The First Minister:** I have regular meetings with the Secretary of State for Wales to discuss policy issues, and Cabinet colleagues meet their Westminster opposite numbers throughout the year. We also have formal meetings through the Joint Ministerial Committee. Officials also consult as appropriate with Westminster colleagues in support of such policy development.

### **UK Delegation to EU Council of Ministers Meetings**

**Q18 Ieuan Wyn Jones:** Will the First Minister make a statement on the process by which members of his Cabinet are included in the UK delegation to the European Union Council of Ministers meetings? (OAQ9150)

**The First Minister:** I refer you to paragraphs 3.12 to 3.15 of the concordat agreed with the UK Government on the co-ordination of European Union policy issues, which set out the general position.

We are notified by Whitehall departments of future dates for Council of Ministers meetings and, so far as possible, of agenda items likely to be taken at those meetings. It is then for my ministerial colleagues to consider whether their attendance at particular meetings might be appropriate, and to secure the agreement of the lead UK Minister to such attendance. It should be recognised that the UK delegation to each council meeting is necessarily limited in size, and that Scottish and Northern Irish Ministers may also wish to attend particular meetings as well as Assembly Ministers. It may therefore not be possible for an Assembly Minister, or a Scottish or Northern Irish Minister, to attend each council meeting in which they have expressed an interest. Nevertheless, Assembly Ministers have recently attended Agriculture, Health, Education and Youth Councils, Jane Davidson having led for the UK at the Youth Council.

### **Social Exclusion in Wales**

**Q19 Christine Chapman:** What response will the First Minister make to the report of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee into social exclusion in Wales? (OAQ9146)

**The First Minister:** I welcome the Committee's thorough examination of social exclusion. I will, in conjunction with other Cabinet members, look carefully at the recommendations relevant to our remit put forward in the report.

### **The Social, Economic and Cultural Development of Wales**

**Q20 Richard Edwards:** In his role as policy development co-ordinator, what is the First Minister doing to promote community involvement in the social, economic and cultural development of Wales? (OAQ9169) *Withdrawn.*

### **The Assembly's Relations with the UK Government**

**Q21 Pauline Jarman:** Will the First Minister make a brief statement on the Assembly's relations with the UK Government? (OAQ9166)

**The First Minister:** My colleagues and I have a cordial and constructive relationship with our counterparts in the UK Government.

### **Public Understanding of Sustainable Development and Social Inclusion**

**Q22 Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** How will the Assembly promote public understanding of sustainable development and social inclusion? (OAQ9157)

**The First Minister:** Development of a strategy to raise awareness and promote understanding of sustainable development issues will form part of the draft action plan for implementing the sustainable development scheme.

An action plan on social disadvantage is being prepared, which will monitor changes in key indicators and appraise progress across all the Assembly's areas of responsibility. Examples of key indicators might include access to services, housing quality and educational attainment.

### **The State of the Nation**

**Q23 Cynog Dafis:** Will the First Minister make a brief statement on the discussion in the Business Partnership Council on the state of the nation? (OAQ9152)

**The First Minister:** A paper giving an overview of the state of business in Wales was presented and discussed at the last meeting of the Business Partnership Council on 1 December. Details of that discussion are available in the minutes, which are now on the internet and intranet.

### **Arian Ychwanegol i Awdurdod Heddlu De Cymru**

**C24 Owen John Thomas:** A yw Prif Weinidog Cymru wedi cael unrhyw drafodaethau gyda'r Ysgrifennydd Cartref ynghylch sicrhau arian ychwanegol i Awdurdod Heddlu De Cymru gyflawni dyletswyddau arbennig yn y brifddinas? (OAQ9162) [W]

**Prif Weinidog Cymru:** Nac ydwyf, ond petai Awdurdod Heddlu De Cymru yn gwneud cais mor rhesymol, byddwn, wrth gwrs, yn barod i gyfleu fy nghefnogaeth i'r cais hwnnw i'r Ysgrifennydd Cartref.

### **Additional Funding for South Wales Police Authority**

**Q24 Owen John Thomas:** Has the First Minister had any discussions with the Home Secretary about securing additional funding for South Wales Police Authority to fulfil special duties in the capital city? (OAQ9162) [W]

**The First Minister:** No, but should South Wales Police Authority make such a well-founded application, I would, of course, be prepared to convey my support for it to the Home Secretary.

### **Non-devolved Matters concerning Wales**

**Q25 Jonathan Morgan:** Has the First Minister had discussions with the Secretary of State for Wales regarding matters concerning Wales not devolved to the Assembly? (OAQ9170) *Withdrawn.*

### **The Assembly's Relations with the European Union**

**Q26 Janet Davies:** Will the First Minister make a brief statement on the Assembly's relations with the European Union? (OAQ9156)

**The First Minister:** Relations with the European Union are the responsibility of the Government of the United Kingdom. However, the National Assembly is consulted on issues relating to the EU, and is able to have an input into UK policy, as outlined in the concordat on co-ordination of European Union policy issues. The establishment of the Assembly's office in Brussels, together with our membership of the Wales European Centre, makes us much better placed than previously to contribute to European policy developments.

### **The British Council**

**Q27 Phil Williams:** What discussions has the First Minister had with the British Council to ensure that Wales is given adequate emphasis in the activities of the British Council throughout the world? (OAQ9151)

**The First Minister:** I have not specifically discussed this issue with the British Council. However, the Director of British Council Wales meets three times a year with a National Assembly all-party group, with a view to helping the Assembly with the promotion of Wales through the British Council's overseas network of 110 offices.

The chair of the British Council Wales Advisory Committee sits on the main British Council board to ensure that relevant devolution issues, including the promotion of Wales overseas, are brought to the attention of the board. A senior official of the Assembly sits on the British Council Wales Advisory Committee.

Additionally, the Director of British Council Wales is closely involved in work being undertaken to develop a more coherent approach to the promotion of Wales overseas.