

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 12 March 2002

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

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

Questions to the First Minister

Primary Legislation

Q11 David Melding: Will the First Minister make a statement on the measures used by the Assembly to influence the drafting of primary legislation? (OAQ16198)

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): My colleagues, officials and I have very regular discussions with our Whitehall counterparts on the terms of primary legislation.

Visit to North Wales

Q12 Alun Pugh: Will the First Minister make a statement on his recent visit to north Wales, which included visits to the Conwy Business Centre, the BAE factory at Broughton and the Alcoa plant at Dolgarrog? (OAQ16195)

The First Minister: I formally opened the Conwy Business Centre at Llandudno Junction on 7 February. I had the opportunity to view the facilities and meet a number of the business support staff and several of the entrepreneurs who are using the centre as a business base. The following day, I visited the Alcoa plant at Dolgarrog with the Presiding Officer and yourself, together with representatives of the Welsh Development Agency and Conwy County Borough Council. We had a constructive meeting with the plant's general manager and the group's European director together with its accountants, KPMG. I then spent several hours at the Airbus plant at Broughton where I launched the newly constituted North Wales Aerospace Group. Companies of all sizes attended and the feedback to date suggested that this was a highly successful beginning.

Voter Apathy

Q13 Jonathan Morgan: In his capacity as policy developer for cross-cutting issues, what is the First Minister doing to address voter apathy? (OAQ16201)

The First Minister: Decreasing voter turnout is a widespread problem in most advanced western democracies. Responsibility for the conduct of elections lies with the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions and the Electoral Commission which have conducted several pilot schemes into innovative methods to encourage more people to vote, such as electronic voting and all-postal ballots. As regards the Assembly elections, Parliament is currently examining the secondary legislation necessary to bring the right of access to the universal postal vote in Assembly elections into line with that for parliamentary elections.

Impartiality of the Civil Service

Q14 Alun Cairns: What arrangements has the First Minister agreed with the Permanent Secretary to ensure special advisers do not compromise civil service impartiality? (OAQ16193)

The First Minister: The Permanent Secretary and I are satisfied that the work of special advisers in the Welsh Assembly Government does not compromise the impartiality of civil servants and that no changes to current arrangements are required.

Question 15 (OAQ16208) withdrawn.