

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 16 April 2002

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

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

Questions to the First Minister

Prosperity of the South Wales Valleys

Q6 Geraint Davies: How does the First Minister co-ordinate Assembly policies to ensure long-term prosperity for the south Wales Valleys? (OAQ16826) *Transferred for written answer.*

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): The Welsh Assembly Government is fully committed to implementing policies that ensure the long-term prosperity of the whole of Wales, including the south Wales Valleys.

We have recently announced £7 million support through the Corus package for the re-opening of the Ebbw Valley railway line to passenger traffic. In 2001, there were 22 foreign direct investment projects into the south Wales Valleys area, which is expected to create almost 1,500 new jobs and safeguard over 1,200. Capital expenditure for these projects is expected to total almost £79 million.

Ministerial Code of Conduct

Q11 Jocelyn Davies: Will the First Minister make a statement on the effectiveness of the ministerial code of conduct since its introduction? (OAQ16829)

The First Minister: The ministerial code is an effective and comprehensive code that will assist us to undertake our official duties in the way that upholds the highest standards.

Ministerial Relations with External Organisations

Q12 Rhodri Glyn Thomas: How does the First Minister monitor his ministerial colleagues' relationships with external organisations? (OAQ16827)

The First Minister: I meet regularly with all my Ministers, both in Cabinet and bilaterally.

Benefits for South Wales East

Q13 Brian Hancock: How have the policies of the Government of Wales benefited South Wales East? (OAQ16828)

The First Minister: The Welsh Assembly Government is working in South Wales East, as it is throughout Wales, to deliver its policies to spread prosperity and deliver key public services over both the medium and long term as set out in 'Plan for Wales 2001'.

We have recently announced the Greater Bargoed community regeneration scheme at an estimated cost of £17.4 million as part of a further major package of transport investment in Wales during 2002-03. In 2001, there were 22 foreign direct investment projects secured for the South Wales East constituency. Capital expenditure on these projects is expected to total over £120 million and will create over 1,500 new jobs and safeguard another 1,500.

Impact of the Forthcoming Budget on Wales

Q14 Peter Black: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the impact of the forthcoming budget on Wales? (OAQ16811)

The First Minister: There have been meetings and correspondence between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Treasury at official and ministerial level.

Development of the Universal Bank

Q15 Ann Jones: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Post Office regarding the development of the universal bank? (OAQ16815)

The First Minister: Although I have not had any specific meetings with Consignia about the universal bank, I understand that good progress is being made on its implementation, and that it is on schedule for introduction when benefit payments move over to automated credit transfer in 2003.