Introduction

Welcome to the Third Europe Matters newsletter. There was much excitement at the last meeting of the Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee as they held their first direct session with Brussels via video conference. A member of Cabinet for the EU’s Environment Commissioner, Stavros Dimas, discussed with them the EU's Biodiversity Action Plan and its implications for Wales and beyond.

As the Chair acknowledged, this a great way of bringing Brussels closer to home and helping our engagement with Europe. The European and External Affairs Committee will also be making more use of this technology at forthcoming meetings to allow us to have direct dialogue with EU decision makers.

As the Finnish Presidency of the EU passes its half-way mark, His Excellency Jaakko Laajava, Finland’s Ambassador to the UK, will be updating the European and External Affairs Committee on the 25th October on progress with their priorities and prospects for the remaining two months. We’ll also be taking further evidence in our review of European and global citizenship.

If you’d like to find out more about the work of the Committees on EU issues, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Sandy Mewies
Chair of the European and External Affairs Committee

Forward Look
European and External Affairs Committee

25 October 2006

♦ **Functions of the Committee in the Third Assembly** – Members will suggest what functions an EEAC might have in the 3rd Assembly, to aid the deliberations of the Standing Orders Committee.

♦ **EU Presidency** – Members will hear from His Excellency Jaakko Laajava, Ambassador of Finland to the UK on the progress of Finland’s Presidency of the EU.

♦ **European Citizenship Education Policy Review** – the Committee will receive evidence from Oxfam Cymru.

Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee

26 October 2006

♦ **CAP Simplification** – The Committee will discuss the recent conference on the simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy held by the European Commission in Brussels on 3-4 October 2006.

Related items

15 November 2006

♦ **All-Wales Fisheries Strategy** – the Committee will scrutinise the Welsh Assembly Government’s strategy.

Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee

Related items

9 November 2006

♦ **Review of EDT Committee’s Report on Energy Policy in Wales** – the meeting will be devoted to taking evidence to review developments since the Committee’s original report, which was adopted in two parts – in January 2003 ([part one](#)) and April 2003 ([part two](#)).

Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee

18 October 2006

♦ **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** – The Committee will receive a paper to note on the EQF and its relationship with the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales.
European and External Affairs Committee

27 September 2006

♦ First Minister's Report – items discussed include the state aids regional aid map; Wales’ “Contract of Confidence” with the European Commission in relation to auditing EU structural funds programmes; EU enlargement; Wales’ representation on Ecosoc.

♦ Structural Funds: Convergence Programme for West Wales & the Valleys – Members agreed to respond to the Welsh Assembly Government’s consultation.

♦ Subsidiarity Monitoring – the Committee agreed to consider participating in the Committee of the Regions’ second test of its subsidiarity monitoring network. The subject of the test will be the Commission documents on “the European Qualifications Framework” and “efficiency and equity in european education and training systems”.

Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee

11 October 2006

♦ Minister’s Report – The Minister’s report highlighted the Assembly Government's activities to celebrate the European Day of Languages (26 September 2006), with the focus being on bilingual working.

28 September 2006

♦ European Digital Libraries – The Committee examined the digitisation of cultural heritage (including EU plans for a European Digital Library), with a presentation from the National Library of Wales.

Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee

5 October 2006

♦ Special Educational Needs – The Committee visited Denmark to gather evidence for its on-going policy review on special educational needs.

Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee

20 September 2006

♦ Minister’s report – it included items on the progress on the structural
funds programmes and the launch of the convergence consultation document.

♦ **Structural Funds: Convergence Programme for West Wales & the Valleys** - Members agreed a response to the Welsh Assembly Government’s consultation.

**Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee**

11 October 2006

♦ **Biodiversity** – The Committee received a presentation from a Member of Cabinet of the EU’s Environment Commissioner, Stavros Dimas, on the Commission’s Communication ‘Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond’.

28 September 2006

♦ **Biodiversity** – The Committee had a discussion on the Welsh Assembly Government stance paper on the EU Commission’s Communication on ‘Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond’ and agreed to invite the Commission to present its document to the Committee.

♦ **Minister’s Report** – The Committee discussed with the Minister the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013 and the impact of EU negotiations on the draft rules on voluntary modulation; EU rules on Bluetongue and the EU’s Emissions Trading Scheme.

**Health and Social Services**

28 September 2006

♦ **Minister’s report** – Members received an update on “designed to Comply”, the Welsh Assembly Government’s report on NHS Wales’ compliance with the current European Working Time Directive.

**Local Government and Public Services**

4 October 2006

♦ **Update on EU issues** – Members requested further information from the Welsh Assembly Government on the implications for Wales of recent developments relating to EU public procurement rules.

*Please note transcripts may take 5-10 days to appear after the meeting has taken place*
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