

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Europe Matters

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The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.



Sandy Mewies speaking at event on fall of the Berlin Wall at Cardiff Council. In the photo are:

Back row, L-R: **Marcin Grabiec**, member of Vice President Wallstrom's Cabinet, European Commission; **Christopher Langen**, German Foreign Language Assistant; **Andy Klom**, Head of EC Office in Wales; **Peter Ferda**, Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic

Front row, L-R: **Halina Ashley**, Manager of the Polish Centre in Llanelli; **Sandy Mewies AM**; **Helga Rother-Simmonds**, German Consul to Wales



## Introduction

I am delighted to welcome you to the 16th issue of Europe Matters, our monthly update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

I would like to pay special tribute to Rhodri Morgan AM, who stepped down as First Minister on 8 December. Rhodri is a keen European, and advocate of an active Welsh voice in the European Union, through his regular update to the European and External Affairs Committee on the work of the Assembly Government in this area.

I look forward to working with his successor, Carwyn Jones AM.

Changes in Wales are mirrored by changes in Brussels, where there has been a flurry of activity following the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon at the beginning of November, which finally came into force on 1 December. One of the first actions was the agreement of appointments to the two new “top jobs” created by the Treaty (the offices of President of the Council and High Representative to the EU). This was followed at the end of November with the announcement by President Barroso of his proposed allocation of portfolios to the nominees for the new European Commission. The latter, will have to be formally approved by the European Parliament, with hearings scheduled to take place in mid-January. The four Welsh MEPs will be actively involved in this process.

The Treaty of Lisbon which includes formal recognition of regional parliaments for the first time in an EU treaty will have direct implications for Wales because of the new subsidiarity protocol. The European and External Affairs Committee carried out an inquiry during 2008 on the implications this would have on Wales, and there have been a range of discussions since. For example, the subsidiarity protocol was discussed at a recent meeting between Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas from the National Assembly for Wales and the Presiding Officers of the other devolved legislatures in the UK. We look forward to working with colleagues in the devolved legislatures and Houses of Parliament in the UK to implement the new protocol in practice.

These developments resonate with the work of the All Wales Convention and the timely publication of its report in November which called for a referendum in the future over increased devolution of powers to Wales. A similar debate is ongoing in Scotland through the work of the Calman Commission and the Scottish Government’s own political priorities. There are likely to be implications in terms of monitoring and implementing EU legislation should new legislative powers be transferred from London in the future.

On 9 December we published the Committee’s interim report of the inquiry into the future of EU Cohesion Policy, and look forward to presenting the key conclusions and recommendations in Brussels on St David’s Day, 1 March 2010, to a European audience. With over £2 billion of EU funding coming to Wales for the period 2007-2013 this is a very important policy area. We aim to ensure that Wales is actively engaged in the debate over the future policy that will intensify during 2010-2011.

This debate takes place within the wider context of the EU Budget Review and the strategic priorities of the new Barroso Commission. This will include the successor to the Lisbon Strategy - likely to be known as the EU2020 Strategy. The European and External Affairs Committee is following these issues closely and will carry out an inquiry into the EU Budget Review during 2010 which will include reference to the wider debates on the future of Lisbon Strategy, Cohesion Policy and the Common

Agricultural Policy.

I would like to congratulate Christine Chapman AM, the Assembly's representative on the Committee of the Regions, for the successful adoption of her own-initiative report on the future of the Lisbon Strategy. It is an excellent example of Wales taking central stage in Brussels in the debate over this key European strategy.

On 2 November I had a very fruitful meeting with the four new Welsh MEPs, where we discussed the work of the Committee and the ways in which we can work together on issues of common interest to Wales.

As far as the Assembly's other Committees are concerned, the Enterprise and Learning Committee's inquiry into generating jobs in the green economy is particularly relevant in the context of the EU response to the economic and financial crisis, and the expected priorities of the EU2020 Strategy, the successor to the Lisbon Strategy. They held their first evidence sessions in November and the inquiry is expected to conclude in the first term of 2010.

The Sustainability Committee is expecting to adopt reports on flooding and carbon reduction in early 2010 and the Rural Development Sub-Committee will shortly publish the results of its inquiries into the dairy industry in Wales and the future of the uplands.

Finally, I was privileged to take part in two events in November celebrating landmark events in recent European history. The first, to mark the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall was an event hosted by Cardiff Council and the European Commission's Office in Wales; at the second, I opened a photographic exhibition on the Baltic Way – an iconic moment in history that also took place 20 years ago, shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall. More than a million courageous people joined hands to create a continuous human chain that extended for 600 km and linked the 3 Baltic State capitals.

**Sandy Mewies**

**Chair of the European and External Affairs Committee**



## **EU related topics in the Assembly's Committees**

### **European and External Affairs Committee**

- **Inquiry into Future of EU Cohesion Policy:** the Committee adopted its interim report on 1 December, for publication on 9 December. This followed final evidence sessions on 3 November with the Conference for Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR) and officials from the UK Government's Department for Business Innovation and Skills.
- **2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion:** the Committee held sessions on 17 November and 1 December, taking evidence from the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government Bryan Gibbons AM, officials from the Department for Work and Pensions, which has overall lead on the European Year in the UK, the Anti Poverty Network Cymru and Children in Wales.
- **CALRE:** the Committee received an update from the Deputy Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler AM on 3 November about the participation of the Assembly in CALRE, the European network for regional legislatures and assemblies.
- **European Commission:** on 17 November the Committee received an update from Andy Klom, Head of the European Commission's representation in Wales, on the outreach and other activities of his office during 2009.
- **First Minister's Report:** Rhodri Morgan AM, gave his final update to Committee on 1 December before stepping down as First Minister, where he spoke about the international activities of the Welsh Government, as well as developments in a number of European policy areas such as future of Cohesion Policy, the Lisbon Strategy and the EU Budget Review.

### **Enterprise and Learning Committee**

- **Generating Jobs in the Green Economy:** the Committee held its first evidence sessions in November, including scrutiny of the Deputy First Minister, Ieuan Wyn Jones AM, and the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, Jane Davidson AM, as well as evidence from Cardiff Business School.

### **Sustainability Committee**

- **Flooding and Carbon Reduction:** the Committee will publish the reports from its inquiries into Flooding in Wales and Carbon Reduction in Wales in early 2010.
- **Access to inland waterways:** the Committee took evidence from a broad range of Welsh stakeholders at its meetings on 5 and 12 November, and this inquiry will continue into 2010.
- **Scrutiny of Government Sponsored Bodies:** the Committee will carry out an inquiry during 2010 into the Welsh Government sponsored bodies in Wales, which includes the Environment Agency, Countryside Council for Wales and the National Parks. This is likely to cover implementation in Wales of the provisions of a number of EU Directives, including the Habitats Directive.

## **Rural Development Sub-Committee**

- **Future of the Uplands in Wales:** the sub-Committee is undertaking an inquiry looking at the economic, social and environmental future for the Welsh Uplands, and on 23 November held its meeting in Tregaron, Ceredigion, to discuss the challenges and opportunities with the Farming Unions, National Parks and Cambrian Mountain Society. This followed an evidence session on 19 November with the National Trust, the Uplands Forum and the Forestry Commission.
- **Dairy Industry in Wales:** the Sub-Committee published the report from its inquiry in November 2009
- **Wine, beer and cider production:** the Sub-Committee is planning to carry out an inquiry into the Welsh wine, beer and cider industry during 2010, which is expected to look at examples of best practice from other parts of the world, including New Zealand.

## External activities of Members on Assembly business

- **Presiding Officers of the Devolved Legislatures:** the Llywydd, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM, participated in the annual meeting of the Presiding Officers of the three devolved legislatures, joining Alex Fergusson MSP (Scottish Parliament) and William Hay MLA (Northern Ireland Assembly). Amongst the issues they discussed were the implications of the subsidiarity protocol of the Treaty of Lisbon.
- **Committee of the Regions:** Christine Chapman AM's opinion on the Future of the Lisbon Strategy was adopted at the CoR plenary on 3 December.
- **British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA):** Mike German AM, visited Brussels on 15-16 November as part of a delegation from the European Affairs Committee, who are carrying out an inquiry into regional economic spaces and macro regions across Europe. The Committee will visit Stockholm on 13-14 December for further meetings on this inquiry, including the Swedish Government, which was the key driver behind the adoption of the Baltic Sea Strategy at end of October, which is an example of a European macro region.
- On 17 November, Sandy Mewies AM, Chair of the European and External Affairs Committee was a keynote speaker at an event to commemorate the **20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall**. The event was held Cardiff City Hall and chaired by Andy Klom, Head of the European Commission Office. The distinguished guests included Councillor Rodney Berman, Leader of Cardiff Council, Marcin Grabiec, Private Office of European Commission Vice President Margot Wallström, Halina Ashley, Director of the Polish Cultural Centre in Llanelli, Peter Ferday, Czech Honorary Consul and Helga Rother-Simmonds, German Honorary Consul.
- On 19 November Sandy Mewies AM spoke at a photographic exhibition at the Temple of Peace, Cardiff, "**The Baltic Way That Moved the World**", which celebrated the 20th anniversary of 'The Baltic Way', when more than a million people joined hands to create a continuous human chain that extended for 600 km and linked the 3 Baltic State capitals. The event was hosted by the new Latvian Ambassador to the UK, His Excellency Mr Eduards Stiprais, who was on his first visit to Wales, and the Latvian Honorary Consul, Mr Andris Taurins.

## International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd

- On 26 November the **Secretary of State for Wales, Peter Hain MP**, visited the Assembly and addressed the plenary session
- On 1 December **His Excellency Mr Fakhraddin Gurbanov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan** to the United Kingdom visited the Assembly on his first official visit to Wales.
- On 2 December the Assembly hosted a reception to celebrate the **60th anniversary of the modern commonwealth**, with keynote addresses by the Presiding Officer and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Wales Branch President Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM and Branch Chair Janet Ryder AM, and a personal message delivered on behalf of Commonwealth Secretary General Mr Kamallesh Sharma.

### **Links**

- [National Assembly for Wales homepage](#)
- [Assembly Business Notice](#)
- [Committee pages](#)
- [Members' Research Service pages](#)

### **For further information—**

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