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.
Introduction

I am delighted to welcome you to the 23rd issue of Europe Matters, our regular update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

This is the first edition under the Fourth Assembly and I would like to use this opportunity to explain some of the changes in our approach to engagement with European issues under the new committee structures established in June.

In place of a dedicated European and External Affairs Committee we are mainstreaming European affairs across the work of all Committees, which I hope will mean more Assembly Members engaged on issues of high importance to Wales.

The five thematic policy/legislation committees will lead on European issues falling within their remit, including regular updates from the Assembly’s EU Office on key developments relevant to their work. The fruits of this approach are already in evidence with inquiries underway or in preparation on a number of key strategic issues to Wales.

Environment and Sustainability Committee has established Task and Finish Groups on the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy. Enterprise and Business has launched an inquiry into the future of EU Structural Funds, and will also be looking at the future EU Research funding programme (Horizon 2020) and reforms to the EU Public Procurement legislation in the coming months.

Finance Committee is planning an inquiry on financial implementation of the current 2007–2013 EU Structural Funds Programmes in Wales and will have the future EU Budget on its radar as it looks at the broader question of devolution funding.
The Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee has lead responsibility on subsidiarity monitoring, and will engage with the other UK legislatures and with our parliaments across Europe, to ensure any issues of concern to Wales are picked up and alerted to the European Commission.

Through all of this work we will be liaising closely with the Welsh MEPs, the European Commission, EU networks such as CALRE, and Welsh stakeholders, and we will be organising seminars and conferences, and participating in other events in Wales and across Europe.

I am keen to see Assembly Members actively engaged in European and international activities, and as a former member of the Committee of the Regions, I am pleased to see that Christine Chapman AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM are providing a strong and influential voice for Wales as our two Assembly representatives on this body. Both myself and my deputy, David Melding AM, will be doing the same on CALRE (the European network of regional parliaments) and I am aware a number of other members have visits planned to Brussels over the coming months during what is a crucial period in negotiations on a number of key dossiers of importance to Wales.

Looking closer to home, we have had a busy programme of VIP visits and events in the National Assembly of Wales since the elections. Christine Chapman AM, chaired the annual Mock EU Council, involving schools from across Wales and students from Silesia in Poland. We welcomed the Czech and Turkish Ambassadors to the UK, a delegation from the Western Australian Parliament, the High Commissioner to Canada and a number of other important dignatories.

Finally it was with a tinge of sadness that I met His Excellency Prince Seesio Bereng Seesio High Commissioner for Lesotho before he steps down from this role after six year in post, and I would like to put on record my thanks to him for his work in promoting the Wales-Lesotho links.

Rosemary Butler AM
Presiding Officer
**EU related topics in the Assembly’s Committees**

**Environment and Sustainability Committee**

- **Task and Finish Group inquiry into the Reform of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):** call for written evidence launched following publication of European Commission’s draft legislative proposals in October. Evidence sessions planned for November including the Welsh Government’s Deputy Minister, DG Agriculture and Welsh MEPs (9 November), environmental stakeholders (18 November), and an evidence session with the farming unions and farmers at the Royal Welsh Winter Fair in Builth Wells (28 November).

- **Task and Finish Group inquiry into the Reform of Common Fisheries Policy (CFP):** call for written evidence launched end of September. Evidence sessions held in October and November, including DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (originally 9 October – to be rescheduled), Welsh environmental organisations and the Welsh Government’s Deputy Minister (3 November), and representatives from the fishing industry in Wales (17 November).

**Enterprise and Business Committee**

- **Draft legislative proposals for EU Structural Funds 2014–2020:** inquiry launched following publication of the European Commission’s draft legislative package in October. Evidence sessions planned with the European Commission (16 November), Welsh MEPs (dates being confirmed) and other Welsh stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

- **Procurement Task and Finish Group inquiry into influencing the Modernisation of European Procurement policy:** agreement of terms of reference of the inquiry at end of September and launch of call for written contributions in October. Formal evidence sessions are planned to commence in first quarter of 2012, following publication of European Commission draft legislative proposals (expected 13 December).

- **Town centre regeneration:** final evidence session will be with the Welsh Government’s Minister on 24 November. The inquiry has touched on the use of EU Structural Funds for town centre regeneration projects.

**Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee**

- **Subsidiarity monitoring:** lead responsibility for consideration of subsidiarity issues relating to all new legislative proposals coming out of the EU having relevance to the devolved competences of the Assembly (in accordance with Protocol Subsidiarity of the Treaty of Lisbon).

- **Committee of the Regions:** a session is envisaged during the autumn to look at ways of reporting on the activities of the Welsh representatives on the Committee of the Regions.

**Finance Committee**

- **Effectiveness of European Structural Funding in Wales 2007–2013:** terms of reference agreed in October and call for written submissions published. Main evidence sessions envisaged for the first quarter of 2012.

**Children and Young People Committee**

- **EU update:** envisaged during the autumn term following publication of European Commission’s 2012 Work Programme.

**Health and Social Care Committee**

- **EU update:** envisaged during the autumn term following publication of European Commission’s 2012 Work Programme.
External activities of Members on Assembly business

– On 12–14 June the **Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM** attended the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) Plenary held in Cork.

– On 24 June the **Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM** attended the Standing Committee meeting of CALRE (network of European regional legislatures) held in Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain.

– On 21–23 July the **Deputy Presiding Officer** attended the CALRE “Dynamics of European Regionalism” workshop hosted by CALRE President Pagano in his home city of Pescara, Italy.

– On 9 September **Christine Chapman AM** attended the Committee of the Regions (CoR) Political Bureau meeting in Poznan, Poland, in her capacity as political co-ordinator of the CoR’s Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform. Christine Chapman is one of two representatives from the Assembly on the CoR.

– On 16 September the **Presiding Officer** attended the Standing Committee meeting of CALRE held in Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

– On 30 September **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** attended the Natural Resources Commission meeting of the CoR in Brussels.

– On 5 October **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** participated in a high level seminar in Brussels on the proposed multi-annual financial framework for the EU (2014–2020) organised by the CoR and the European Policy Centre (think tank).

– On 10–11 October **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** addressed EU Budget Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski during the CoR plenary session.

– On 16–22 October, **William Powell AM** attended the 9th CPA Canadian Parliamentary Seminar in Ottawa.

– On 20–21 October **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** participated in a joint conference of representatives from the three main EU Institutions with national parliaments and CoR representatives, which was held at the European Parliament.

– On 23–25 October the **Deputy Presiding Officer** and three of the new representatives of the National Assembly for Wales on BIPA (**William Powell AM, Bethan Jenkins AM** and **Darren Millar AM**), who were selected in June, participated in the BIPA plenary session in Brighton. **Joyce Watson AM** attended in place of the fourth new BIPA representative, **Ken Skates AM**.

– During the October recess, **Darren Millar AM** visited South Africa’s Western Cape as part of the CPA Wales Branch Sponsorship Scheme.

– On 9–10 November **Simon Thomas AM** will be in Brussels for a conference in the European Parliament and a series of meetings with EU officials.


– On 24–26 November the **Deputy Presiding Officer** will attend the CALRE Plenary Assembly in L’Aquila, Italy.

– On 9 December the **Deputy Presiding Officer** will attend a conference on Federalism in Europe (focused on Belgium, Germany and the UK) in the Flemish Parliament in Brussels.
International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd

– On 14 September the Assembly hosted the annual Mock EU Council, involving children aged 16–18 from schools from across Wales and two students from Silesia in Poland, with CoR member Christine Chapman AM chairing proceedings. The focus of this year’s Mock Council was the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Eurozone crisis.

– On 22 September the Presiding Officer met Andy Klom, Head of the European Commission’s Office in Wales.

– On 3 October Members of the Western Australia Parliament visited the National Assembly for Wales, as part of a visit to the UK and Europe, and met the Presiding Officer and members of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee.

– On 10 October the Presiding Officer met His Excellency Prince Seesio Bereng Seesio High Commissioner for Lesotho, who will shortly be stepping down from his diplomatic position after 6 years in post and wished to thank those who have been involved with the Wales Lesotho link. The Presiding Officer also met 27 teachers from Lesotho during their visit to Wales organised through links schools in Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire.

– On 11 October the Presiding Officer met Mr Ahmet Ünal Çeviköz Turkish Ambassador to the United Kingdom as part of a Welsh Government programme.

– On 19 October Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM met with Michael Žantovský Czech Ambassador to the United Kingdom as part of a Welsh Government programme.

– During 21–23 October the Assembly co-hosted the UK-Spain Tertulias Conference.

– On 3 November Mr Gordon Campbell High Commissioner to Canada visited the Assembly to officially launch an exhibition entitled “Treasures of a Nation”.
Links
– National Assembly for Wales homepage
– Assembly Business Statements and Announcements
– Committee pages
– Research Service

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