



**COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
WELSH PARLIAMENT BRANCH EXECUTIVE**

**REPORT TO THE SENEDD BRANCH FOR THE PERIOD
1 January 2019 - 25 March 2021**

Background

The Welsh Parliament unanimously agreed a motion signed by the four party leaders to apply for admission to membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) on 7 July 1999. Wales was formally welcomed into the CPA at the General Assembly meeting in Trinidad on 19 September 1999.

Branch Structure

All Members of the Senedd are by default Members of the CPA Wales Branch

Office Holders

President: Elin Jones MS

Vice President: Ann Jones MS

Chair: Rhun ap Iorwerth MS

Secretary: Manon Antoniazzi,

Chief Executive and Clerk of the Welsh Parliament

Acting Secretary:

Al Davies, Senior International Relations & Protocol Manager

Branch Executive Committee

Rhianon Passmore MS

David Rowlands MS

David Melding MS (July 2020- present)

Mohammad Asghar MS (January 2019-June 2020)

CHAIR'S REPORT

Due to the effect the COVID-19-Pandemic has had on the work of the Branch, as well as the forthcoming Senedd elections, this report covers a longer than usual period.

2019 proved to be a particularly busy and productive year for the Senedd's CPA Branch. Some notable highlights to mention include the Branch's participation in the innovative Regional Conference in Guernsey; the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Uganda, as well as our representation by Welsh Youth Parliament Members at the Commonwealth Youth Parliament in New Delhi.

We also held a memorable Commonwealth Day event to celebrate the relationship between Wales and Africa and have enjoyed hosting parliamentary delegations from numerous countries, including the Maldives and Sri Lanka.

Our Branch has continued to have a strong presence in numerous *Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians* activities, with Joyce Watson MS and Rhianon Passmore MS leading our representation in this network.

Covid-19 of course fundamentally changed the nature and focus of our work and there have been no physical inward or outward visits or conferences since March 2020.

Despite this, there has continued to be a wealth of activity as the CPA has adapted to working virtually. The Senedd Branch has not only enjoyed participating in numerous virtual conferences and programmes but has also taken advantage of the platform to discuss and showcase the agile and innovative way in which the Welsh Parliament responded to the pandemic; in which there has been much interest internationally.

In June 2020, we were saddened by the sudden passing of Mohammad Asghar MS. Oscar had been the longest serving Member on our Branch Executive Committee; representing the Welsh Conservative Group continuously since 2010. He had represented the Branch at numerous CPA Conferences, including most recently at the 2017 CPC in Bangladesh as well as at the 2019 BIMR in Guernsey.

We were pleased to welcome David Melding MS, a longstanding participant in the work of the CPA, to represent the Welsh Conservative Group for the remainder of this Senedd term.

One significant piece of work which the Branch has undertaken over the past months is to review and renew our constitution.

These new rules, which have been consulted on with Members from all Senedd party groups will, in going forward from the Sixth Senedd, improve our governance. Amongst the key changes are mechanisms to ensure: a fairer gender balance; promoting rotation for the key Branch positions as well as a fairer allocation of participatory opportunities in CPA conferences.

On a personal note, I would like thank the Branch Executive Committee Members for their contribution and support. I'd also like to add how much I have enjoyed my time as Chair of the Senedd Branch of the CPA. I have seen first-hand the valuable opportunities the network provides to learn and acquire best practice, as well as to showcase our work here in Wales.

I hope to have the opportunity to re-engage with the work of the CPA in the future and would encourage other Members to do the same.

Rhun ap Iorwerth MS.

CPA Senedd Branch Chair.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING THE PERIOD OF THE REPORT:

1. Participation in CPA Conferences

***48th BIMR Conference
Guernsey, May 2019***

This Annual Regional conference on the topical theme of "*Fake News and Disinformation*" was attended by Branch Chair Rhun ap Iorwerth MS, Mohammad Asghar MS, Rhianon Passmore MS, David Rowlands MS and Joyce Watson MS. [Report](#)

***Caribbean Regional Conference
Trinidad, July 2019***

Branch Chair, Rhun ap Iorwerth MS was selected to represent our BIMR Region at this conference. [Report](#)

***64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
Uganda, September 2019***

Branch Vice-President Ann Jones MS led our representation at this international CPA conference, accompanied by Delyth Jewell MS who also participated in a Welsh Government organised programme in Mbale. [Report](#)

***BIMR Virtual Conference
Hosted by Malta Branch, September 2020***

This virtual Conference, the first of its kind for our Region, appropriately focussed on the theme of *Parliaments' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*. The full Senedd Branch Executive Committee participated in the conference, with Branch Chair Rhun ap Iorwerth MS giving a keynote presentation.

2. **Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)**

***International Women's Day Programme
Marlborough House, London
March 2019***

Joyce Watson MS attended this programme as the Regional CWP Chair.

***BIMR CWP Outreach Programme
Nicosia, Cyprus
June 2019***

Joyce Watson MS led this two day CWP programme to Cyprus. A wide range of meetings were held to explore and encourage increased women's participation in politics and public life.

***Westminster Workshop on Gender Sensitive Scrutiny
London, June 2019***

Branch Vice President Ann Jones MS and Rhianon Passmore MS represented the Branch at this CPA UK Westminster programme.

***6th BIMR CWP Conference
Jersey, September 2019***

Joyce Watson MS and Rhianon Passmore MS represented the Branch at this Conference.

***7th BIMR CWP Conference
Falkland Islands, February 2020***

Joyce Watson MS and Rhianon Passmore MS represented the Branch at this conference, the theme of which was *Combating Stereotypes in Small Communities*. [Report](#)

***8th BIMR CWP Conference
Virtual, February 2021***

Rhianon Passmore MS and Suzy Davies MS represented the Branch at this Conference, the theme of which was *Prioritising Women's Representation and Promoting Gender Sensitive Parliaments*.

3. **Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD)**

Branch Vice-President Ann Jones MS has played a prominent role in the recently established CPwD network. This has including Chairing a successful workshop on "*Facilitating Persons with Disabilities as Electors, Candidates and Legislators*" at the CPA Uganda Conference, as well as contributing towards a series of [videos](#) to promote the need for accessible parliaments.

In September 2020, Ann Jones MS was elected by parliamentarians across our CPA Region to become their first *Champion for Parliamentarians with Disabilities*.

Since then, Ann Jones MS has invited the participation of advocates in other parliaments within the UK to discuss priorities. She has also met with the Association's other eight Disability Champions in order to take forward the work of this important new CPA network.

4. **Supporting other Commonwealth Parliaments**

***Gambia Parliament Standing Orders workshop programme
October 2019***

As part of our ongoing engagement in the Gambia in partnership with the CPA/WFD, David Melding MS participated in this specialist workshop training at the Gambia Parliament. [Report](#)

***Post-Election Seminar
Montserrat, February 2020***

David Melding MS represented our Branch and Region at this Post-election seminar. [Report](#)
[Link](#) to David Melding's reflections of his experience.

***CPA UK Select Committees Workshop for the Anguilla parliament
July 2020***

David Melding MS was selected to participate in this workshop as part of a collaboration between CPA UK and the CPA Secretariat. The virtual Post-election Seminar was tailored to meet the needs of newly elected as well as re-elected parliamentarians, and focussed on *The Role of Select Committees, The Role of PAC, Writing Reports and Achieving Impact*.

[Link](#)

**CPA UK Anguilla PAC Workshop
November 2020**

Rhianon Passmore MS (and Senedd PAC Clerk Fay Bowen) participated in this Workshop, leading on a session examining how to remain effective as a PAC in a virtual world. [Report](#)

5. **Engaging with Young People in Wales**

**Commonwealth Day Observation
Westminster, March 2019**

The Branch was represented by two young people at the official Commonwealth Observance. Laura Johnson and Zach Evans participated in the programme, the theme of which was "A Connected Commonwealth".

**10th Commonwealth Youth Parliament (CYP)
New Delhi, India
November 2019**

The Branch collaborated with our Welsh Youth Parliament team in order to facilitate our representation at this conference. WYP Members Rhian Shillabeer and Talulah Thomas were selected to represent the Senedd at the Commonwealth Youth Parliament in New Delhi, India. [Report](#)

6. **The Senedd's Response to Covid-19**

**BIMR Roundtable Event
June 2020**

This event sought to provide a platform for parliamentarians to glean insight from the case study of the Senedd in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The lead presentation was delivered by Branch Chair, Rhun ap Iorwerth MS who shared key learnings from the innovations and speed with which the Welsh Parliament responded to Covid-19.

Further details and a summary of the Roundtable event are available [here](#)

BIMR Working Group on Covid-19

Members from different BIMR Branches have volunteered to lead workstreams on various strategic themes, related to the Covid Pandemic.

Rhianon Passmore MS has been leading on the theme of **Agile and Effective Parliaments** and will shortly present a webinar to the Region on the Senedd's experience.

7. Notable visits and other activities.

Branch President and Chair Visit to Botswana and South Africa, February – March 2019

This visit to the Botswana parliament offered the opportunity to evaluate the sustained and ongoing support which the Senedd had provided in a range of areas.

A subsequent short visit to the Western Cape Provincial Parliament in Cape Town included discussion on numerous matters of mutual interest, such as the governance of devolved parliaments; capacity issues; the Senedd's Dignity and Respect Policy as well as that of the Welsh Youth Parliament. The visit report is available [here](#)

Llywydd-led visit to Canada February 2020

The Llywydd, accompanied by Deputy Presiding Officer Ann Jones MS and Senedd Commissioner Suzy Davies MS participated in this visit to Canada.

The programme, which included official programmes at both the federal parliament in Ottawa as well as the National Assembly for Quebec, provided the opportunity to discuss issues such as working bilingually, gender equality, citizen engagement and financial scrutiny and audit. The visit report is available [here](#)

***Commonwealth/International "Wales and the World" Event
Senedd, March 2019***

A lunchtime reception was held in the Senedd to mark Commonwealth Day. The theme of the reception was "*Wales and Africa*" and included speeches by the Branch President and Chair as well as a memorable performance by Ballet Nimba.

***CPA UK Commonwealth Parliamentary Forum
on Climate Change: Preparing for Glasgow COP26
Virtual Conference, March 2021***

Several Members of the Senedd's *Climate Change, Environment & Rural Affairs Committee* participated in this forum.

Election Observer Mission (EOM) Training

During this reporting period Branch Chair Rhun ap Iorwerth MS, Rhianon Passmore MS and David Melding MS have undertaken EOM training, organised by the BIMR Secretariat.

8. Commonwealth Visitors to the Senedd.

The Branch has assisted in the development of programmes for visitors to the Senedd including Speakers, High Commissioners, delegations and officials from Commonwealth countries and parliaments, including Canada, Australia (federal and provincial), India, Singapore, The Gambia, Maldives and Sri Lanka.

9. Branch Sponsorship Scheme (on-going).

Members are reminded of this scheme and encouraged to look for opportunities to apply for support for study visits to other Commonwealth Parliaments. Members interested in this opportunity should, in the first instance, email the Acting Branch Secretary Al Davies (al.davies@senedd.wales) with a brief outline and business case of their proposed study visit.

10. Forward Look

2021

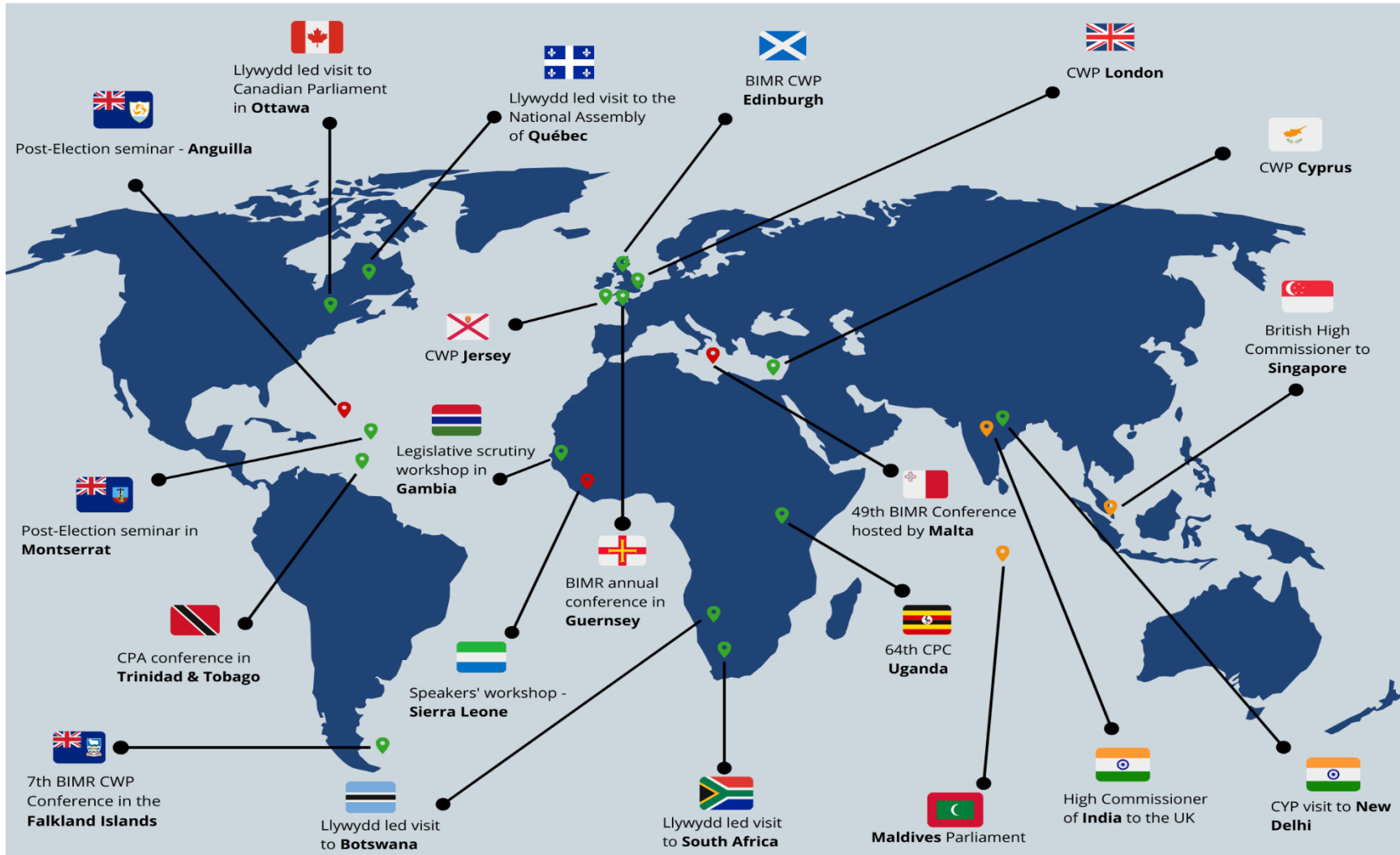
- BIMR Conference, Belfast (September)

2022

- BIMR Conference, St Helena
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia (Canada).

25 March 2021

Snapshot of Senedd CPA Branch Activity 2019-2021



Map Key

BIMR British Islands and Mediterranean Region

CWP Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians

CPA Commonwealth Parliamentary Association



Inward visit



Outward visit



Virtual visit

