

National Assembly for Wales
Europe Matters

Produced by the National Assembly for Wales
EU Office

Issue 22_February – March 2011



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 22nd issue of Europe Matters, our regular update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

As the last issue of the third Assembly it seems an appropriate point to review some of the highlights of the last four years, including the period where Sandy Mewies AM was chair of the Committee, as well as bringing you up to date with the most recent events in Wales from February and March.

The Committee has taken a strategic approach to European and external affairs over the last four years, which is reflected in the range of issues it has focused on, selected because of their importance to Wales and the opportunity they provide to ensure a strong voice for Wales in discussions in Brussels. This has included a long-running inquiry into the future of EU Cohesion Policy, which has also focused on the EU Budget Review and implications of the Europe 2020 Strategy to Wales. The Committee also undertook inquiries into: the functioning of the subsidiarity monitoring protocol granted by the new EU Treaty; the implications of the Directive on Patients' Rights to Cross-border Healthcare to Wales; the level of Welsh participation in research, innovation and lifelong learning programmes; and the extent of Welsh engagement with the various European Years, in particular the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

This has been complemented by work on European issues undertaken by the Assembly's other Committees, including the Enterprise and Learning Committee's review of the implementation of the 2007–2013 Structural Funds Programmes in Wales, and Rural Development Sub-Committees work on the future of the Common Agriculture Policy.

A notable feature of the last couple of years has been the close contact with the four Welsh MEPs. I would like to note on behalf of the Committee the high value we place on strong links with our representatives in Brussels, including the Committee of the Regions representatives, and the regular updates they provide on the invaluable work they carry out on behalf of Wales. I am sure I speak on behalf of my successor(s) that we look forward to a continuation and development of this close relationship under the fourth Assembly.

Looking back at the work of the European and External Affairs Committee in February and March, we were very pleased to receive evidence from EU Budget Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski, whom we were originally due to meet in Brussels in December, until the snow made travel impossible. I was also delighted to welcome back to Wales President Jean Yves Le Drian in his dual role as President of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR) and of the Conseil Régional de Bretagne. Together with his Vice President, Pierre Karleskind, Monsieur Le Drian attended our Committee meeting during a two-day visit to Wales.

To coincide with International Women's Day on 08 March, the Committee also received an inspiring update on the work of the Welsh-led charity Positive Women, founded by Swansea-born Kathryn Llewellyn and Sphiwe Hlophe from Swaziland. They were accompanied by former First Minister of Scotland Lord Jack McConnell, and they told us about the work of Positive Women in Swaziland, and their aspirations to work across Africa supporting indigenous groups that promote and defend the rights of women.

On 07 February I attended the EC-UK Forum, which is the meeting of the Chairs of the relevant European Committees from the House of Lords, House of Commons, Scottish Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly and ourselves, where we discussed a number of important issues to Wales including the EU Budget Review and Subsidiarity issues.

We also welcomed a number of other distinguished visitors to the Assembly during February and March, including the Chinese, Colombian, Hungarian, and US Ambassadors to the UK; a delegation of Canadian parliamentarians visiting Wales as part of a mutual learning exercise; the Indian High Commissioner to the UK; and, closer to home, the Secretary of State for Wales and a delegation of MPs from the House of Commons' Political and Constitutional Reform Committee.

This leads me to my final comment as Chair of the European and External Affairs Committee, before I step down as an Assembly Member at the end of March. It is with immense pride that I witnessed a resounding “Yes” from the people of Wales in the Referendum on law-making powers for the National Assembly for Wales, held on 03 March. This referendum settles the devolution question in Wales, giving the Assembly the right to initiate and adopt new laws in Wales – without first seeking approval from London – within the twenty areas of devolved competence.

This has historic significance, as the last time that Welsh law was made exclusively in Wales was in the tenth century under Hywel Dda. This is subsidiarity in action – something all Europe-watchers will be very familiar with.



Rhodri Morgan AM
Chair of the European and External Affairs Committee

EU related topics in the Assembly's Committees

European and External Affairs Committee

- **EU Budget and the Future of EU Cohesion Policy:** EU Budget Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski gave evidence to the Committee's inquiry on 01 February, via video conference from Brussels.
- **Welsh Participation in EU Research, Innovation and Lifelong Learning Programmes:** the Committee's report from this inquiry was launched on 16 February at the Senedd.
- **Positive Women:** on 08 March the Committee received an update on the work of the newly established charity, Positive Women.
- **First Minister for Wales:** the Committee received an update on the activities of the First Minister in European and international affairs on 15 February.
- **Legacy report and Work Programme for 2011:** these reports were discussed at the 08 March meeting of the Committee, and the Legacy report was formally adopted on 22 March.
- **Welsh MEPs:** the Committee received an update from Derek Vaughan MEP at the last meeting of the Committee on 22 March.
- **European Commission update:** Andy Klom, the Head of the European Commission's Office in Wales gave an update to the Committee on 22 March on recent activities across Wales.
- **Contribution to House of Lords Inquiry into the EU Budget Review:** the Chair submitted a response in February on behalf of the Committee to this inquiry, feeding in views from the Committee's work in this area.
- **Committee of the Regions and CALRE:** the Committee received updates from the Welsh representatives on the Committee of the Regions, Christine Chapman AM, Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM, and Councillor Bob Bright (Councillor Chris Holley sent his apologies). The Deputy Presiding Officer provided an update on the participation of the Assembly in CALRE, the European network of regional legislative assemblies.

Enterprise and Learning Committee

- **Implementation of the 2007–2013 Structural Funds in Wales:** the Committee held an update in this area which was the subject of an inquiry during 2009–2010.
- **Implementation of the Economic Renewal Programme in Wales:** the Deputy First Minister, Ieuan Wyn Jones AM and the Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills, Lesley Griffiths AM, appeared before the Committee on 17 February to present an update on progress in implementing the Economic Renewal Programme, launched in the summer of 2010.

Sustainability Committee

- **Biodiversity:** the Committee published the report from its inquiry into biodiversity in Wales on 31 January.
- **Legacy work:** as part of its legacy work the Committee held evidence sessions with Welsh Ministers on the mainstreaming of sustainability and the "One Wales" Commitments of the Welsh Government during January and February, and in February and March held evidence sessions on the environmental delivery options in Wales.

Rural Development Sub-Committee

- **Review of Rural Development Sub-Committee reports:** an evidence session was held on 10 March with the Welsh farmers' unions reviewing the reports adopted by the Rural Development Sub-Committee during the third Assembly.
- **Promotion and production of Welsh food:** a review session was held on 08 February to provide an update on developments since the inquiry carried out by the Sub-Committee in this area.

Plenary business

- **Reform of the Common Agriculture Policy:** on 01 March a debate was held in plenary session on the future of the Common Agriculture Policy.
- **Transposition of revised Waste Framework Directive:** on 08 March the plenary approved the draft "The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011", which partly transpose Directive 2008/98/EC2 on waste (the revised Waste Framework Directive).

Inquiries undertaken during third Assembly with European dimension

European and External Affairs Committee

- Future of EU Cohesion Policy (including EU Budget Review and Europe 2020)
- European Investment Bank (incorporated into the inquiry into Future of EU Cohesion Policy)
- Welsh participation in EU Research, Innovation and Lifelong Learning Programmes
- Common Agricultural Policy Health Check
- The Treaty of Lisbon and Subsidiarity Monitoring
- Draft Directive on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare
- European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010

Enterprise and Learning Committee

- Implementation of the 2007–2013 Structural Funds in Wales
- The science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) agenda
- Implementation of the Welsh Government's Economic Renewal Programme
- Generating Jobs in the green economy
- Final report on the economic contribution of higher education in Wales

Sustainability Committee

- Biodiversity in Wales
- Carbon reduction in Wales
- Flooding in Wales

Rural Development Sub-Committee

- Promotion and production of Welsh food
- Reform of the Common Agriculture Policy
- Animal welfare and meat hygiene
- The future of the uplands in Wales
- Review of Axis 2 of the Wales Rural Development Plan 2007–2013

Communities and Culture Committee

- Promoting Welsh arts and culture on the world stage

Children and Young People Committee

- Provisions of safe places to play and hang out
- Child poverty in Wales

External activities of Members on Assembly business

- On 07 February **Rhodri Morgan AM** attended the meeting of the EC-UK Forum in his capacity as Chair of the European and External Affairs Committee, where he met with the Chairs of the Committees responsible for European affairs in the House of Lords, House of Commons, Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly.
- On 09 February **Christine Chapman AM** attended the Economic and Social Commission meeting at the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in Brussels, where her draft opinion on the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion was discussed. Christine will present her final report to the CoR plenary on 31 March for adoption.
- On 18 February **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** attended the Temporary Ad Hoc Commission on the EU Budget Review, and will also attend the CoR plenary on 31 March.

International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd

- On 08 February a delegation from the **Serbian Autonomous Province of Vojvodina**, including the Speaker, Mr Sándor Egeresi, visited the National Assembly for Wales to learn about the Welsh model of devolution, and met the Deputy Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler AM.
- On 15 February **His Excellency Mr János Csák, Hungarian Ambassador to the UK**, attended the European and External Affairs Committee, and met the Presiding Officer, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, during his visit to Wales.
- On 15 February the **President of the Regional Council of Brittany, Monsieur Jean Yves Le Drian, and Vice President, Pierre Karleskind**, visited the National Assembly for Wales, participating in the meeting of the European and External Affairs Committee as part of a visit organised by the Welsh Government.
- On 04 March the Senedd hosted the electoral commission during the vote-counting for the **Referendum on the law-making powers of the National Assembly for Wales**.
- From 07–09 March **Constance Kilimo**, a senior staff member from the **National Assembly of Malawi**, visited the Assembly to learn about devolution in Wales, as part of a three-month internship with the Scottish Parliament.
- On 08 March **His Excellency Liu Xiaoming, Chinese Ambassador to the UK**, visited the Assembly.
- On 09 March **His Excellency Louis B. Susman, US Ambassador to the UK**, visited the Assembly.
- On 10 March the **Right Honourable Chris Huhne MP, Secretary of State for Energy & Climate Change**, attended the meeting of the Sustainability Committee.
- On 11 March **His Excellency, Mauricio Rodríguez Múnera, Colombian Ambassador to the UK**, visited the Senedd.
- On 14 March the Senedd hosted a **Commonwealth Day reception** for distinguished guests from across the Commonwealth visiting Wales as part of the Commonwealth Local Government Conference organised by Cardiff Council.
- On 15 March the **Deputy Indian High Commissioner, Rajesh Prasad**, visited the Senedd for a meeting with the Presiding Officer.
- On 15 March the **Prime Minister for Trinidad & Tobago, Kamla Persad Bissessar**, was welcomed to the Assembly, during her visit to Wales also as part of the Commonwealth Local Government Conference.
- From 14–17 March a delegation of senior politicians from the **Canadian Parliament** – the Honourable Jim Abbott MP, the Honourable Senator Jim Munson, the Honourable Senator Richard Neufeld, and the Honourable Carolyn Bennett MP – visited the Senedd for a three- day formal programme of exchange and learning.
- On 24 March members from the **House of Commons Political & Constitutional Reform Committee** – Graham Allen MP (Chair), Fabian Hamilton MP, Andrew Griffiths MP, Eleanor Laing MP, Stephen Williams MP and Christopher Chope MP – visited the Assembly to hold discussions with a cross-party selection of Assembly Members on the Welsh experiences across a range of issues including coalition government, relationships between central and local government, electoral systems, and fixed-term Assemblies.

Links

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