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National
Assembly for
Wales

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Introduction



Rosemary Butler AM Presiding Officer

I am delighted to welcome you to the 25th issue of Europe Matters, our regular update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

As we pass the first anniversary of the Fourth Assembly, it is a timely opportunity to look back on the activities and achievements over the past 12 months since we decided to mainstream European issues across the Committees.

Mainstreaming is working. This is the clear message to come out of the informal meeting between Welsh MEPs and Committee Chairs, which I hosted on 2 May. It is evident from the breadth and variety of activity across the Committees (see details below in the section on the ongoing work of the Assembly's Committees), the number of AMs involved (almost all of the 47 AMs who sit on Committees) and in the approach to engaging in the EU legislative process and working with the European Parliament as 'legislature to legislature'.

The visit to Brussels of the Environment and Sustainability Committee on 9-11 May encapsulates this: members discussed their work on the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), two key dossiers for Wales with the leading MEPs on these proposals, during a very important phase in the deliberations by the European Parliament on these dossiers.

The Committee also met with the leading officials from the European Commission, including Lowri Evans, Director General of DG Maritime Affairs and Gwilym Jones from the EU Agriculture Commissioner's Cabinet, and in this way showed the commitment from the Assembly to engage in the EU policy and legislative process, as the democratically elected national body for the people of Wales.

The Enterprise and Business Committee is planning a visit to Brussels in the autumn as a follow up to its work on the future EU Structural Funds, Horizon 2020 (the EU's proposed framework programme for research and innovation), and the revisions of the public procurement directives. Other Committees are considering visits for the future, which is something I very much welcome and support.

The relationship with Welsh MEPs is a particularly important conduit through which our Committees can engage with the European Parliament, and I would like to thank them for the constructive way in which they are working with us on key issues for Wales.

We also value highly our relationship with the European Commission, and I would like to welcome David Hughes, the new Head of the European Commission's office in Wales, who recently took over from Andy Klom who is now the Head of the Dutch representation in The Hague. David is from North Wales, and has worked in a number of Commissioner Cabinets during his 17 years in the European Commission, and brings a wealth of experience to combine with his local knowledge of Wales, and we very much look forward to working with him.

On 13 July we will host a meeting of the Standing Committee of CALRE, the European network of regional parliaments, and it will be a pleasure to welcome the President of CALRE for 2012, President Pedrera from the Extra Madura Region, and the other CALRE parliaments and legislative assemblies who will attend. This will be the first time we have hosted a CALRE meeting in Wales since 2006.

Over the past few months we have welcomed a number of international VIP visitors to the Assembly, including Ambassadors from Brazil, El Salvador, Hungary and Israel; delegations from the Ugandan and Victorian Parliaments; and Dr Barry Elsby from the Falklands Island Government.

It is also pleasing to see the external engagement of AMs continue, with a number of visits to Brussels, including the Welsh Conservative group on 25 June, Ken Skates AM in April, in addition to the regular participation in the Committee of the Regions by Christine Chapman AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM.

Finally I would like to wish everyone a warm, relaxing and fulfilling summer break.

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):** The Committee visited Brussels on 9-11 May to follow up on its work on CAP reform, and during the visit held meetings with MEPs, members of Cabinet of the EU Agriculture Commissioner, DG Agriculture, UK Permanent Representation, and a number of other Brussels based representations and networks.
- **Task and Finish Group inquiry into the Reform of Common Fisheries Policy (CFP):** Following the publication of its report and draft amendments from this inquiry in March, the Committee received a detailed response from EU Commissioner for Maritime Affairs Maria Damanaki. During the Committee's visit to Brussels in May meetings were held with the Chair and Vice President of the Fisheries Committee in the European Parliament, Welsh MEPs, and the Director General of DG Maritime Affairs Lowri Evans.
- **Inquiry into Glastir (Welsh Government agri-environment scheme):** The Committee is undertaking a short inquiry into the implementation of Glastir, which included an evidence gathering session with Welsh stakeholders on 17 May. The Committee will be discussing this and progress in the negotiations on CAP reform and CFP reform with the Deputy Minister, Alun Davies, at the Royal Welsh on 25 July.

Enterprise and Business Committee

- **Draft legislative proposals for EU Structural Funds 2014-2020:** The Committee received a response to its report from EU Commissioner for Regional Policy Johannes Hahn. A visit to Brussels is anticipated in the autumn to follow up on this inquiry (and the other EU-related work of the Committee).
- **Procurement Task and Finish Group inquiry into influencing the Modernisation of European Procurement policy:** The report from this inquiry was adopted and published on 15 May, and sent to Welsh MEPs and the lead rapporteur in the European Parliament.
- **Inquiry into international connectivity through Welsh ports and airports:** The report from this inquiry was published on 4 July, following the evidence session earlier this year, which included a focus on the impact of EU state aid rules on potential investment support to Welsh ports and airports.
- **Horizon 2020:** This inquiry into the EU's proposals for a new Research and Innovation Framework Programme for 2014-2020 included two evidence sessions in June and a follow up visit to Glyndwr University and OpTIC in North Wales. The inquiry included contributions from the UK Research Office, the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Welsh Government, DG Regional Policy, the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR), Climate-KIC (EU funded initiative), and Welsh Higher Education sector. One of the themes of the inquiry is synergies between EU Structural Funds and Horizon 2020. The report from this inquiry is in preparation and will be published in July.
- **Inquiry into Apprenticeships:** As part of this inquiry the Committee is looking at the effective use of EU funding in supporting apprenticeships in Wales. The Committee received 31 responses to its public call for evidence for this inquiry (which closed in mid-April) and held a number of evidence sessions with Welsh stakeholder organisations in May. The report is being drafted and will be published shortly.

Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee

- **Draft Public Procurement Directive COM(2011)896:** As noted in the last Europe Matters (Issue 24) the Committee considered a potential subsidiarity concern on the draft EU Public Procurement Directives at its meeting on 20 February, and submitted its concerns to the House of Commons and House of Lords. The House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee took these into consideration in recommending a reasoned opinion be submitted to the European Commission, which was endorsed at the Commons debate on 6 March. Welsh MEPs were notified of these concerns, to inform the deliberations in the European Parliament on the draft directives.

Finance Committee

- **Effectiveness of European Structural Funding in Wales 2007-2013:** This inquiry is ongoing, following evidence sessions with Welsh stakeholders and the European Commission since January this year. The Committee is planning to take evidence from Value Wales on 18 July, with a view to considering the key issues from the inquiry in September and publishing a report in the early autumn.

Children and Young People Committee

- **Inquiry into adoption:** The inquiry is ongoing with evidence sessions set to be completed by the end of this term, with a view to adoption of the report in the early autumn. The Committee considered some background information on adoption systems elsewhere in Europe in the course of the inquiry.

Health and Social Care Committee

- **Inquiry into residential care for older people:** This inquiry is ongoing and a number of evidence sessions have been held with Welsh stakeholders since January, including a look at comparative models of ownership in other parts of the EU.

External activities of Members on Assembly business

On 22 March Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM, in his capacity as Committee of the Regions representative, participated in a conference of national parliamentarians hosted in the European Parliament in Brussels, which focused on the Multi-annual Financial Framework proposals for 2014-2020.

On 22-23 March Christine Chapman AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM in their capacity as Committee of the Regions representatives, participated in the EU Summit of Cities and Regions in Copenhagen.

On 26 March Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM was in Brussels for a meeting of the Natural Resources Commission of the Committee of the Regions, which considered draft reports on the proposals for reform of the CAP and reform of the CFP.

On 23 April Ken Skates AM visited Brussels for a series of meetings with European Commission officials, UK Permanent Representation to the EU, a number of EU networks, and officials in Wales House.

On 26 April Christine Chapman AM attended a meeting of the Economic and Social Affairs Commission of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels

On 9-11 May all members of the Environment and Sustainability Committee visited Brussels for a series of meetings on reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and EU environmental policies. This included meetings with: Gabriel Mato MEP, Chair of the Fisheries Committee; Struan Stevenson MEP, Vice Chair of the Fisheries Committee; Luis Capoulas Santos MEP, rapporteur on the CAP reform proposals; George Lyon MEP, Mairead McGuinness MEP and Jim Nicholson MEP, shadow rapporteurs on CAP reform; Lowri Evans, Director General of DG Maritime Affairs; Karl Falkenberg, Director General of DG Environment; Georg Haussler (Chef de Cabinet) and Gwilym Jones from the EU Agriculture Commissioner Ciolos' Cabinet.

On 14-15 May the Deputy Presiding Officer led a cross party delegation to the 44th British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly Plenary session in Dublin. The theme of the plenary was 'Making business easier between Britain and Ireland'.

On 10-14 June, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Wales Branch Chair Joyce Watson AM, accompanied by Simon Thomas AM and Byron Davies AM, attended the 42nd Annual Conference of the British Isles & Mediterranean Region in Edinburgh. The theme for this year's conference was "Making Parliament Relevant".

On 10-16 June the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM represented Wales in the Falkland Islands, as they commemorate the 30th anniversary of the liberation of Port Stanley from Argentine occupation.

On 25 June a delegation of Welsh Conservative AMs including Andrew RT Davies AM, Angela Burns AM, Byron Davies AM, Mark Isherwood AM and Mohammad Asghar AM visited Brussels for a series of meetings with officials from the EU Institutions and EU networks on a range of issues.

International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd

On 26 March the Israeli Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Daniel Taub visited the Assembly and met the Presiding Officer as part of a series of meetings during his visit.

On 27 March the Brazilian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Roberto Jaguaribe visited the Assembly and met the Presiding Officer as part of a series of meetings during his visit.

On 25 April Dr Barry Elsby from the Falkland Island Government visited the Assembly and had a meeting with the Deputy Presiding Officer.

On 25 April the El Salvador Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Werner Matías Romero visited the Assembly and met the Presiding Officer as part of a series of meetings during his visit.

On 30 April a delegation from the Ugandan Parliament, Members of the Standing Committee on Rules Privileges and Discipline visited the Assembly for a series of meetings covering Constitutional Legislative affairs, Members Support and had a meeting with the Presiding Officer.

On 2 May the Presiding Officer hosted an informal meeting of Welsh MEPs with the Chairs of the Assembly's Committees to discuss ongoing and future work on EU issues relevant to Wales.

On 8 May the Family and Community Development Committee of the Victoria Parliament in Australia visited the Assembly to meet with Members from the Communities, Equality & Local Government Committee and the Health & Social Care Committee.

On 23 May the Hungarian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr János Csák visited the Assembly and met the Presiding Officer as part of a series of meetings during his visit.

On 25 June, the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly's (BIPA) Environmental and Social Committee visited the Senedd as part of its Inquiry into the integration of recently arrived migrants. The Committee on which Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM sits took evidence from a number of witnesses, including Joyce Watson AM, Chair of the Assembly's Cross Party Group on Human Trafficking in Wales.

On 9 July the new Head of the European Commission's office in Wales, David Hughes met with the Presiding Officer.

On 13 July the National Assembly for Wales will host the 3rd CALRE Standing Committee meeting 2012, and will bring together participants from: the Parliaments of Extremadura, the Canary Islands and Murcia in Spain; the Regional Councils of Veneto and Trentino in Italy; the Parliament of the German speaking Community of Belgium; and the Parliament of Åland in Finland.

Links

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