

# European and External Affairs Committee

## EUR(2) 06-06 (p.3)

**Date: 12 July 2006**

**Venue: Committee Room 2, Senedd, Cardiff Bay**

**Title: Wales in the World**

### **Purpose**

1. This paper provides an update on the Assembly Government's External Relations activity.

### **Summary**

2. The Assembly Government's international activities and priorities are focussed in the following, inter-linked and complementary areas:

International Relationships

The Image and Branding of Wales

Promotion and Marketing

Events and Visits – internal and external

Working with and through others

3. The paper outlines activities in each of these areas since the Committee's last substantive discussion on external relations matters.

### **Action**

4. The paper is essentially for information.

### **International Relationships**

5. The Welsh Assembly Government has continued to develop its existing links, but we have also looked to open and develop new links and relationships which would offer potential benefits to Wales. Some of our relationships are set out in a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or similar document; others are not, but they can be equally meaningful and effective if based on sound working relationships. The following is a brief summary of the most active bilateral relationships:

New South Wales (NSW) - The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MOU with NSW was marked in June 2005. It coincided with a visit to Wales by Loftus Harris, the Head of the NSW Government's Department of State and Regional Development. The relationship continues to be productive, particularly in the education field. One example is Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences, which is continuing

to collaborate with NSW's Newcastle University in the development of shared assessment technologies for children in need.

Latvia – The MOU with Latvia, signed in May 2004, continues to flourish and is one of the most productive with activity across a range of areas local government, regional policy, in particular structural funds, trade and economic development, education, arts and culture. The Latvian Minister for Economic Development is bringing a trade delegation of 30 companies to Wales on 12 July. A Welsh trade mission is going to Latvia in October this year.

Chubut, Argentina - The First Minister's visit to Chubut in October 2005 led to added impetus in Wales' unique relationship with Chubut. The Governor of Chubut has accepted an invitation to visit Wales and this Autumn plans to lead a trade and cultural delegation to Wales, and to bring an exhibition of photographs and objects relating to the special relationship between the Welsh and Tehuelche people since their arrival in Patagonia. It is intended to review the MOU at the same time to firm up some areas of potential collaboration.

Silesia - The relationship continues to work well, particularly in the areas of local government, education, regional policy and Structural Funds, arts and culture. A joint labour market initiative is being developed with EU funding. The First Minister reaffirmed the MOU during his visit to Silesia in November 2005.

Catalunya – Other commitments and the rapidly evolving political situation in Catalunya have so far prevented President Maragall from visiting Wales as intended. However there is a continuing relationship with Catalunya both bilaterally - primarily in the area of education - and through common interests in regional networks. Although the hurdle of the referendum on further devolution is now successfully negotiated, the Maragall government has lost its coalition partner and early elections are now looming.

Brittany – During a visit to Brittany in June 2006 the First Minister and the President of Brittany signed a Plan of Action to underpin the existing MOU. It sets out a range of objectives in the areas of sustainable development; economic development and innovation; agriculture and rural development; young people, education, training, research; the environment; health; sport, tourism, particularly in relation to sailing and water sports; culture and language policy; exchanges between towns and local authorities; and European affairs. The First Minister also addressed the Brittany Regional Council in plenary session during his visit.

Chongqing - In March 2005 the First Minister and Vice-Mayor Wu Jianong of the Municipality of Chongqing signed a new MOU in recognition of our increasingly important relationship with the main city of South West China. Chongqing is located on the Yangtze River upstream of the Three Gorges and already one of the 3 major hubs for economic growth under China's Western Development Strategy, will continue to grow in importance with the completion of the Three Gorges Dam project in 2008. The MOU sets out the intention to work together for their mutual benefit in the areas of economic and trade development; education and training; the environment; culture; governance; and agriculture. Since the MOU was signed a delegation of construction and property industry representatives have visited Wales in April and proposals for later this year include a visit to

Wales by Vice Mayor Chen Guang Guo in September. A trade mission and education delegation from Wales plans to visit Chongqing in October.

Emilia Romagna - We have a developing relationship with the Emilia Romagna region of Italy. Consideration is being given to putting the relationship on a more formal footing through the development of an MOU.

6. The Welsh Assembly Government's involvement and role in multi-national and/or regional networks has continued eg:

NRG4SD - Wales is currently the European Chair of the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (NRG4SD) and Vice Chair of NRG4SD. The Network has recently adopted a Wales-led paper on Minority Languages.

Reg Leg – In 2006 Wales holds the Presidency of the Conference of European Regions with Legislative Powers (Reg Leg). During our presidency we have established the Committee of the Regions Inter-Group for members who draw their mandates from Regional Government or Parliament. At the inaugural meeting – Mr Schausberger of Salzburg was elected as president and Rosemary Butler AM was elected as second Vice President. In November, Wales will host the Conference of Presidents of Regions with Legislative Power in Cardiff.

EARLALL – The Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills' position as Vice President of the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL) provides an opportunity to cement relationships with other EARLALL regions and to raise the profile of Wales. Membership of EARLALL provides a valuable opportunity for regions to work together, not only in sharing knowledge and best practice but also in kick-starting joint developmental projects between regions. EARLALL also serves as a platform for member regions to comment collectively on policy development within the European Union and over the last 2 years has been progressing its ambitions as an influencing body by strengthening its links with the Commission. Membership of EARLALL is an important and practical way in which Wales can be fully involved in Europe in its own right.

## **The Image and Branding of Wales**

7. This year has seen the culmination of an exercise to develop a new Wales brand. The objective was a brand which would be as relevant to those promoting Wales as a tourist destination as to those promoting Wales as a business partner or as a place to study; a brand which would be as motivating to the people of Wales as to the outside world

8. The outcome of that work is a brand which places Wales as a nation of 'original thinkers'; a nation which is prepared to follow its own path; a passionate people who are not afraid to speak their own minds; a country that is not swayed by outside influence; a land that cherishes culture & creativity; and a place which prides itself on being different and given to innovation and lateral thinking.

9. In future we will present ourselves based on three key values which relate to:

The spirit of the people which is described as: honest, down-to-earth and unpretentious; open-minded and egalitarian, with a strong sense of right and wrong; emotional and passionate, have a real identity and sense of belonging to their country; and proud of their nation's unique history and culture

The spirit of the place described as: small, manageable country with a human scale, not a remote, isolated wilderness; open, accessible and filled with the passion and warmth of its people; committed to creating a fair community where everyone is valued; an inclusive society which offers everyone the opportunity to reach their potential; and

A national attitude which: challenges conventions, but not in an aggressive or confrontational way; constantly challenges the status quo, looking for original/lateral solutions to develop and improve itself as a nation; prides itself in being a small clever country with big ideas, that punches above its weight; always portrays itself with enthusiasm and vigour, challenging negative stereotypes

10. Brand guidelines are being developed to enable the brand to be rolled out through all new promotion and marketing initiatives as they come on line. Over the coming months we will develop a new suite of communication and marketing materials to support the new brand to replace existing materials as they are exhausted.

11. A more detailed presentation on the Wales brand was arranged for members of EEAC and EIN Committee on 12 June.

## **Promotion and Marketing of Wales**

12. We have and will continue to use St David's Day as a hook to raise the profile of Wales overseas, particularly where the Welsh Assembly Government has an overseas presence and through working with Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) Posts and media. Specific examples of this include:

13. Wales showcase events which help to build a public profile of Wales in target markets through the use of interactive information, food demonstrations and performances by Welsh artists. In March 2005 a Wales showcase was staged in Dubai, one year after the opening of the trade office there and in March 2006 the Showcase in Hong Kong contributed to the development of the building of relationships with China and coincided with the signing of the MOU with Chongqing. In both cases a trade mission coincided with the timing of the showcase and an associated programme of activities arranged to directly engage target sectors and individuals.

14. 'St David's Day' programmes which take place in the week around 1 March to promote Wales through a range of activities such as exhibitions, seminars, receptions and artistic performance are now well established in New York and Brussels where the Welsh Assembly Government has staff on the ground.

15. Ministers have also hosted the London-based Diplomatic Corps at events to mark St David's Day – at a reception held in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London in 2005, and at dinner in the Millennium Stadium in 2006.

16. In 2006 we also produced a promotional box which demonstrated some of the quality Welsh produce Wales has to offer. The box was extremely well received by the many international guests at our St David's Day events.

17. Through ongoing contact, information for their local media and an annual message from the First Minister, the Welsh Assembly Government encourages and supports FCO Posts around the world to mark St David's Day.

18. The opportunities provided by development of the new Wales brand and the merger with the Welsh Assembly Government of the Welsh Development Agency and Wales Tourist Board both increase the scope for ensuring consistency of message and image in our promotional activities and marketing material used to promote Wales.

19. Following the merger the Welsh Assembly Government now has a presence in Amsterdam, Bangalore, Beijing, Brussels, Chicago, Dubai, Dublin, Hong Kong, Houston, Milan, Munich, New York, Ontario, Paris, San Francisco, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore, Sydney, Taipei and Tokyo, and we are currently looking at how these can best contribute to promoting Wales in the future.

20. From a profile-raising perspective for Wales it is essential to take full advantage of the promotion and marketing potential of major events which impact on Wales but where the Welsh Assembly Government is not in the lead. Examples of this include major sporting events coming to Wales and the UK such as the Ashes Test match in Cardiff in 2009; Ryder Cup 2010; the London Olympics in 2012.

21. An example of other opportunities the Welsh Assembly Government uses to get the Welsh message out is this year's Queen's Birthday Party hosted by the British Ambassador in Rome. The Welsh Assembly Government supported the Embassy to give the event a Welsh theme, in terms of branding, menu, entertainment and promotional literature. It provided an opportunity to raise the profile of Wales and promote Welsh food produce at the event and through media opportunities.

## **Events and Visits**

22. On other occasions the Welsh Assembly Government takes the lead on staging one off events or a Welsh presence within high profile, well established events.

23. Events such as Wales showcases and Diplomatic St David's Day receptions have already been mentioned earlier in this paper. Other examples of events aimed at an international audience during the period of this report include: the Foreign Ministers' Gymnich in Newport and the Competitiveness Council in Cardiff held under the UK's presidency of the EU in 2005; "The World comes to Wales" Diplomat Conference in Cardiff in June 2005; the Canada-UK Colloquium which held its annual meeting in Wales for the first time in November 2005.

24. This summer, the Welsh Assembly Government is staging an exhibition at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York between June and September 2006 which tells the story of Welsh

immigration to America. The anticipated visitor numbers during this period are around 1 million.

## **Outward Visits**

25. Visits overseas by Ministers in support of the above events or to lead Trade Missions or attend and participate at international meetings and conferences are equally productive in achieving wider profile and influence.

26. During the course of government business, Ministers have undertaken a range of visits to countries overseas which have been previously reported to the Committee. Outside of EU business these include:

The First Minister has visited Argentina, Brittany, China (Hong Kong, Chongqing) Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Iraq, Poland, Vietnam.

The Minister for Enterprise Innovation and Networks has visited Brittany, Canada, Dubai, Spain, USA.

The Minister for Environment Planning and Countryside has visited Amsterdam, Brussels, Dubai, Germany, Ghana, South Africa, Sumatra

The Minister for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills has visited Spain, Italy, Lesotho;

The Minister for Health and Social Services has visited Dublin, Norway;

The Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services has visited Dublin, Denmark, Sweden;

The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport has visited Venice, New York, Melbourne.

## **Inward visits**

27. Visits to Wales by foreign VIP's and delegations are another tool in raising the profile of Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government has and will continue to seek to attract influential visitors to Wales, particularly those who can further Wales' cause in particular markets or areas eg a visit by a delegation from the UAE led to the lifting of the ban on Welsh lamb exports to the UAE.

28. During the period of this report, the countries and regions from which the Welsh Assembly Government has received visitors includes:

Argentina, Armenia, Australia (Victoria, NSW, Western Australia), Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Canada (Quebec), China (Chongqing, Guangdong), Croatia, Czech Republic, Gabon, Germany, India, Iraq, Israel, Italy (Lombardy, Tuscany), Kazakhstan, Korea, Latvia, Lesotho, Malaysia, Montenegro, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad, Turkey, Udmurt Republic, United Arab Emirates, USA, Vietnam

29. In addition to events collectively involving the Diplomatic Corps Ministerial bilateral engagements have taken place with Ambassadors or equivalents from Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Gabon, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lesotho, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia,

Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, USA.

## **Working with and through others**

30. To achieve maximum impact for the least spend for Wales the Welsh Assembly Government continues to work with and through others.

31. The FCO, including their overseas posts, continue to be of considerable assistance across the range of activities. With Welsh Assembly Government encouragement, St David's Day is now established in the calendar of many overseas posts and it has enabled the First Minister's St David's Day message to reach a much wider audience.

32. The Welsh Assembly Government is represented on the FCO's Public Diplomacy Partners Group - an advisory panel formed to advise and support the UK Government's Public Diplomacy Board. The group includes representatives of UK Government departments, other Devolved Administrations and Non Departmental Public Bodies.

33. We continue to work closely with UK bodies such as Visit Britain and UKTI who provide assistance with overseas events and trade missions.

34. The Welsh Assembly Government and the British Council in Wales work closely together. This mutually productive working relationship has been reflected in an increased level of engagement with the British Council UK body and British Council offices overseas. For example, the British Council office in Chongqing is providing considerable assistance in taking forward the relationship in a number of areas – education, art and culture.

35. The Welsh Assembly Government's engagement with the foreign Diplomatic Corps based in London continues to improve and develop on the back of their positive experience of Wales and Welsh events. We also continue to encourage further full time consular representation in Wales

36. In 2005 and 2006 a further 5 Honorary Consuls have joined the Consular Association in Wales – representing Czech Republic, Estonia, Jordan, Kazakhstan and Slovakia. 23 countries are now represented by honorary consuls in Wales. In addition Ireland has a permanent representative here, the US Embassy has a satellite office in Cardiff and the European Commission has a fully fledged representation office. We work with them on both an individual basis and as a group and will continue to do so.

37. We are engaging with the Wales International Consortium, individual Higher Education institutions, Fforwm and the international network of further education institutions on the potential opportunities for education in the international market.

38. We continue to work with other parts of the public sector to further the promoting Wales agenda, in particular the museum and libraries sector. The National Library of Wales is closely involved with the exhibition at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York.

39. We are looking to engage more private sector involvement in the promotion of Wales, in addition to that already undertaken through company visits/trade missions and exhibitions overseas. For example, the private sector was involved in an Environment Services project in Morocco involving the Four Motors, Wales and Flanders.

### **Welsh International Sustainable Development Framework**

40. This paper has focussed on the external relations activity of the Welsh Assembly Government. In parallel, the Government is also taking forward work on the international development agenda.

41. The public consultation on the Welsh International Sustainable Development Framework attracted 273 responses from individuals and organisations across Wales. The Framework, which has been warmly welcomed, will enhance Wales' ability to help deliver the UN Millennium Development Goals and ensure that the Assembly Government can improve the co-ordination of a Welsh response to international disasters and emergencies. Following consideration of the responses it is intended to launch the final framework in the Autumn.

### **Conclusion**

42. This paper has provided the Committee with an update on the extensive range of the Assembly Government's External Relations activity. It is proposed to provide regular updates to the Committee in the future.