

**National Assembly for Wales**  
EU Office

## Europe Matters

Issue 32 – Summer 2015

Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



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## Introduction



**Dame Rosemary Butler AM**  
**Presiding Officer**

I am delighted to introduce the 32nd issue of Europe Matters, our update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

Europe is firmly on the agenda following the announcement of an EU Referendum by the new UK Government. The Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee chaired by my Deputy, David Melding AM is planning to look at this in the autumn.

I will be encouraging a strong engagement by the Assembly in these discussions. We must ensure that we have an informed debate, that we understand what the EU means to Wales, how it affects our lives across so many areas, many of which are devolved to the Assembly. The UK Government in its discussions on EU reform will I trust be mindful of the responsibilities of the Assembly and the other Devolved Legislatures and Parliaments in the UK.

In May I welcomed the four Welsh MEPs to the Assembly to meet with Chairs of Committees and the Welsh CoR representatives, to discuss how the Assembly engages with the EU and how we work with our representatives in Brussels.

In June three Assembly Committee visited Brussels, with one of these also visiting Luxembourg to meet officials in the European Investment Bank. They had productive meetings with MEPs, European Commission officials, representatives from UKREP, a plethora of EU networks and Brussels-based representations. Our Petitions Committee delegation featured on the formal agenda of the European Parliament's Petitions Committee. On 20 July at the Royal Welsh Show members of the Environment and Sustainability Committee will meet EU Agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan who will be on an official visit.

In March David Rees AM, Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee was invited to a stakeholder event in London, to discuss with the lead rapporteur MEP and UK Government officials his Committee's recently published report on new psychoactive substances. Enterprise and Business Committee has launched a new inquiry looking at the potential of the maritime economy, which has been much in the news in Wales following announcements about tidal lagoons, and complements the own-initiative report by Rhodri Glyn Thomas on Developing the Potential for Ocean Energy, in his role as Committee of the Regions (CoR) representative. Mick Antoniw AM is also active on the CoR, with an own-initiative opinion on living wages, and his ongoing work on the Ukraine crisis.

We have welcomed many dignitaries and VIPs to the Assembly. I was particularly delighted to host at the end of June a meeting of CALRE Gender Equality Group, which the Assembly Chairs.

## EU related topics in the Assembly's Committees

### Environment and Sustainability Committee

In light of the volume of Welsh legislation that will occupy the Committee's time until the election the Committee has adopted a new approach to its European work. It will track and seek to influence EU proposals of interest to the Committee through written consultation and informal engagement with stakeholders. Any issues identified for Wales will be pursued through written communication with the EU institutions and Welsh Government. Some of the key EU areas of interest to the Committee are set out below. A full list can be found on the Committee's website. The Committee visited Brussels on 3-4 June to discuss its priority areas with key EU stakeholders.

- **Inquiry into the organic production and labelling of organic products:** This inquiry has looked at the potential impacts on Wales of the European Commission's proposals for a Regulation on organic production and the labelling of organic products and the proposals published in 2014. The inquiry is: considering the potential impacts of the proposals on the organics sector in Wales; considering recommendations for changes to the legal proposals published; acting as a forum for stakeholders in Wales to engage with the debate on the future of organic production in the EU. The Committee held an oral evidence session on 13 November and has written to the Commissioner for Agriculture, the chair of the European Parliament Agriculture Committee and Welsh MEPs outlining its key proposals for amendments to the text of the draft regulation. It will continue to follow and respond to the work of the European Parliament on the organics regulation during the summer term of the Assembly.
- **Marine policy and fisheries:** The Committee has continued to keep development of the Welsh Government's marine and fisheries policy under review including delivery of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Common Fisheries Policy in Wales. An evidence session was held on 26 February.
- **Cultivation of GMOs:** Following on from the Council of the European Union's ('Council') agreement on a negotiation position on proposals to amend the authorisation process for the cultivation of GMO's, the Committee held factual briefing sessions with Welsh Government and European Commission officials on the content of the proposed amendments. The Committee intends to continue to monitor and track the negotiations on this proposal. This is one of the issues that the Committee discussed during its visit to Brussels on 3-4 June.
- **Ban on driftnets:** Following the publication by the European Commission of a regulation to prohibit the ban on driftnets the Environment and Sustainability Committee wrote to the Welsh Government to clarify its response to the proposals. The Committee has engaged with Welsh stakeholders on their views on the proposals and recommendations for amendments. In February the Committee wrote to the Commissioner for Fisheries, the Chair of the European Parliament Fisheries Committee and Welsh MEPs, setting out Welsh stakeholders' concerns and suggesting amendments to the ban. Correspondence the Committee has received from the Commission in relation to its concerns on this proposals can be found on the Committee's website. The Committee discussed this issue during its visit to Brussels on 3-4 June.

- **Common Agricultural Policy—Changes to the Basic Payment Scheme:** On 11 February the Committee took evidence from the Deputy Minister for Farming and Food about Changes to the Basic Payment Scheme. The Committee held an evidence gathering session with agriculture stakeholders to discuss this issue and the organics regulation, GMO's, the Rural Development Plan and EID regulations on 30 April. Evidence gathered at this session was used to scrutinise the Deputy Minister for Farming and Food on progress on these issues on 20 May.

## **Enterprise and Business Committee**

- **Inquiries into (i) Assisting Young People into Work; (ii) Employment opportunities for people over 50; (iii) Inquiry into Tourism:** While the main foci of these three inquiries are Welsh and UK actions, each inquiry includes consideration of the impact and value-for-money of European funding. The report of the Assisting Young People into Work inquiry was published on 19 March and was noted in plenary on 20 May. The employment opportunities for people over 50 inquiry report is expected to be published this summer. The Tourism report was published in November and was noted in plenary on 21 January.
- **EU scrutiny session:** the Committee held a scrutiny session with the Minister for Finance and Government Business on 21 January focusing on the Welsh Government's preparations for the new Structural Funds Programmes for 2014-2020, and in follow up to the Committee's inquiries into Horizon 2020 and EU Funding Opportunities 2014-2020. The Committee also held an update session with the Head of the European Commission's Office in Wales, David Hughes, and the Assembly's EU Office, focusing in particular on the European Commission's Work Programme for 2015 and the priorities of the new European Commission. On 19 March the Committee held a scrutiny session with European Commission officials about the Strategic Investment Plan and investment in Wales's Maritime Economy
- **Maritime Economy:** the Committee is undertaking a new inquiry looking at the potential of the maritime economy to Wales, including the development of Ocean Energy. This inquiry is also considering the opportunities to Wales from the "Juncker Investment Plan" and other potential sources of finance. The Committee held an information session with officials from DG Maritime Affairs in March, The Committee also held evidence sessions in north Wales on 9 July with Welsh ports, Menai Science Park and Bangor University, and further evidence sessions are planned for the autumn. The Committee also gathered background information during its visit to Brussels/Luxembourg (more below).
- **Welsh MEPs:** the Committee held a private update session with the Welsh MEPs in March via video conference from Brussels to discuss a range of EU issues, including the Juncker Investment Plan, TTIP (EU/US trade negotiations), and the Greek crisis.
- **Visit to Brussels/Luxembourg:** at the end of June the Committee visited Brussels for meetings with senior officials from the European Commission, UK Government, and a number of the Welsh MEPS. The Committee also visited the European Investment Bank HQ in Luxembourg for meetings with officials to discuss opportunities for investments in Wales, including from the Juncker Investment Plan.

## Health and Social Care Committee

- **Inquiry into new psychoactive substances (NPS):** The Committee held evidence sessions and undertook engagement activity during autumn and winter 2014. The terms of reference for this inquiry included consideration of international evidence on approaches taken to NPS in other countries. The Committee took evidence on draft legislation that is being prepared by the European Commission to regulate NPS at EU level (over and above the current limited EU regulation). Giving evidence to the Committee in January 2015, Home Office officials expressed the UK Government's reservations about the European Commission's proposed approach. The Committee reported in March 2015 with one of its 14 recommendations calling on the Minister for Health and Social Services to work in partnership with the UK Government, and other devolved administrations, to ensure that Welsh interests are reflected in all future negotiations on the European Commission's proposals relating to NPS. The report was noted in plenary on 13 May. On 30 March the Committee Chair participated in a stakeholder session with the European Parliament's rapporteur on NPS at the UK Office of the European Parliament in London.

## Children, Young People and Education Committee

- **Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income Households:** The Committee has held evidence sessions in autumn 2013 and went on to undertake focused work on the importance of parental engagement in 2014. A further evidence session with the Minister was held in December 2014 to conclude the inquiry. The Committee's report was published in February 2015. The report was noted in plenary on 20 May.

## Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee

- **Report on Subsidiarity:** The monitoring report on relevant subsidiarity issues to Wales coming out of draft EU legislative proposals, covering the period May to December 2014, was noted on 12 January. The report covering the period January to May was noted at the meeting on 15 June.
- **EU referendum:** At its meeting on 15 June, the Committee considered correspondence from the Electoral Commission inviting comments on the proposed wording of the referendum question included in the European Union Referendum Bill, which was introduced in the House of Commons on Thursday 28 May.
- **Proposal for European Regulation on Genetically Modified Organisms:** On 22 June the committee agreed to write to the Welsh Government to ask whether it expects to take decisions on the use of genetically modified food and feed in Wales under the proposed EU Directive

## Petitions Committee

- **European Parliament Petitions Committee:** the Chair William Powell AM and Joyce Watson AM participated in a Right to Petitions Public Hearing at the European Parliament's Petitions Committee in June as well as participating in part of the Petitions Committee's meeting. This visit will help inform the Committee's reflections on the existing approach to petitions in the Assembly.

## Plenary business with dedicated sessions on European issues

- 21 January: the Assembly noted the Report from the Enterprise and Business Committee's inquiry into Tourism.
- 21 January: a short debate on The Farming Industry – the reduction in the milk prices that are paid to farmers; uncertainty regarding basic payments following a judicial challenge; and the member states taking back authorising GM crops from the EU.
- 25 February: the Assembly noted the Report from the Health and Social Care Committee's inquiry into Access to Medical Technologies in Wales.
- 24 March: the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport gave a Statement, followed by a debate, to update on Actions from Enterprise and Business Committee Reports - progress in relation to the recommendations from the Enterprise and Business Committee reports on the Welsh Government's approach to trade and inward investment, youth entrepreneurship and international connectivity through Welsh ports and airports.
- 24 March: the Minister for Finance and Government Business gave a Statement, followed by a debate, on strengthening procurement policy.
- 24 March: the Deputy Minister for Farming and Food gave a Statement, followed by a debate, on the dairy review.
- 5 May: Llyr Gruffydd AM asked an Urgent Question on the Basic Payment Scheme.
- 13 May: the Assembly noted the Report from the Health and Social Care Committee's inquiry into new psychoactive substances.
- 19 May: the Minister for Finance and Government Business gave a Statement, followed by a debate, on EU Funding Ambassadors.
- 20 May: the Assembly noted the Report from the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry into educational outcomes for children from low income households.
- 20 May: the Assembly noted the Report from the Enterprise and Business Committee's inquiry on assisting young people into work.
- 2 June: the Minister for Finance and Government Business gave a Statement, followed by a debate, in the form of a progress report on EU Structural Funds 2014-20.
- 23 June: the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty gave a Statement, followed by a debate, on European Structural Fund Operations to Tackle Poverty.
- 7 July: the Deputy Minister for Farming and Food gave a Statement, followed by a debate, on the Common Agricultural Policy Basic Payment Scheme.

*Note: in addition to the above European issues feature in Ministerial Statements and in questions to Ministers on a regular basis.*

## External activities of Members on Assembly business

- 19 January - Lindsay Whittle AM represented the Assembly at the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly's, Economic Matters Committee meeting on their current inquiry into the role of '*Youth Unemployment*' in Belfast.
- 4-6 February - The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)'s British Isles and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) held its 2<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference. The Conference was hosted by the Gibraltar Branch and CPA Wales was represented by Branch Chair and BIMR CWP Steering Committee Member Joyce Watson AM, accompanied by Jenny Rathbone AM and Ann Jones AM. The theme of the conference was "*Ending Violence against Women*".
- 11-13 February: Mick Antoniw AM attended the inaugural plenary of the new mandate of the CoR in Brussels
- 22 - 24 February - Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM, William Powell AM, Joyce Watson AM, Lindsay Whittle AM and Darren Millar AM attended the 50<sup>th</sup> British Irish Parliamentary Assembly Plenary in Dublin. The Plenary focused on the theme of '*Sport in promoting cultural and community development*'
- 2 March: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM in Brussels for CoR meeting.
- 5 March: Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM spoke at a conference on the role of National Parliaments in the EU, organised by the University of Roma Sapina, which took place at the Chamber of Deputies in the Italian Parliament in Rome.
- 13- 16 April - Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM led a delegation, accompanied by Commissioners Sandy Mewies AM, Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM and Peter Black AM, to Bosnia Herzegovina. The visit was as part of the "*Lessons from Srebrenica*" education programme to mark the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide.
- 20 April: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM in Brussels as part of the evidence gathering for his own-initiative report on Developing the Potential of Ocean Energy for the CoR
- 4-5 May: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM in Brussels as part of the evidence gathering for his own-initiative report on Developing the Potential of Ocean Energy for the CoR meeting with Brussels-based stakeholders, European Commission officials, and networks such as Ocean Energy Europe.
- 22 May: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM visited the European Investment Bank HQ in Luxembourg as part of the evidence gathering for his own-initiative report on Developing the Potential of Ocean Energy for the CoR.
- 22 May: Mick Antoniw AM visited Brussels for a stakeholders meeting to inform the preparation of his own-initiative opinion for the CoR on Standards in Remuneration in the EU.

- 24-27 May: Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM led a delegation, accompanied by CPA Wales Branch Chair Joyce Watson AM and Branch Members Ann Jones AM and Simon Thomas AM to attend the annual British Isles & Mediterranean Regional (BIMR) Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Conference, which was this year hosted by the CPA Cyprus Branch in Limassol. The conference theme was *Parliaments in the Face of Contemporary Challenges* and focussed upon the themes of Youth Unemployment and Parliamentary Accountability.
- 27 May: Mick Antoniw AM in Brussels for CoR meeting.
- 3-4 June: members of the Environment and Sustainability Committee visited Brussels for a series of meetings with: Welsh MEP Dr Kay Swinburne, Scottish MEP Dr Ian Duncan, Director General of DG Maritime Affairs Lowri Evans, Tom Tynan from EU Agriculture Commissioners Phil Hogan’s Cabinet, officials from UKREP, DG Environment, the European Investment Bank, NFU Brussels, AGRA FACTS, Friends of the Earth and the RSPB.
- 3-4 June: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM in Brussels for CoR plenary.
- 21-22 June: Chair of the Petitions Committee William Powell AM and Joyce Watson AM visited the European Parliament’s Petitions Committee and participated in a hearing on the Right to Petition.
- 24-26 June: members of the Enterprise and Business Committee visited Brussels and Luxembourg for a series of meetings. In Brussels they met Welsh MEPs Derek Vaughan and Jill Evans, Miguel Gil-Tertre from EU Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness Commissioner Jyri Katainen’s Cabinet, senior officials from UKREP, Ocean Energy Europe, and the Irish Perm Rep. In Luxembourg they had a series of meetings with European Investment Bank officials at its HQ.
- 24 June: Mick Antoniw AM in his capacity as CoR representative chaired a panel session at an EU conference on asbestos
- 25 June: Mick Antoniw AM presented his own-initiative report on Standards in Remuneration in the EU to the meeting of the SEDEC Commission at the CoR.
- 30 June: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM presented his own-initiative report on Developing the Potential of Ocean Energy to the meeting of the ENVE Commission at the CoR.
- 7-9 July: Mick Antoniw AM in Brussels for CoR plenary.

## International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd

- 2-3 February: the Assembly welcomed a small delegation from the Parliament of Fiji as part of a programme coordinated through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). The delegation was led by Jiko Luveni, Fiji's first woman speaker.
- 25 February: Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM met Mr Naoto Kan, former Prime Minister of Japan. Mr Kan addressed an audience at the Pierhead, as part of a visit programme in partnership with the Green Cross International.
- 26 February: Latvian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Andris Teikmanis visited the Assembly to outline Latvia's priorities during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union.
- 17 March: Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM met the French Ambassador, Her Excellency Ms Sylvie Bermann.
- 24 April: Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM hosted a visit to the Senedd by His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester.
- 27 April: Deputy Presiding Officer, David Melding AM met the Ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Mr Patrick Engelberg.
- 5 May: Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM hosted the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA, during his first visit to the National Assembly for Wales.
- 13 May: Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM met a delegation from the Jordanian Parliament as part of a wider programme to the UK arranged by Global Partners Governance.
- 14 May: Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM hosted a meeting of Assembly Chairs with the four Welsh MEPs and three of Wales' four representatives on the CoR.
- 21 May: Deputy Presiding Officer, David Melding AM met the Estonian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Lauri Bambus.
- 3 June: Deputy Presiding Officer, David Melding AM met the Kazakhstan Ambassador His Excellency Mr Erzhan Kazykhanov.
- 10 June: Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM met the Chilean Ambassador, Mr Rolando Drago.

## International Events and Conferences at the Senedd

- 26 June: Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM hosted a **CALRE Gender Equality Working Group Seminar** at the Senedd with participants from the Flemish, Galician, Walloon, Federation Wallonie-Bruxells and Åland Parliaments. The Seminar focussed on “Enhancing the Participation of Women in Democracy”. A video of the Seminar can be viewed [here](#).
- 29 June: Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM hosted an event in the Senedd, in the company of the Argentine Ambassador, HE Alicia Castro. The reception officially launched a photographic exhibition, specially commissioned by the Argentine Embassy, celebrating the **150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Welsh Settlement in Patagonia**.
- 8 July: the Assembly hosted a Srebrenica Memorial Service sponsored by the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM and the First Minister Carwyn Jones AM at the Senedd on 8 July.

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## **Links**

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