

National Assembly for Wales
EU Office

Europe Matters

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Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

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



Rosemary Butler AM
Presiding Officer

I am delighted to introduce the 27th issue of Europe Matters, our update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

With summer finally reaching our shores it's a good moment to reflect on what has been another active period on European matters in our Committees, and in the work of individual Assembly Members.

The Assembly's Committees continue to take an active interest in European issues, maintaining our high profile within the EU Institutions in Brussels, and helping to facilitate the participation of a wide variety of stakeholders and interests from across Wales in the EU policy and law making process.

Environment and Sustainability Committee has undertaken a number of inquiries with a strong European dimension, for example invasive alien species, shale gas, and the marine environment, taking evidence from European Commission officials and other EU experts. This Committee will also hold update sessions in July with the Irish EU Presidency and with Welsh Stakeholders on the negotiations on reforms of the Common Agriculture Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy.

Enterprise and Business Committee undertook an inquiry looking at how Wales can improve its chances of success under the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme for 2014-2020, looking at models of best practice in Ireland, Scotland, Catalunya and Aragon. The Committee has an update session planned with the European Commission and the Minister for Finance Jane Hutt AM on 18 July, focusing on the negotiations under the Irish EU Presidency on EU Structural Funds and the EU multi-annual financial framework, and the preparations for future EU programmes in Wales.

The Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee, which has lead responsibility on subsidiarity monitoring in the Assembly, is undertaking a new inquiry looking at Wales' role in the EU decision-making process. The Committee is gathering evidence from Brussels – including a first visit on 17 June and a follow up planned in the autumn – meeting with senior officials and politicians in the EU Institutions, as well as a range of EU networks and other representations. This work will help us to understand how Welsh interests are represented in Brussels, and the influence that the Welsh Government and the Assembly has on EU policy and legislation of relevance to Wales.

Over the past few months we have hosted a number of important events and meetings on EU-related matters.

At the end of April the EC-UK Forum, a biannual informal meeting of the Chairs of Committees responsible for EU affairs in the UK and devolved legislatures took place in the Senedd, Chaired by David Melding AM, Deputy Presiding Officer. This forum provides an opportunity for an exchange of information on current and planned work on European affairs, and we very much welcome this initiative and the positive working relationships between our politicians and officials on European matters.

On 1 May – very much our Europe Day this year! – we held the annual meeting of Committee Chairs, Welsh MEPs and our Committee of the Regions representatives, and it was particularly useful to hear their experiences of the ongoing negotiations on some of the key issues for Wales in Brussels. During the evening we co-sponsored a reception and debate on Wales in Europe for the 40th anniversary of UK membership of the EU at the Pierhead building in partnership with the European Parliament's UK representation and European Commission's Wales Office. It was very well-attended and included a panel discussion with the Welsh MEPs and Assembly Members.

On 11 July we will welcome Shan Morgan, the UK's Deputy Ambassador to the EU, during a two day visit to Wales organised by the Welsh Government. Shan will meet with Chairs of Committees to discuss the work of UKREP in Brussels, and some of the key European issues we have on our agenda in the Assembly.

I would like to congratulate Mick Antoniw AM on his appointment as the Assembly's new representative on the Committee of the Regions, replacing Christine Chapman AM who stepped down from this role last November.

Wales has a strong voice on the Committee of the Regions, and active members, which is evident in the number of 'rapporteurships' they have secured on very important dossiers for Wales over the last year. Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM is undertaking his third report in a year – the latest on state aid to fisheries and aquaculture – following his high profile work on EU budget synergies and the role of the European Investment Bank, whilst Mick Antoniw AM has just secured his first rapporteurship, on public employment services.

In addition we have welcomed a host of other VIPs to the Assembly over the past few months, including the Ambassadors to the UK from Cuba, France, Ireland and the Netherlands. I am pleased to see members continuing to be active at a European and international level, including participation in the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Assembly, and CALRE.

EU related topics in the Assembly's Committees

Environment and Sustainability Committee

- **Inquiry into the Reform of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):** an informal update session will be held on 11 July with the lead official from the Irish Permanent Representation to the EU on the progress in negotiations under the Irish EU Presidency. On 17 July roundtable meeting will be held with stakeholders to discuss the outcomes of the Agriculture Council and trilogue negotiations on CAP reform.
- **Inquiry into the Reform of Common Fisheries Policy (CFP):** reform of CFP will be discussed at the two sessions to be held on 11 and 17 July (as detailed above)
- **Marine environment:** the report from this inquiry was published at the end of January 2013.
- **Energy Policy and Planning in Wales:** the Committee held a number of follow up sessions on 25 April 2013 to this inquiry that was undertaken last autumn, including a session with officials from DG Environment and DG Energy to discuss energy from unconventional gas (shale gas).
- **Invasive Alien Species:** undertaken sessions with Welsh stakeholder and Welsh Government in May and June, and planning a session with DG Environment following publication of proposals anticipated in the autumn
- **Review of Waste Policy:** the Committee is scoping out a potential future inquiry into aspects of waste policy in Wales in the context of the current review of EU waste policy and potential revisions to EU legislation in 2014.

Enterprise and Business Committee

- **Horizon 2020 part 2:** the report from the second phase of the Committee's inquiry into Horizon 2020 was published on 31 May 2013. This phase looked in particular at the future support to participation from Wales, taking evidence on 14 March from Ireland, Scotland, ERRIN (EU network) and Cardiff University, as well as drawing on background information on support structures and participation levels for FP7 in Flanders, Aragon and Catalunya.
- **Draft legislative proposals for EU Structural Funds 2014-2020:** on 18 July the Committee will hold an update session with the European Commission on the progress of negotiations on the legislative proposals under the Irish EU Presidency. The Committee will also hold a session with the Minister for Finance Jane Hutt AM to discuss the Welsh Government's preparations for the future Structural Funds programmes and its reactions to the Committee's Horizon 2020 report.
- **Inquiry into Integrated Public Transport in Wales:** the report from this inquiry was published in May 2013.
- **Youth Entrepreneurship:** this short inquiry during the summer term focuses on the Welsh Government's Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy, and includes evidence sessions from young entrepreneurs, other Welsh stakeholders and the relevant Welsh

Government Ministers, including initiatives supported using EU Structural Funds. The inquiry is likely to report in the early autumn.

Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee

- **Inquiry into Wales' role in the EU decision-making process:** a new inquiry was launched at the beginning of May looking at Wales' role in influencing the EU policy and law-making process. Evidence sessions are planned for the summer and autumn terms, including visits by the Committee to Brussels. The Committee is also consulting with key stakeholders and organisations.
- **Report on Subsidiarity:** regular termly report on monitoring of subsidiarity dimension of EU legislative proposals. The most recent, covering the period January – April 2013 was considered at the Committee's meeting on 3 June 2013.
- **Subsidiarity concern:** correspondence was sent on 15 May to the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee, Welsh MEPs and to the European Commission outlining subsidiarity concerns of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Measures to Reduce the Cost of Deploying High-speed Electronic Communications Networks

Plenary business with dedicated sessions on European issues

- 19 February: Statement by the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes: Contamination of Beef Products
- 20 February: Debate on the Finance Committee's report 'The Effectiveness of European Structural Funds in Wales'
- 12 March: Statement by the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes: The Guilford Report on the Arrangements for Implementation of the European Programmes 2014-2020
- 17 April: Debate on the Environment and Sustainability Committee's Report on the Inquiry into marine policy in Wales
- 14 May: Statement by the Minister for Finance: The Welsh Government Response to the Guilford Report Recommendations
- 3 July: Welsh Government response to the Enterprise and Business Committee's report on Horizon 2020

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

External activities of Members on Assembly business

- 11 April Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM presented in Welsh his report on public and private finance (including role of the European Investment Bank) to the Committee of the Regions plenary. The report was adopted unanimously with cross-party support.
- 15 April the Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM attended the 2nd CALRE Standing Committee meeting held in Venice.
- 13 May Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM chaired a panel session with the European Investment Bank, European Commission and Irish EU Presidency at a High Level Conference in Brussels, focusing on role of EU budget and EIB funding in supporting investments at the local and regional level
- 27 May to 1 June Antoinette Sandbach AM represented the Assembly at the 24th Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar held in Singapore.
- 29 May Peter Black AM attended the CALRE Working Group meeting on E-Democracy which will be held in the Parliament of Andalucia in Seville.
- 3 June Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM spoke at a European conference in Kolobrzeg Poland on behalf of the President of the Committee of the Regions, presenting the main findings from his two reports on synergies in EU, state and sub-state budgets, and public/private finance.
- 17 June Joyce Watson AM represented the Assembly at the next British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, Environment and Social Committee meeting on their current inquiry into Human Trafficking to be held in Dublin.
- 17 June David Melding AM (Chair) and Eluned Parrott AM from the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee visited to gather evidence for this Committee's inquiry into Wales role in the EU decision-making process, including meetings with Lowri Evans Director General of DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Welsh MEP Dr Kay Swinburne, and senior officials from the European Commission and a number of Brussels-based EU networks and representations.
- 19 June Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM was a speaker on behalf of the President of the Committee of the Regions at a conference in Dublin, organised as part of the Irish Presidency of the EU, which will focused on the role of EU Cohesion Policy and the European Investment Bank in economic recovery.
- 24 June Mick Antoniw AM will visited Brussels for a series of meetings as part of an induction to his new role as representative of the Committee of the Regions, which was formally confirmed on 21 May 2013.
- –3-4 July Mick Antoniw AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM will attend the Committee of the Region's plenary session in Brussels. Rhodri will also hold a number of meetings with European Commission and various EU networks/representations to gather evidence for his report for the Committee of the Regions on State Aid to Fisheries and Aquaculture

- 8 July William Powell AM will represent the Assembly at the next British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, European Committee meeting to be held in Dublin this will include a meeting with the Irish Presidency of the European Union and some informal meetings with the European Investment Bank.
- 31 August-5 September Joyce Watson AM, Ann Jones AM and Simon Thomas AM will represent the Assembly's Branch of the CPA at the 59th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa between.

International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd

- 11 March the Cuban Ambassador, Her Excellency Mrs Esther G. Armenteros Cárdenas visited the Assembly and met the Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM as part of a series of meetings during her visit to Wales.
- 19 March the French Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Bernard Emié visited the Assembly and met the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 21 March the Irish Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Bobby McDonagh visited the Assembly to give evidence to the Chair's Committee on Ireland's priorities during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Ambassador also hosted a reception to celebrate St Patrick's Day in Wales and to mark Ireland's Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers.
- 29 April the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM Chaired a meeting of the EC-UK Forum in the Senedd. The VIPs that attended were: William Cash MP, Chair of the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee; Lord Tim Boswell, Chair of the House of Lords EU Committee; Mike Nesbitt MLA, Chair of Northern Ireland Assembly's Office of First Minister Deputy First Minister Committee; and Christina McKelvie MSP, Convener of the Scottish Parliament's European and External Relations Committee
- 1 May the Head of the European Commission's UK representation, Jacqui Minor, the Head of their Wales Office, David Hughes, the Head of the European Parliament's UK representation Bjorn Kjellstrom, and of their office in Edinburgh James Temple-Smithson visited the Assembly for the 40th anniversary debate, Wales in Europe, co-organised and sponsored by both EU Institutions with the Assembly.
- 1 May three of the four Welsh MEPs, Derek Vaughan, Jill Evans and Dr Kay Swinburne visited the Assembly for an informal meeting with the Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM, Committee Chairs and the Assembly's Committee of the Regions representatives, as well as participating in the Wales in Europe panel debate in the Pierhead.
- 11 June a delegation from Bavaria visited the Assembly as part of a wider programme arranged by the South Wales Chamber of Commerce.
- 17 June the Netherlands Ambassador Her Excellency Ms Laetitia van den Assum visited the Assembly and met the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM as part of a series of meetings during her visit to Wales.

- 2 July Kyle Galler, Principal Economic Policy Analyst at the European Commission’s Representation in the UK, gave an update to a number of Assembly Members during an EU ‘breakfast briefing’ organised by the European Commission’s Office in Wales.
- 9 July the Québec Agent-General, Stéphane Paquet will visit the Assembly for a meeting with the Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM as part of a series of meetings during his first visit to Wales.
- 11 July the UKs Deputy Ambassador to the EU Shan Morgan met the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM, Chairs of Assembly Committees, and the Assembly’s representatives on the Committee of the Regions during a two-day visit to Wales organised by the Welsh Government.

Links

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For further information:

Contact:

Gregg Jones, Head of Office (**Gregg.Jones@wales.gov.uk**)
National Assembly for Wales EU Office
Wales House
6th Floor
Rond Point Schuman 11
1040 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: 0032 (0) 2226 6692
Mobile: 0044 (0) 7816 164 455

Or

National Assembly for Wales International Relations team
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA
Tel: 0044 (0)29 2089 8642/8897
InternationalTeam@Wales.gov.uk

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We hope you find this report of interest. If you do not wish to receive future editions of this newsletter, or if you have not received this directly and would like to add your name to the mailing list, please email Gregg Jones.