# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Consultation Response to the Draft International Strategy for Wales**  |
| **DATE**  | **22 November 2019** |
| **BY**  | **Eluned Morgan AM, Minister for International Relations & Welsh Language**  |

Following the continuing lack of clarity on the nature of the UK’s future relationship with the European Union, I took the decision to prepare a draft international strategy for a 12 week public consultation in July.

The draft strategy published for consultation on the Welsh Government’s website and was also promoted in newsletters and on social media platforms. The consultation was accompanied by a set of questions which sought views on the three key goals and how they could deliver Wales’ international ambitions.

By the end of the consultation on 23 October we had received 110 responses. The majority responded from Wales or the UK, with a small handful from outside of the UK. I was pleased to receive a response from the Basque Government who fully endorsed the draft strategy and was pleased to see that both Government’s had shared international objectives, and in particular, a shared commitment to sustainability and to future generations.

Overall the majority of responses agreed with the goals either wholly or in part. Most of the respondents who partially agreed with the goals suggested rewording of the goals slightly or additional goals that could be developed.

Multiple respondents welcomed the inclusion of global responsibility, social responsibility and a values-based strategy. Many acknowledged the contribution and role that both the Education and Cultural sectors could play in delivering the strategy’s ambitions, especially with regards to supporting economic development, developing international links through students and Higher Education institutions, as well as the use of students, culture and diaspora to support our soft power agenda.

The draft strategy highlights the important role that our people and cultural organisations, in Wales and overseas, can play in raising Wales’ international profile. A number of respondents cited the role of diaspora as a key asset, and that the use of diaspora, and alumni, could be strengthened in the final strategy.

There was also a positive response to the strategy’s recognition of international communities as an important and valued part of the fabric that make up our diverse community in Wales.

Wales has a strong global commercial relationship both in terms of exports and attracting inward investment. In the Products chapter the draft strategy set out plans to showcase Wales’ expertise in cyber security, compound-semiconductors and film and television production to demonstrate that we have a modern and vibrant economy.

Whilst the majority of respondents agreed wholly or in part with the choice of the three showcase centres of excellence, there was a strong agreement that more clarity was needed about why these sectors have been chosen. It was also stated by a number of respondents that this approach could be seen as restrictive in terms of attracting investment from other sectors and supporting research and development. In addition, a number of respondents called for greater emphasis on fair trade, fair work and environmental responsibility to support the activity being proposed in the strategy and to ensure that the strategic Goals complemented one another.

Wales‘ culture and language have contributed to international tourism and increased recognition as a visitor destination. In the Place chapter, we identified the need to promote sustainable tourism as a priority and highlighted the Wales for Africa Programme and our Health Boards to demonstrate our commitment to global responsibility. The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with our approach, but felt that the ambitions didn’t go far enough to truly showcase Wales’ strengths.

With regard to our international development work, there was a call for additional activity from the Welsh Government, focussing mainly on the current Wales for Africa programme.

Overall, the work undertaken by the Wales for Africa programme was welcomed, with a split in views on the benefits and dis-benefits of focussing on a small number of geographical areas.

Comments about the commitment to support sustainable tourism were largely positive. However, in line with the overarching theme of responses to this particular chapter, respondents felt that more could be done to develop this work further and promote the Welsh offer. In addition, the role of the Welsh language to promote Wales was identified as a key selling point, alongside the natural landscape and well known cultural events such as the Urdd and National Eisteddfod.

The key points and key themes from the consultation will be considered and reflected upon over the coming monthsas the drafting of the final document continues. However, in response to the consultation some immediate decisions I have taken are to:

* bring in greater context for the need for a strategy;
* include a vision statement at the beginning of the document to express the Wales we expect to see in 5 years;
* keep the three objectives of the strategy as: raise Wales’ profile on the international stage; grow the economy through increasing exports and attracting inward investment; establish Wales as a globally responsible nation;
* continue to focus on the three industries to showcase Wales, but to bring more information into the document regarding the rationale behind choosing these industries;
* bring clarity to the message that these sectors are a focus to demonstrate creativity, sustainability and technology and are not the sole focus of our inward investment proposition.
* bring out the key themes of sustainability, technology and creativity – highlighting further industries to act as magnet projects, specifically under these key themes;
* slim down the section on Brexit and immigration and to focus on sustaining our positive relationship with Europe and the role of our office in Brussels;
* develop a comprehensive diaspora plan and a comprehensive digital plan to help increase our voice overseas.

There will always be differences in opinion on the detail of a strategy and the approach, but one thing is clear – when faced with uncertainty, clarity on priorities and a direction of travel is needed. The new strategy will set out our approach to internationalisation and encourage a Team Wales approach to delivering our ambitions – pulling us around a common set of goals and a consistent message. It is not intended to be a list of actions.

The nature of the strategy will always be high level to ensure that it is agile and flexible enough to take account of any wider changes in the UK’s international relations, and able to respond to changing global priorities.

The international strategy recognises the role of the UK Government in realising our ambition and places certain calls on the UK Government to support its delivery, and so it would not be appropriate to release a new strategy during a UK General Election pre-election period. Therefore, I have planned to re-schedule the publication of the final strategy to the New Year.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond.

Consultation Summary of Responses -[https://gov.wales/International Strategy - summary of responses](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgov.wales%2Fdraft-international-strategy-for-wales&data=02%7C01%7CMichael.Cummings%40gov.wales%7C094a5ec36f8e4138a9af08d76e8d4423%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637099425319065663&sdata=WRIGtEfeMMioE4VIGZI2fuJeF0ZItxpdAgjqYazIAY8%3D&reserved=0)