

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 welcome you to issue 26 of Europe Matters, our regular update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

As one of Europe's newest legislatures we are proud to engage actively in European affairs, and make a positive contribution in the European policy and legislative process, during what has been a challenging period for the European Union. Our friends and colleagues from Ireland have taken over the Presidency of the EU during a crucial six months in the negotiations, and we are sure that they will provide excellent leadership during this period.

One of their first priorities will be to reach agreement on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020, so I am particularly pleased that the Assembly held a debate on this issue on the eve of the EU Summit in November. With our new approach to mainstreaming EU affairs, Plenary is an important arena in which key European issues can be discussed by all Members of the Assembly. The work in our Committees on the reform of CAP, the EU Structural Funds and participation in other European programmes, has shown the importance of engaging in these key debates at the right time and in the right way, and effective use of plenary debates can add a real value to this.

Part of this engagement means visiting Brussels, meeting with MEPs and the European Commission, and giving visibility to the priorities and objectives of Welsh stakeholders. This is something I very much encourage. Enterprise and Business Committee spent two days in Brussels in November, and I know that other Committee visits are envisaged this year, whilst individual members continue to organise specific programmes through our Brussels Office. I would like to thank again the Welsh MEPs for their support and involvement in such visits.

In addition to this and the active participation of Welsh Government Ministers in Brussels and Strasbourg, **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM**, through his role as representative on the Committee of the Regions, has secured two 'rapporteurships' in recent months on particularly important dossiers to Wales, enabling the National Assembly for Wales to take a leading role in this work. The first is on creating better synergies between EU, national and sub-national funding, and is closely linked to the wider discussions on the MFF proposals for 2014-2020; the second is on the use of EU funding, including the European

Investment Bank, in supporting public and private partnership investments at the local and regional level.

Rhodri will make history by presenting both reports in Welsh in the European Parliament in Brussels (the first later this week, the second in April), making use of a concordat agreed between the UK Government and Committee of the Regions, at the initiative of the Welsh Government in 2008.

Christine Chapman AM stepped down from her role as Committee of the Regions representative during the autumn, and will be sadly missed in Brussels having made a significant contribution over the last five years, including influencing the shape and content of the Europe 2020 strategy. In this role Christine helped to enhance and take forward the reputation of the Assembly, and on behalf of colleagues I would like to thank Christine for the dedication and commitment she showed in her excellent work on the Committee of the Regions.

Within the UK we have regular contacts with our colleagues in the other devolved legislatures and with the UK Parliament, which provides an invaluable mechanism for exchanging ideas and best practice. Through shared learning we can improve and enhance the work that we undertake on behalf of the people of Wales. I am very keen that we engage with other parliaments at European and International level, and our membership of CALRE, the EU network for sub-State legislatures and Parliaments provides one such opportunity.

One of the active members of this CALRE network is the Flemish Parliament, and we welcomed their political bureau for a two-day visit to Wales around St David's Day last year. I am delighted that the Assembly Commission and my Deputy, David Melding, will visit the Flemish Parliament in Brussels in February.

You will see from the following pages the wide range of activities in our Committees, the external activities by our Assembly Members at EU and international level, and some of the VIP guests we have welcomed and will welcome in the coming months, including the visit on 23 January of US Ambassador to the UK The Honourable Louis Honourable Louis B Susman on his final visit to Wales before he steps down this year. Wales and the world will be the theme of our celebrations of St David's Day around 1 March, and I very much encourage an outward looking and welcoming approach to our work with the EU and beyond.

We look forward to an energetic and fruitful 2013, the European Year of Citizens!

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):** continued monitoring of the CAP Reform proposals, including an update session with the Deputy Minister for EU Programmes, and a session with stakeholders planned for 6 February.
- **Task and Finish Group inquiry into the Reform of Common Fisheries Policy (CFP):** continued monitoring of the CFP Reform proposals, including an update session with the Deputy Minister, with MEPs (Struan Stevenson MEP and Welsh MEP Dr Kay Swinburne).
- **Inquiry into Glastir:** report from this inquiry into the Welsh Government's agri-environment scheme (part of the Rural Development Programme Wales for 2007-2013) published on 17 October.
- **Marine environment:** evidence sessions (including with DG Environment) during the autumn term to review the implementation of the UK 2009 Marine Act in Wales and the Welsh Government's progress in meeting EU obligations in this area (including Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive, the Bathing Water Quality Directive and the Water Framework Directive).
- **Inquiry into coastal protection:** report from this inquiry published in October.

Enterprise and Business Committee

- **Visit to Brussels 7-8 November:** meetings with European Commission (Cabinets of the Regional Policy Commissioner and the Research, innovation and science Commissioner, DG MOVE, DG Maritime Affairs, DG Education and Culture), Welsh MEPs, the UK Permanent Representation to the EU, and EU networks. The key themes of the visit were: the MFF 2014-2020 negotiations, future of EU Structural Funds, Public Procurement, Transport and Horizon 2020.
- **Draft legislative proposals for EU Structural Funds 2014-2020:** an update session with the Deputy Minister in September and scheduled for 24 January; update session with Chair of the European Parliament Regional Development Committee, Professor Danuta Hübner on 24 January; meetings with European Commission, MEPs, and EU networks during visit to Brussels in November; further sessions envisaged during the Spring and Summer terms in light of progress with MFF negotiations.
- **Procurement Task and Finish Group inquiry into influencing the Modernisation of European Procurement policy:** ongoing monitoring of the EU legislative proposals including meeting with DG Internal Market lead unit during visit to Brussels in November.
- **Inquiry into international connectivity through Welsh ports and airports:** meeting with DG MOVE (Transport) during the Committee's visit to Brussels in November.

- **Horizon 2020:** visit to Cardiff University on 10 January to discuss their participation in EU research programmes, including examples of successful projects.
- **Inquiry into Integrated Public Transport:** launched in the autumn a number of evidence sessions held with stakeholders in Wales, and further sessions scheduled for the spring term.
- **Inquiry into Apprenticeships:** report from this inquiry (included use of European Social Fund to support apprenticeships) published on 25 October.
- **Active Travel (Wales) Bill:** scrutiny of Welsh Government draft legislation anticipated to be published during the spring term.
- **Next Generation Broadband:** scrutiny session with the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Transport and Science planned for 7 February, including consideration of the revision of State Aid guidelines on broadband to initiatives in Wales.

Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee

- **Report on Subsidiarity:** regular termly report (22 October) on monitoring of subsidiarity dimension of EU legislative proposals

Finance Committee

- **Effectiveness of European Structural Funding in Wales 2007-2013:** report from this inquiry published on 17 December.
- **Synergies between EU, national and sub-national budgets:** session with Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM in his role as rapporteur for the Committee of the Regions on 30 January, to discuss his own-initiative report which is scheduled to be adopted at the Committee of the Regions plenary session on 31 January.

Children and Young People Committee

- **Inquiry into adoption:** report from this inquiry published on 8 November.

Health and Social Care Committee

- **Inquiry into Residential Care for Older People:** report from this inquiry published on 13 December.

External activities of Members on Assembly business

- 3-4 September **Ieuan Wyn Jones AM** visited Brussels for a series of meetings with European Commission, EU networks, and MEPs focused on Horizon 2020 and EU Structural funds proposals for 2014-2020.
- 11-14 September **Rebecca Evans AM** attended the 58th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the theme of which was 'Ensuring a Relevant Commonwealth for the Future'.
- 12 September **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM**, visited Brussels for a series of meetings as part of the preparatory stages for his own-initiative opinion for the Committee of the Regions on 'creating synergies between EU, national and sub-national budgets'.
- 28 September **Christine Chapman AM** was a speaker at the annual conference of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) in Brussels, which reviewed the performance of the Europe 2020 strategy during 2010-2012 in delivering on poverty and social inclusion objectives.
- 1 October **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** was in Brussels for a meeting of the Natural Resources Commission of the Committee of the Regions.
- 8-10 October **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** attended the plenary session of the Committee of the Regions during the Open Days week of Cities and Regions, and held a number of meetings as part of the preparation of his draft report on synergies between EU, national and sub-national budgets.
- 15 October **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** was in Brussels for a meeting of the Natural Resources Commission of the Committee of the Regions.
- 22 October **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** participated in the EC-UK Forum hosted in Belfast, which brings together the chairs of the European Committees and equivalent of the devolved and UK legislatures.
- 22-23 October the Deputy Presiding Officer **David Melding AM, William Powell AM, Ken Skates AM, Joyce Watson AM** and **Elin Jones AM** attended the 45th British Irish Parliamentary Assembly Plenary held in Glasgow. The theme of the conference was "The Scottish Economy and Irish/Scottish Relations".
- 7-8 November members from the Enterprise and Business Committee visited Brussels for a series of meetings with the European Commission, Welsh MEPs, UKREP and EU networks. The members that attended the visit were: **Nick Ramsay AM (Chair), Eluned Parrott AM, Joyce Watson AM, Alun Ffred Jones AM, Ken Skates AM and David Rees AM.**
- 14-15 November **Darren Millar AM and Russell George AM** attended an EU Integration Forum conference in Rome.

- 28 November **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** presented his draft opinion on ‘creating synergies in EU, national and sub-national budgets’ to the Temporary Ad Hoc Budget Commission in the Committee of the Regions.
- 5 December **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** attended the Natural Resources Commission meeting at the Committee of the Regions.
- 10-11 January **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** visited Brussels and Luxembourg for meetings with the European Commission, European Investment Bank and Welsh MEPs in the context of his own-initiative report for the Committee of the Regions on synergies in public/private funding initiatives to support local and regional investments.
- 21 January **David Melding AM** attended a British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) Committee Meeting in Edinburgh and **Lindsay Whittle AM** will attend a BIPA meeting in Dublin.
- 21-22 January **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** was in Brussels for a stakeholder consultation event and other meetings related to his Committee of the Regions report on synergies in public/private funding, and to speak at a conference on Sustainable Tourism at the European Parliament organised by Welsh MEP Jill Evans.
- 23 January the **Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM** and the **Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM** welcomed The Honourable Louis B Susman the US Ambassador to the UK on his final visit to Wales before he steps down this year.
- 28 - 29 January **William Powell AM** visited Brussels as part of the BIPA Committee B visit programme organised by the UKREP and House of Commons, focusing on the EU Atlantic Strategy.
- 31 January-1 February **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** will attend the plenary session of the Committee of the Regions to present his report on Creating Synergies between EU, National and sub-National Budgets.
- 9-16 February Branch Chair of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Assembly (CPA) **Joyce Watson AM** and **William Powell AM** will represent the CPA Wales Branch at the British Isles and Mediterranean Regional Conference in the Falkland Islands.
- 21-22 February the **Presiding Officer, the Deputy Presiding Officer and members of the Assembly Commission (Angela Burns AM, Sandy Mewies AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM)** will visit the Flemish Parliament in Brussels.
- 24-25 February **Antoinette Sandbach AM** will visit Paris with a delegation from the Wales Young Farmer (YFC) to meet their counterparts in France, together with Welsh MEP Dr Kay Swinburne.
- 6 March **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM** will attend the meeting of the Temporary Ad Hoc Budget Commission at the Committee of the Regions to present the first draft of his report into synergies in public/private funding.

- 11 March the **Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM** will welcome to the National Assembly for Wales, Lord Neuberger President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom.

International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd

- 25 October the Slovenian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Iztok Jarc visited the Assembly and met the **Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM** as part of a series of meetings during his visit.
- 28 November the Ethiopian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Berhanu Kebede visited the Assembly and met the **Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM** as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 7 January the **Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM** hosted a visit by Kaye Darveniza MP from the Victoria Parliament in Australia.
- 5-6 February the **Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM** will welcome a delegation from the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago who will be hosted at the National Assembly for Wales as part of a study visit funded by the European Commission in Trinidad.
- 9-17 February attending the 43rd British Islands Mediterranean Regional Conference in the Falkland Islands will be **Joyce Watson AM** and **William Powell AM**.
- 28 February the **Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM** will host a special St David's Day lunchtime reception, the theme of which will be "Wales in the world and the World in Wales", for representatives of international organisations based in Wales, and stakeholders linking Wales and the world. The CPA Wales Branch Chair **Joyce Watson AM** will also make an address at the reception for the 2013 Commonwealth Day.
- 1 March a St David's Day event open to the general public will be held in the Senedd.

Links

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