

SOR 2

## **Business Committee**

### **Response to the Review of Standing Orders**

**G. Morgan**

1.

July 5th , 2010

Hello there,

This is a letter with my views as a Welsh citizen on the Welsh Assembly which hopefully contains some worthwhile and constructive observations and criticisms about the Assembly ,which I hope will help towards making a difference in improving and driving forward the necessary positive developments in the Assembly.

These are not points I make just for the sake of complaining but rather constructive points made by a Welsh citizen who is totally supportive of the Assembly, devolution and its aims. I would like to congratulate the Assembly as an institution on the way it has embraced it's responsibilities towards servicing and providing the best deal for Wales in Britain and the world and in also developing new directions and developments for Wales.

### **THE POINTS;**

#### **The Assembly's various websites and public information**

The Assembly's websites ,to be blunt are a mess - the antithesis of good clear and informative design: a mass overload of jumbled unclear un-thought out mess.It really does need to be simplified and made far far more user friendly.If someone like me who has a general interest in politics and governmental matters finds it hard to make head or tails of them I'm guessing that the majority of the Welsh population will as well which is a great shame and not right.

I have been on the Assembly's websites a few times with the aim of finding out specific information about the Assembly and matters that might apply to me but have been so perplexed and put off by the design that i have had to log off in frustration. It really needs to start with basic info and with far clearer and simplified sections. At present It just doesn't come across as a site that's been made with the general user friendliness of the public in mind at all.The Assembly Government owes the people of Wales clarity of

information. I believe it should start with a simple paragraph and explanation of what the Assembly does or doesn't do in Wales and then have clear clutter free sections regarding other relevant matters.

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It doesn't help that you have two different websites with two different names for the Assembly-one being the Welsh Assembly Government at [www.assemblywales.org](http://www.assemblywales.org) and the other being the National Assembly of Wales at [wales.gov.uk](http://wales.gov.uk). And then there is also the Senedd name for the building .If someone like me who understands the basic infrastructure of the Welsh political landscape has trouble understanding it ,anyone else who has little interest in politics doesn't stand a chance of making sense of it .

### **Public information and Public relations**

It is also almost impossible to know who to get in touch with or contact at the Assembly when it comes to finding particular departments ,especially when trying to find one public relations office and person that will speak on behalf of all the Assembly.

It would be a shame if the Assembly as an institution follows in the footsteps of recent trends where the person trying to find something out keeps getting passed around different departments where no one wants to take responsibility for anything and no one knows or is prepared to declare themselves a spokesman or to take responsibility for anything.

This must be addressed if the assembly is to gain more credibility. For example when calling the Assembly recently to try and find out who the PR officer for the Assembly is ,I was passed around countless different departments and given about six different names of who might possibly be the PR officer for the Assembly. I believe this is unacceptable and needs to be addressed.

### **The Assembly building in the bay**

The Assembly building itself in the bay is an impressive design and with excellent green and sustainable credentials and I congratulate you on it. However ,it needs far more pomp and ceremony and a status to it-there isn't even a name to it on the outside (of the bay entrance) which is utterly ridiculous .Thousands of people from all over the world walk past the bay side of it it weekly without having a clue what the building is or what it represents.A great deal of local people might not even realise what it is. This is a criminal wasted opportunity for the Assembly Government of Wales to make itself known to the world ,which needs to be put right.

If you want people of all ages and backgrounds to appreciate and feel more of a part of the building and the political process you need to at least explain what the

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building is and what it does. I understand that the building is meant to be iconic enough to not need any signs but this doesn't quite work. And even if it did, I believe it would still need a sign or emblem, or some description as to what the building and institution is.

Yes it's a very impressive building but so are many other buildings in Cardiff-buildings that are already built and buildings that will be built in the future. The architects and primary developers of the Assembly building have no right to take for granted that everyone will know what the Assembly building is or represents. It needs to advertise itself and pull people in to it. As far as most of the people walking past it know, it could be the regional office of coca cola or the head office of a plastic moulding company for all they know!

I propose a new design to go on the front of the building or on the front of the overhanging roof stating in big letters what the building is. There should surely be a series of large Welsh flags on the front and roof of the building together with EU flags and possibly also UN flags. Also there should be big emblems of Wales such as huge red dragons or similarly suitable emblems on either side on the steps at the front of the building.

The inside of the building could also do with far better furnishing/drapes/colour as well-anything to add a bit of a life and a bit of ceremony. Adding more colour would definitely lift the slightly dreary gray surroundings. The slates are impressive but too much grey can't be good! In conclusion the Assembly shouldn't be ashamed to be a bit flashy, to claim it's political place in the bay and to add a bit of life to the building. The Assembly shouldn't be so reticent in having big Welsh dragon flags or similar on the main Assembly Senedd building and big letterings explaining what the building is.

I believe the Assembly needs to think big and act bigger if it is to successfully draw more people in to its processes and to make sure it is an Assembly Government for all the people of Wales. I believe it needs to be far bolder in advertising itself rather than the subdued and apologetic way it sells itself to the country and the world at the moment. The building exterior and interior feels far too empty and barren at the moment and needs to be injected with some spirit and flair.

There is of course always the option of moving to a better more flamboyant building that's already been built in Cardiff of course and having the Assembly in the bay as an alternative meeting and discussing site and party venue for other political and civic/national functions but this would seem a bit of a shame as it is such a great location with huge potential.

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### **Catering at the Assembly**

I was also amazed with the catering arrangements at the Assembly when I visited the recently - not only is the 'café' facilities utterly lacking and inadequate -the catering company is contracted out to a company from London!!

This is utterly incredulous-is it too much to ask to find a Cardiff or Wales based company to do this work of running the so called 'cafeteria' so that it will contribute to the local and national Welsh economy? Forgive me but at the moment it is more like a half hearted tea stall on a barren industrial estate! Surely it should be a goal to have a bigger and proper serving restaurant run by a quality Welsh catering company that serves substantial quality meals and food to the visitors and politicians of the Assembly alike? I strongly propose that any contracts be given to Welsh based companies and that a proper kitchen/café is built serving real food and coffee and not the flawed tea cabin that's currently there.

### **Summing up**

In conclusion I would again outline that people need to know and have explained and outlined to them the basic difference between the Welsh Assembly and the Welsh Assembly Government in a plain language that everyone will understand. If possible I believe they should be amalgamated into one institution with one name so as to give people a better basic focus and basic understanding and to simplify the political infrastructure of the Welsh political system as much as is possible.

Also there needs to be far better advertising and 'dressing up' on the actual Assembly building in the form of signs, flags and symbols, both on the outside and inside of the building. There also needs to be far better clarity in the information you provide to the general public regarding what the Assembly does which includes far better and effective communication in your literature and pr,both in your online presence, in print and in a effective public spokesperson and public relations person and department. And finally ,the catering and eating facilities need to be massively improved and expanded.

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**Conclusion in simplified points;**

\*Better design, clarity and effective communications with the public and the use of a single name for the whole of the Welsh government for the purpose of public and institutional clarity

\*Proper and impressive signs and symbols on the outside and inside of the Assembly building to give it the status and standing it deserves.

\* Improvement and expansion of the cafeteria and eating facilities.

I very much appreciate your time and consideration in this matter and very much hope that all my points are seen as constructive observations and criticisms rather than negative Assembly bashing. I hope this letter finds it's way to the right people so that they can consider and hopefully act upon these points and that it can be a positive and constructive correspondence that is of value. After all, the Assembly belongs to us all and we all want to see it work and improve it's services to the people of Wales.

Many thanks for listening and I hope to hear from you soon. A response and/or reactions on all these points would be very much appreciated,

Yours Sincerely,

G.Morgan