

Visit Report

Cross-Committee Visit to Stuttgart

24-26 February 2025

Between 24-26 February 2025, a cross-Committee delegation led by the Deputy Presiding Officer undertook a visit to Stuttgart, Germany as part of the Senedd's first official programme to the German Landtag (State Parliament) of **Baden-Württemberg**.

The programme at the Landtag covered parliamentary procedure, organisation of business, and electoral reform, whilst the wider visit programme focussed on renewable energy, manufacturing and trade, and innovation and AI. The visit was delivered as part of the Senedd's International Framework, and with the ambition to develop bilateral links with EU legislatures post-Brexit.

The delegation consisted of members of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee and the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee. A full copy of the visit programme is available at Annex 1.

Visit Delegation:

- David Rees MS, Deputy Presiding Officer
- Llyr Gruffydd MS, Chair of CCEI
- Carolyn Thomas MS, CCEI
- Hannah Blythyn MS, ETRA



Deputy Presiding Officer's foreword

It was a pleasure to lead this visit to Stuttgart and to the Baden-Württemberg Landtag, and I'm grateful both to the members involved for their contributions and to those we met along the way for their hospitality. The visit was an opportunity for the Senedd to engage more closely at a state-level in Germany, an ambition of ours for this Sixth Senedd and in a post-Brexit landscape. The warm welcome we received from colleagues at the Landtag provided us with an opportunity to draw comparisons between our legislatures, from our modern parliamentary buildings to the post-industrial and vast areas we represent, and we were able to learn about their ways of working as we prepare for the Seventh Senedd. Conversations we had with stakeholders in the renewable energy, manufacturing, and innovation sectors gave us much to think about, and I'm sure that our conversations will enhance and influence our scrutiny as members going forward. I'm hopeful that first official visit from the Senedd to Stuttgart and the Baden-Württemberg Landtag will be the beginning of a continued relationship with the region, and that we can welcome colleagues to the Senedd in the near future.

David Rees MS

Deputy Presiding Officer

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1. Meetings & visits

EnBW

- 1.** The delegation met with EnBW, one of the largest energy companies in Germany that supplies over 5.5 million customers. Conversations here focussed on the company's move towards renewable energy and its Mona Project, a proposed off-shore wind farm off the north Wales coast.
- 2.** Members heard about EnBW's expansion into renewable energies, including its phasing out of coal-fired power generation and transformation of its coal power plant sites into hydrogen gas power plants. Whilst discussing the company's aims to be climate neutral by 2035, they talked about the political and financial pressure of investing heavily in renewable energies in the present in order to ensure results in the future.
- 3.** In discussing these renewable projects, members heard about the community ownership models employed by EnBW. This model and the community benefits were of particular interest to members and EnBW agreed to provide a more detailed note on their work in this area.
- 4.** They also discussed EnBW's ownership structure, where majority shares are owned by the State of Baden-Württemberg and at municipal level, meaning around 96% of the company is publicly owned.
- 5.** Members also heard about EnBW's e-mobility portfolio, which includes over 7k charging points across Europe. Members considered how this compared to electric vehicle charging provisions in Wales.
- 6.** They also spoke about EnBW's Mona Project, based off the north Wales coast. They discussed the benefits of fixed vs floating offshore wind farms, as well as Mona's connection to the grid at Bodelwyddan. Members raised questions relating to the grid access and how it will impact local biodiversity and communities.



Delegation pictured here at the EnBW offices in Stuttgart with members of their senior management team.

Mercedes-Benz Plant, Sindelfingen

7. Members toured the Mercedes-Benz Plant at Sindelfingen, where over 200,000 cars were produced last year including EQ (Electric Vehicles) and bulletproof models. The plant site is around 32 million sq ft, and has onsite fire service, creche services and hospital for the 35,000 employees who work there.

8. As part of the tour of the assembly hall, members saw all models of cars being assembled on a rolling line, through some 43 work stations. The cars were assembled and produced in the order that they were sold, with screens throughout the hall displaying the model and destination of each vehicle as it moved through the assembly hall on a conveyor belt.

9. During their tour of the shop floor, members observed the increasing automation of the assembly hall. Automated vehicles delivered parts to each section of the assembly line, and the hand tools used by line workers were powered by wi-fi, which controlled the pressure and time on each tool;

essentially, workers have to lift and place the equipment onto the vehicle and the automation does the rest.

10. These observations raised questions about the future automation in the manufacturing industry and its impact on workers.

11. Members raised questions about prospective global tariffs on Mercedes vehicles. They heard that as well as assembling cars at this plant, it also produced all parts for Mercedes vehicles, which are then exported to different assembly halls around the globe. They discussed how this would impact the export tariffs imposed, comparing the tariffs on parts versus an assembled vehicle.



Members at the Mercedes-Benz Plant at Sindelfingen

HLRS, Stuttgart University

12. Members met with staff at the University of Stuttgart's High Performing Computing Centre (HLRS) to learn more about their work in areas of AI and Supercomputing.

13. Here, Members discussed with staff how HLRS works with clients across all sectors from public sector, to SMEs, to the automotive industry, to use supercomputing as part of their infrastructure and problem-solving. This can include in areas of security and to help with large flows of data. They also discussed the training that HLRS provides in this area, particularly to SMEs, and how the ever-changing landscape of supercomputing requires them to evolve and upgrade systems and equipment.

14. Members heard how the equipment and system used by HLRS usually change every 5 years, and staff explained how they see decline in the systems at around 4 years. Their current flagship High-Powered Computer, 'Hunter' is a transitional system before they move to their next supercomputer 'Herder' in 2027.

15. The delegation were interested in the environmental impact of this work, and asked about the impact the turnover of equipment and of the high-powered element of supercomputing. They discussed how HLRS is aiming to reuse heat developed by the supercomputer and the computing centre, and how to ensure the efficiency of the equipment.

16. Members then toured the Hunter Supercomputer room and the 'AI Cave', an AI simulation lab used to project interactive simulation projects. Here, staff displayed a projection of the city of Stuttgart that is used to test accessibility features in real locations, and members were able to 'tour' the simulation city from both a birds-eye and ground level view.

2. Parliamentary Engagement

17. The delegation were welcomed to the Baden-Württemberg Landtag for the Senedd's first official visit there.

18. Members received a tour of the modern parliament building, constructed in 1956, and viewed the buildings artworks and sculptures as well as the Landtag's memorial book, commemorating members of parliament who were persecuted for their political activism from 1933 to 1945.

19. The delegation then convened in the Landtag's debating chamber with members of the Environment, Climate, and Energy Industry Committee, the Economic Affairs, Labour and Tourism Committee, and the European and International Affairs Committee.

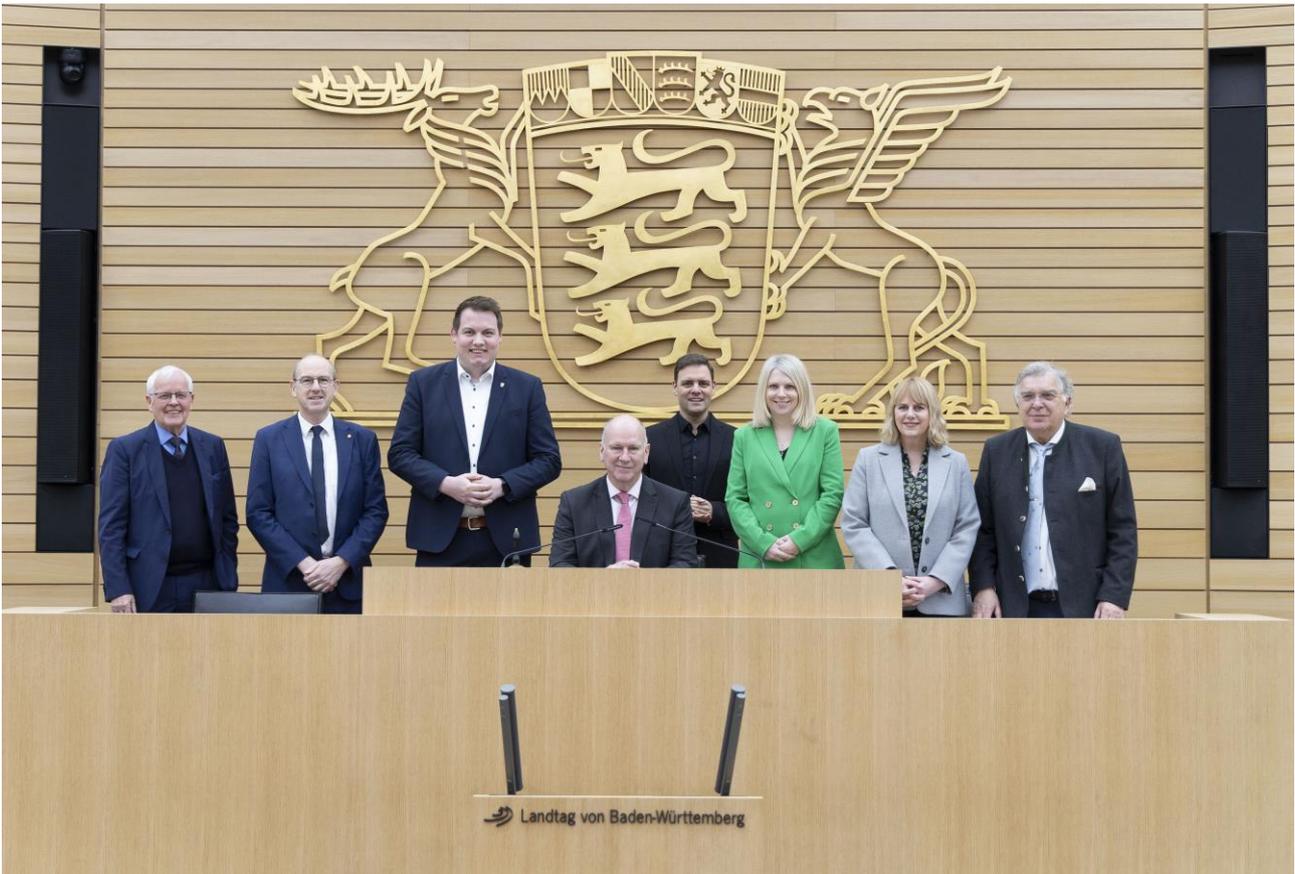
20. Here, they discussed the operation of Plenary sessions and organisation of business at the Landtag. Plenary is in session for 2.5 days a month, with another 2 weeks of the month dedicated to Committee business.

21. Members heard about the voting system in Plenaries, which is done by show of hands, and includes the convention for the President (Speaker) and her deputies to use their votes. Officials also explained the extensive changes that happen to the debating Chamber following each election to accommodate new members and factions.

22. Over an official lunch, members heard about the electoral changes afoot at the Landtag ahead of the next election in March 2026. This will include a move away from the single vote system and reducing the voting age to 16. Senedd members then gave a brief overview of the electoral changes ahead in Wales.

23. Members discussed the extensive links between Wales and Baden-Württemberg, including twinning, similarities as post-industrial communities, and the vast areas that members of the legislatures represent. Members of the Landtag also highlighted the physical similarities between the two legislatures, in terms of the modern parliamentary buildings and the multiple buildings that make up our parliamentary estates. They also compared the Committee work that members undertake as part of their duties.

24. The Deputy Presiding Officer then took the opportunity to extend an invitation for a reciprocal visit from the Landtag to the Senedd when time allows.



Senedd Delegation in the Landtag Chamber (L-R; Emil Sänze MdL, Llyr Gruffydd MS, Niklas Nüssle MdL, David Rees MS (Deputy Presiding Officer), Florian Wahl MdL, Hannah Blythyn MS, Carolyn Thomas MS, Dr. Reinhard Löffler MdL)

Carolyn Thomas MS reflected:

“The visit to Stuttgart was extremely interesting, particularly learning from EnBW and the Stuttgart parliamentarians about their transition to renewable energy and asking questions about introducing community benefit. We heard about the Mona offshore wind project, delivered in partnership between EnBW and BP, which is currently in the final planning stages and is of particular interest as it will be in the Liverpool Bay off the North Wales coast. I wanted to know what local benefit there may be and how it will fit with existing windfarms and infrastructure such as Mostyn Docks, RWE off shore windfarms and the training of wind turbine apprentices at Coleg Llandrillo.

It was interesting to visit the Mercedes factory, to compare with Northeast Wales’ advanced manufacturing sites such as Toyota and Airbus, and to learn about AI and the HLRS supercomputer from computer experts. It is important to build and foster relations between our two parliaments, industries and culture, as we have much to learn from each other. They were interested to hear about the use of the Welsh language, and we discussed the size of committees, the parliaments and electoral reform.”



Senedd delegation viewing the State Parliament's Memorial Book.

Llyr Gruffydd MS said:

"It's always good to learn from other parliaments and share experiences on how to be better legislatures and more effective scrutineers of government. The very different practices employed by the Landtag of Baden-Württemberg highlighted opportunities to change some of the ways we operate in the Senedd. This is particularly true of committee work.

Strengthening links with industry and academia was also a key focus of the visit. I was particularly glad to be able to discuss renewable energy developments in North Wales directly with senior executives of Energy Baden-Württemberg. It was also interesting to learn about the use of AI and Supercomputing at Stuttgart's High Performing Computing Centre. Seeing this technology applied to real-life situations such as testing accessibility was a particular eye-opener.

Building relations with other regions and nations is mutually beneficial and links between Wales and Baden-Württemberg will hopefully be strengthened further with a return visit by their Members of the Landtag in the future."

3. Annex 1 - Visit Programme

Senedd Delegation:

David Rees MS, Deputy Presiding Officer
Llyr Gruffydd MS, Chair, CCEI Committee
Carolyn Thomas MS, CCEI Committee
Hannah Blythyn MS, ETRA Committee

Tuesday 25 February

- 09.00 Meeting with EnBW
- 11.30-12.30 Guided Tour – Staatsgalerie
- 14.30 Site visit – Mercedes Manufacturing Plant, Sindelfingen
- 16.15 Depart Site Visit

Wednesday 26 February

- 09.00 Meeting with Stuttgart University High Performing Computing Centre (HLRS)
- 11.00-14.00 Official Programme at the Baden-Württemberg Landtag
- 11.00 Guided tour of the Parliament Building
- 11.30 Welcome by MdLs in the Plenary Chamber
- 12.00 Lunch at restaurant Peplum with MdLs
- 14.00 Official end of the programme