

COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Date: 9th March, 2000

Venue: Committee Room 1

Time: 9.30-12.30

Title: Chair's Report

Purpose

To provide an update on a range of issues which do not justify full papers. This report is circulated for information.

Recommendation

That Members note the content of the report.

Background

1. The Committee on European Affairs last met on the 25th November, 1999. A number of developments have taken place since then, and are listed below.

Assembly Representation in Brussels

2. Members will be aware that the Assembly voted in favour of joining the Wales European Centre during the plenary debate on the 29th February. Members had the opportunity to visit the Wales European Centre's new premises during their visit to Brussels on the 2nd and 3rd March.

3. The Head of Assembly Office in Brussels has now been appointed. Applications for the post of Executive Officer have been invited from candidates within the civil service, and an appointment will be made before the end of the month.

Committee of the Regions

4. Members will be aware that Eurig Wyn is no longer entitled to represent Wales on the

Committee of the Regions since he was elected as a Member of the European Parliament last year. Councillor Linda Matthews and Councillor John Evans both resigned from their positions at the end of 1999. Councillor Brian Smith continues to be a member of the Committee, representing local government.

5. These changes have provided the Assembly with the opportunity of nominating a full member and an alternate to the Committee of the Regions. It is proposed that the full member be drawn from the largest party and the alternate from the second largest party. The Welsh Local Government Association will continue to be represented by Councillor Brian Smith as a full member, and they have nominated Councillor Huish as an alternate. These names will be forwarded to the Foreign Secretary, who will nominate them on behalf of the United Kingdom government. The Council of Ministers is the institution which has the powers to make appointments to the Committee of the Regions.

Visits to Brussels

6. The former First Secretary and the Assembly Secretary for Economic Development visited Brussels on the 27th January. The focus for the visit was a meeting with Commissioner Barnier to discuss progress on the Objective 1 Single Programming Document. They also met Sir Stephen Wall, the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the European Union, Bill Stow, the Deputy Permanent Representative, four of the Welsh Members of the European Parliament, Jos Gallacher, Director of the Wales European Centre and George Calder, Head of the Scottish Executive's office in Brussels.

7. The Committee on European Affairs visited Brussels on the 2nd and 3rd March and had a full programme of meetings and events. The first day of the visit included meeting Welsh MEPS, a tour of the European Parliament, a meeting with the Board of the Wales European Centre including a visit to the new building, attended a reception arranged by the Wales European Centre and a dinner hosted by the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative. The second day of the visit included meetings with senior officials from the United Kingdom Permanent Representation, a reception hosted by Commissioner Kinnock, which included an opportunity to meet people from his Cabinet, and presentations by a number of Welsh officials working for the Commission.

The Digital Economy – Seminar in Helsinki

8. Val Feld AM attended a seminar on The Digital Economy in Helsinki in November 1999. She was one of three people who represented Wales at this event. A report was circulated to members of this Committee on the 16th December, 1999.

Compliance

9. Under Section 33 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 the Assembly may consider and make appropriate representations about any matter affecting Wales.

Contact

European Affairs Division