

## **EUROPEAN & EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**Date:** 28 February 2007  
**Time:** 9:30 to 12:30  
**Venue:** Committee Room 3, Senedd, Cardiff Bay  
**Title:** Minister's Report

### **Purpose**

1. To provide an update on a range of issues arising since the last meeting of the Committee.

### **Recommendation**

2. That members note the content of the report.

### **Background**

3. The Committee last met on 24 January 2007. This paper provides an update.

### **First Minister's International Activities**

- **15 February 2007 Visit of the New Hungarian Ambassador**

I met Her Excellency Ms Borbála Czakó who has recently been appointed to the post of Ambassador for Hungary to the Court of St James.

- **28 February 2007 Visit by His Excellency Robert Holmes Tuttle, Ambassador of the United States of America to the Court of St James's**

I will meet His Excellency Robert Holmes Tuttle before his appearance at the European and External Affairs Committee where he will deliver an address and provide a short opportunity for questions from the committee.

### **Other Issues**

#### **Effect of Enlargement on Institutions**

Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU on 1 January 2007. The effect of this on EU institutions is described in Annex A.

### **St David's Day, March 1<sup>st</sup>**

Celebrations have been arranged throughout Wales and the world for St. David's Day 2007. European and External Affairs Division is running events on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government in Chongqing, New York and Brussels throughout Wales week, raising the profile of Wales internationally. There will be a week of exhibitions, meetings and seminars in Chongqing to celebrate St David's Day and the anniversary of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Chongqing Municipal People's Government. The activity will promote Wales as a destination for students and academics, as a destination for tourism as well as demonstrating the use of Welsh skills in the forestry for tourism and tackling environmental degradation. An itinerary of some of the other events planned in New York and Brussels is at Annex B.

## **Action outstanding from previous meetings**

### **Rural Development Plan**

At the last meeting the Committee agreed that it would be helpful to receive a paper on the Rural Development Plan 2007-2013. A detailed paper setting out all the salient points about the Plan, including links with the Convergence Funds, is at Annex C.

### **Constitutional Treaty**

At last month's committee meeting I agreed to provide the committee with a report on the ongoing talks regarding the future of the constitutional treaty at the midpoint of the German Presidency.

The "midpoint of the German Presidency" (i.e. the Spring European Council (March 8-9)) is likely to focus on the issues of energy and climate change, better regulation and the review of the single market rather than the Constitution. However, the Presidency stated that it would consult on the Constitutional Treaty, during the first half of 2007, and then submit a report to the Council. These consultations are proceeding and Chancellor Merkel is taking a strong personal interest in the issue. The future of the Constitutional Treaty will be a major topic for discussion at the June Council (June 21-22). I will provide a further update to the committee when the Presidency proposals for the June Council are announced.

### **Cultural exchanges between Brittany and Wales**

At last month's committee meeting I agreed to update the committee on the possibility of cultural exchanges between Brittany and Wales.

The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport received a letter from the National St David's Day parade, requesting help from the Welsh Assembly Government in funding a visit from the 'Bagad Penhars': a Breton-style pipe and drum band which has been invited to perform in 2007's National St David's parade. Unfortunately the Assembly Government was unable to provide any assistance. Whilst we do support attracting major events to Wales, we do not provide assistance for costs such as this. This type of grant is available from the Arts Council of Wales, though in this instance a grant application to the Arts Council of Wales had previously been unsuccessful.

However, there are other cultural exchanges currently taking place between Wales and Brittany. For example; there are a number of Welsh secondary schools linked with counterparts in Brittany, mainly concerning bilingual education; the Welsh Assembly Government has been invited to support a Welsh presence in a "Breton week" in Paris during September 2007; and a school partnership between the Breton Social Care training institute, the "Institut régional du Travail Social" and one of its Welsh equivalents has been proposed and is at the initial discussion stage.

### **Middle East Peace Process**

At last month's meeting I agreed to provide the committee with a note on the EU position on the possibility of talks with a legitimate Palestinian Government following the elections.

The December European Council commended the efforts of President Abbas over the last six months to form a government of national unity. The EU said it was ready to work with a legitimate Palestinian government if it accepted a platform reflecting Quartet principles – renunciation of violence, recognition of Israel; and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap. In return it would undertake to resume partnership with the Palestinian government and encourage Quartet partners (USA, Russian Federation and the UN) to do likewise; to continue, with other donors, providing financial support and to prepare, in co-operation with the new government, a long-term plan on capacity building, border management and unified and effective security forces, as well as a functioning administration.

At the beginning of February the rival Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas signed an agreement to form the national unity government. EU Foreign ministers said they would await the formation of the new government before making any decisions on the resumption of aid. Reactions from leading EU nations have been mixed, France has said that the new government should be encouraged and supported, while Germany has been more hesitant and the UK has only described the agreement as interesting.

### **REACH**

At last month's meeting I agreed to provide a note regarding the number of businesses in Wales likely to be affected by the REACH legislation.

The degree to which businesses are affected will depend on their use of chemicals covered by REACH. Manufacturers and importers of chemicals will have a clear responsibility to register their activities. There are some 200 chemical manufacturing companies in Wales but chemicals may be imported into the United Kingdom through ports outside Wales. We do not now how many businesses in Wales use chemicals as part of their business. Many which do so will be able to rely on the registration of the use of those chemicals by their supplier. Businesses which wish to use chemicals for a use not registered by their supplier will need to request a further registration by the supplier. Implementation of the REACH regulation will be subject to consultation by the Health and Safety Executive which will be the Competent Authority for the UK.

### **Discover UK programme**

At last month's meeting, I agreed to provide an interim report on the Discover UK – Wales programme in China.

As the UK becomes better known in China, the British Council has decided to launch Discover – UK, an entertaining and informative information campaign to promote the four countries of the UK from June 2006 to June 2007. The Wales season is running from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March. This will take Chinese audiences on to the next level in understanding the contemporary diversity and unique constitutional arrangements that define today's UK. Information on the campaign is at Annex D.

### **Welsh in EU Institutions**

I agreed to update the Committee on the use of the Welsh Language in the EU Institutions. I will provide an oral update at the meeting.

### **European News**

#### **Serbia**

Carla Del Ponte, the UN war crimes prosecutor, has advised the EU not to resume talks on closer ties with Serbia until it surrenders war crime suspects. Italy, Spain and Serbia's central European neighbours are pushing for talks to resume, while the UK, France and the Netherlands want guarantees that co-operation with the war crimes tribunal will give way to results.

#### **Macedonia**

The European Union's Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, has issued a warning to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia which gained EU candidate status in 2005. The main cause for concern is the tension between the ruling conservatives and Macedonia's largest ethnic Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI). Diplomats are concerned that reforms have slowed down in Macedonia since it received candidate status, especially in key areas such as fighting corruption and reforming the police. The Macedonian government hoped to receive a date for accession negotiations at the end of this year but that now looks unrealistic.

#### **African immigration EU job centres**

The European Union development commissioner, Louis Michel, has held talks with the Malian President Amadou Toumani about setting up the EU's first job centre for African migrants; there are other centres planned for Senegal and Mauritania. They are part of the EU strategy to assist in the situation caused by the increasing flow of illegal migrants from Africa and to increase legal migration.

#### **The Euro**

Cyprus has formally applied to join the Euro. The European Commission and the European Central Bank will decide in May whether Cyprus fully meets the criteria necessary to join. EU Leaders will then make the final decision in June. If successful then Cyprus will adopt the Euro in January 2008.

#### **Environmental offences**

The European Commission has revealed plans to turn environmental offences over to criminal courts in the European Union. If plans are approved by member states and become law then dumping toxic and nuclear waste and illegally trading in endangered plants or species could carry a jail sentence. The environmental group Greenpeace welcomes the plans but thinks that the Commission should go further.

**Rhodri Morgan AM**  
**First Minister**

## EEAC FIRST MINISTER'S REPORT

Date	Assembly Minister/Official/ Division	Event	Objectives	Outcomes
23/01/2007	Jane Davidson AM Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning	Dinner with Dr Hussein Ali MWINYI Minister of State for Union Affairs Tanzania	To learn how devolution in Wales works, how Wales interacts with central government, how Wales is represented in the EU and how the different education systems within the UK work.	To build links between Wales and Tanzania.
01/02/2007	Jane Davidson AM Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning	Meeting with delegation from the Baden- Wurtemberg & South Wales Youth Fire Services, who are participating in the inbound leg of an exchange visit.	The programme of the study visit is also designed to provide an opportunity for the delegates from Stuttgart Fire Service to gain a cultural experience and understanding of Wales whilst gaining deeper knowledge of the work of the South Wales Fire Service and how it manages its youth programmes.	This event is the inbound leg of the study visit. A delegation from South Wales Fire Service will undertake an return visit in May 2007. It is anticipated that this will lead to exchanges of young people / young fire-fighters.

04/02/2007	Andrew Davies AM Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks	Wales v Ireland Rugby	Meeting with Minister Dempsey of the Irish Government to continue dialogue from their initial meeting at the Ryder Cup on energy issues	Ongoing
15/02/2007	First Minister	New Hungarian Ambassador	Her Excellency Ms Borbála Czako has recently been appointed to the post of Ambassador for Hungary to the Court of St James. Courtesy call on the First Minister and others within the Assembly.	
28/02/2007	First Minister	Visit of HE Robert Tuttle, US Ambassador to the Court of St James	Meeting with the First Minister and appearance before EEAC.	

### Effect of Enlargement on Institutions

Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU on 1 January 2007. The effect of this on individual institutions is described below.

#### **European Parliament**

Following the accession of Bulgaria and Romania the size of the European Parliament has increased by 53 (18 for Bulgaria and 35 for Romania) raising the total number of MEPs to 785. After the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections the number of MEPs will be cut to 736, as part of this the UK delegation size will be cut from 78 to 72.

The accession of Bulgarian and Romanian MEPs has had two major effects. Firstly there is now more competition for Committee Chair and Vice-Chair posts (the EP tries to ensure a geographical spread). Secondly, the creation of a new far-right group was made possible (the 5 Romanian and 1 Bulgarian members of the far-right group ensures that it meets the number of members required: 20 and the number of Member States they must represent: 6).

#### **European Council**

Romania has 14 votes and Bulgaria 10 votes, bringing the total number of votes up to 345 votes. 255 votes will now be needed for a qualified majority. The new threshold for a blocking minority is 91.

With the accession of Romania and Bulgaria the total EU population has increased. The Member States voting in favour must represent 62% of the total EU population. There are only four scenarios where the 91 votes needed for a blocking minority is not met but the proposal could be blocked because those voting in favour do not represent 62% of the EU population. These are:

<b>Countries voting <u>against</u></b>	<b>Total number of votes in Council <u>against</u></b>	<b>Population of EU countries voting <u>against</u> represents (1000s)</b>
Germany France UK	87 (Germany 29 + France 29 + UK 29)	205,746.1 which represents 41% of the EU population
Germany France Italy	87 (Germany 29 + France 29 + Italy 29)	204,075.9 which represents 41% of the EU population
Germany France Spain	85 (Germany 29 + France 29 + Spain 27)	189,082.5 which represents 38.3% of the EU population
Germany UK Italy	87 (Germany 29 + UK 29 + Italy 29)	201,611,600 which represents 41% of the EU population



## **Commission**

The number of Commissioners has risen from 25 to 27 to include Ms Meglena Kuneva, Commissioner for Consumer Protection (Bulgaria), and Mr Leonard Orban, Commissioner for Multilingualism (Romania). The two new Commissioners will serve until the end of the present Commission's term of office - 31 October 2009. From the UK perspective, the enlarged Commission of 25 functioned relatively well despite the substantial increase in Commissioners. There is no reason to assume that the recent enlargement of the Commission will adversely affect this.

## **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**

Membership increased by 27 from 317 to 344 after the accession of Bulgaria and Romania. Members are nominated by national governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable 4-year term of office. The next renewal will occur on October 2010.

The division of members is as follows:

- 24 Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom
- 21 Spain and Poland
- 15 Romania
- 12 Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria, Sweden, Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria
- 9 Denmark, Ireland, Finland, Lithuania and Slovakia
- 7 Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia
- 6 Luxembourg and Cyprus
- 5 Malta

## **Committee of the Regions**

As with the EESC, membership of the CoR increased by 27 from 317 to 344 after the accession of Bulgaria and Romania. Members are nominated by national governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable 4-year term of office. The next renewal will occur on February 2010.

The division of members is as follows:

- 24 Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom
- 21 Spain and Poland
- 15 Romania
- 12 Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria, Sweden, Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria
- 9 Denmark, Ireland, Finland Lithuania and Slovakia
- 7 Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia

- 6 Luxembourg and Cyprus
- 5 Malta

### European Courts

The number of ECJ and CFI judges and Auditors at the Court of Auditors has increased to 27, one for each country. All the new judges are now in place. The table below lists the new members:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Court</b>	<b>Country</b>
Mrs Camelia Toader	European Court of Justice	Romania
Mr Alexander Stoyanov	European Court of Justice	Bulgaria
Mr Valeriu M Ciuca	Court of First Instance	Romania
Mr Theodore Antonov Chipev	Court of First Instance	Bulgaria
Mrs Nadezhda Sandolova	Court of Auditors	Romania
Mr Ovidiu Ispir	Court of Auditors	Bulgaria

## International St. David's Day Events

### Brussels

- a) **St David's Day Reception** - Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February, Bibliothèque Solvay, 18h00-20h30

#### **Welsh Assembly Government**

The National Day of Wales, hosted by Rt. Hon. Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister for Wales.

The reception is an opportunity to showcase Wales. The new Wales brand will be used to promote the event, together with the True Taste brand.

Guests will include EU Commissioners, Ambassadors, MEPs, Representatives of regional offices, EU networks/organisations. This is an invitation only event.

- b) **Culture and Creativity for Jobs and Growth Conference – Tuesday 27th February.**

#### **Welsh Assembly Government, Welsh Higher Education Brussels and the British Council.**

- To debate the place for culture, creativity and innovation in the European Union focusing on how the Union through its policies and funding programmes,
- To examine the part that regional and local governments can play to develop their creative and cultural industries, to ensure that creativity is given a higher profile across the economy,
- To discuss the role of Higher Education Institutions in providing appropriate skills, expertise, research and development for the employability of future workers,
- To showcase the work of creative businesses and higher education initiatives with a view to promoting networking, European mobility and the development of future collaboration and joint projects

- c) **Art Exhibition Launch – 'Wales on Canvas' Tuesday 27th February, Wales House, 18h00 – 20h00**

#### **Welsh Assembly Government in association with British Council and the Martin Tinney Gallery.**

2006 saw a painter, Tomma Abts, win the Turner Prize, the first painter to win in 22 years. This Art Exhibition will showcase the work of 6 prominent Welsh Painters. Keith Bowen, Harry Holland, Gwilym Prichard, Peter Prendergast, Shani Rhys James MBE, Kevin Sinnott.

The exhibition will run for 6 weeks to coincide with St David's Day.

## **New York**

**Wales Week will once again take place in New York and is running from February 26 - March 2<sup>nd</sup>. As part of that week:**

- Welsh artist Mali Morris' work will be exhibited at the Robert Steele Gallery, 511 W 25th St, from February 3rd to March 1st.
- The British Consulate General in New York will once again fly the Welsh flag.
- A Welsh Food Festival will be held February 26 – March 2<sup>nd</sup> at the United Nations Delegates Dining Room where seven award winning chefs from the Welsh Culinary Team will be preparing Welsh lunch at the Delegates Dining Room at the United Nations, a 400-seater restaurant. The chefs will be preparing an imaginative and unique inspired Welsh menu.
- Penderyn Whisky will be hosting a tasting evening at O'Lunney's, Times Square. With whisky expert Jim Swann, Roy Noble and Mal Pope.
- The Empire State Building will once again reflect our Welsh dragon banner when it lights up in green, red and white at dusk on the evening of St David's Day.
- Art, theatre and film events will also be featured. A play for families will be presented by the award winning Hoipolloi theatre. Three venues will also host a variety of film events: a special series of S4Cs finest animation at the Sony Wonder Technology Lab.

**The Rt. Hon. Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister for Wales will also be in New York from 1 – 3 March and will undertake a full programme which will include:**

- The presentation of 1000 Tenby daffodils bulbs to the British memorial garden. He will donate the daffodils to Camilla Hellman, President of the British memorial Garden.
- A dinner hosted by Ambassador Jones Parry for existing and potential inward investors where The First Minister will deliver an address on the opportunities Wales offers for business.
- An address on Corporate Social Responsibility at a BABI Business Breakfast. Where the First Minister will share a platform with Martin Coles, President of Starbucks, Hannah Jones, Director of SCR at Nike and Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Director Work life Policy Group.
- The First Minister's key note address at the Wales in the World lunch at the UN, hosted by Ambassador Jones Parry with invited Welsh Lumaries and diplomats from the UN. He will also launch the Champions for Wales initiative at the lunch.
- A lecture on Devolution, Statehood and New Europe at the School of Political Affairs at Columbia University.
- The St David's Society of the State of New York's annual banquet where the First Minister will be awarded the Hopkins medal.

- Hosting a table of guests in the food and drinks sector at the James Beard House where the Welsh Culinary Team will provide a 5 course dinner. Menu items will include traditional Welsh Rarebit, select Patchwork Pates and a dessert created using Penderyn Whisky.

## **Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013**

### **Background**

1. The Rural Development Plan 2007-2013 (RDP) is the mechanism by which the Welsh Assembly Government will deliver the activities under the EU Rural Development Regulation (EC 1698/2005). The RDP, when approved by the European Commission, will secure EU funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), a ring-fenced amount from Structural Funds and receipts from compulsory modulation.

2. It is a strategic policy document and so does not contain operational detail on the individual schemes that will be implemented. That level of detail will be set out in the scheme guidance that is currently being developed with internal/external stakeholders and which is not subject to formal ratification by the Commission.

3. The Rural Development Regulation is a highly prescriptive piece of European legislation under which activities in the fields of health, housing and mainstream education cannot be covered by the RDP. Furthermore, the Regulation sets out specific parameters for the activities that can be supported. It also specifies the structure and content of the successor Plan that has to be framed within 4 key action areas:

- Axis 1 - Improving the competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sectors
- Axis 2 - Improving the environment and the countryside
- Axis 3 - Enhancing the quality of life in rural areas and the diversification of the rural economy
- Axis 4 - Adopting the LEADER approach for community regeneration

4. The overall projected spend for the RDP is estimated at some £767 million for 2007-2013. Of this the EU element comprises around £195 million and a projected £51 million from voluntary modulation. On Assembly Government resources, estimated at £521 million, this is derived on projecting forward on a flat-line basis the 2006-2007 MEG provision.

5. The Plan will be submitted for European Commission approval by July. This timeline takes account of the current position on the European Commission's draft legislation for the operation of Voluntary Modulation from 2007 and the National Assembly elections.

### **Content of the RDP**

6. The contents of the draft of the RDP have been informed by extensive internal and external stakeholder engagement over the past 18 months. It has also undergone the internal Policy Gateway process. In parallel, a

Strategic Environmental Assessment has been completed, again informed by internal /external consultation, together with a full Ex Ante Evaluation.

7. Each Axis has a clearly identified focus and a specific range of activities, grouped as measures, that can be supported with conditions applied to how each of these activities can be implemented e.g. beneficiaries, nature and level of support. There are complex rules on co-financing of EU resources for measures under each of the Axes. In addition, there is the requirement to meet minimum spend thresholds, based on the EU funding sources, for each of Axes 1, 2 and 3 (10%, 25% and 10% respectively) and to ring-fence a minimum of 5% for the Leader Axis (Axis 4). The Commission also requires financial information, detailed at measure level (EU and Assembly Government co-financed) for each Axis for each of the years 2007-2013.

8. Annex A outlines the range of measures that are available under each of the Axes. The reality is that financial constraints require priorities to be identified that for the RDP comprise the further development and expansion of the farm-based agri-environment agenda, support aimed at increasing the competitiveness of Welsh agriculture and forestry and bringing greater value-added to the Welsh food-processing sector.

9. The key areas of activity are:

- Axis 1

The EU mandatory Farm Advisory Service as a dedicated advice/guidance service to enable farm/forestry enterprises to meet minimum EU standard thresholds. Farming Connect will be retained as the mechanisms to build business acumen in terms of diversification and innovation, marketing and technology transfer. A Processing and Marketing grant scheme to improve value-added and increase marketing information for farm enterprises and food/drink producers supported by measures to improve supply chain linkages. The Protected Food Names scheme will take marketing advantage from existing and planned EU designations for Welsh food. A grant scheme to support business advice and networking among new entrants to farming.

- Axis 2

To continue the expansion of the farm-based agri-environment agenda through the Tir Gofal and Tir Cynnal schemes, the introduction of the Top-tier scheme to challenge diffuse pollution issues from farming, support for woodland planting and organic farming and the Less Favoured Area support scheme, Tir Mynydd. The RDP makes clear that the current Axis 2 measures will be reviewed during 2007 with the intention of introducing a new suite of activities from 2009.

- Axis 3

To support a range of small-scale local interventions covering diversification out of agriculture, wider micro-enterprise development / support, local tourism and crafts, village renewal, basic services and related non-mainstream training. As required by the European Commission, it will be delivered through local partnerships and local development strategies.

- Axis 4

To develop and mainstream the Leader approach through pan-rural Wales coverage of Local Action Groups (LAGs) who will prepare local development strategies focusing on innovation, piloting new approaches / processes etc. and developing community capacity.

10. To get maximum benefit out of Axes 3 and 4, it has been agreed with Local Authorities and key stakeholders that they will form combined partnerships to develop strategies to take forward activities. Work is well underway locally to develop / consolidate current arrangements and strategies and officials in CPD are currently considering draft submissions from the eligible areas. In addition, officials (EPC, WEFO and EIN), in conjunction with the Spatial Plan team, are finalising a mechanism to link the 'RDP' partnerships and strategies into the Spatial Plan Area Action Group structure that would also not pose any difficulties with the Commission. Under these arrangements, the local strategies will require the endorsement of the relevant Spatial Plan Area Action Groups.

11. The descending priority areas of activity are Axis 2, Axis 1, Axis 3 and Axis 4 reflecting in particular the commitments to enable the farming community, via agri-environment participation, to contribute to the Assembly Government's broader strategies on environmental enhancement and climate change. In respect of Axes 3 and 4 the emphasis is being placed on further developing and strengthening the mechanisms for locally driven partnerships to develop local strategies to revitalise rural communities/create community-based capacity building for social and economic enterprise.

### **Links to other Strategies, including Assembly Government Strategies**

12. A Commission requirement is to demonstrate that the measures covered in the RDP contribute to the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas (economic and sustainable development). Underpinning these requirements, the RDP highlights that a range of Assembly Government strategies are highly relevant to the activities and measures that are to be implemented: *People, Places, Futures – The Wales Spatial Plan, Wales: A Vibrant Economy, Skills and Employment Action Plan, Farming for the Future, The Sustainable Development Plan, the Environment Strategy, Making the Connections, Iaitb Pawb, Health Challenge Wales.*

13. In addition, the RDP sets out the lines of demarcation and complementarity with Convergence and Competition Funds, including the European Fisheries Fund (in exactly the same way those supporting Plans



need to have comparable read-across to the RDP). CPD and WEFO officials are finalising the demarcation details with the Convergence Programme but the thinking is that it will be scale that will define whether projects qualify for RDP or Convergence support. Under Axes 3 and 4, the RDP will focus on relatively small-scale activities identified as a package from Local Action Groups, partnerships based on local authority areas (as required by the Commission). On the other hand, the Convergence support will be formulated from larger projects within the framework of the Wales Spatial Plan.

### **National Strategic Plan**

14. In addition to the prescriptive EU legislation that governs much of the content and structure of the RDP, the Commission requires Member States to submit a “National Strategic Plan” that sets out the strategic context for the successor RDPs. For a Member State such as the UK, where each of the 4 constituent countries has managed their own RDPs since 2000, we are required to prepare a single NSP for the UK. This document has been submitted to the Commission, comprising a general UK overview assessment with 4 annexes to cover the specific strategic approaches for Wales, Scotland, England and N Ireland and negotiations are ongoing.

### **Communications**

15. The Rural Development Regulation requires a communication strategy for the RDP to ensure that the programme is properly publicised and that all beneficiaries are aware that they have received support from the programme. Working together with Communications Directorate, a style guide has been prepared that is being used on all RDP literature and promotional material. Briefly the strategy will include:

- Targeted measures aimed at the general public and beneficiaries
- An annual publicity campaign
- Dedicated pages on the EPC Countryside web-site
- Gwlad will carry articles at key points in the development and implementation of the RDP and give key achievements through the period of the Plan’s operation.
- A monthly e-bulletin has been established that will continue to operate on a quarterly basis following Commission approval to the Plan
- Presence at key agricultural shows
- Press notices for the national and local press at key stages; and
- Ministerial visits and announcements.

**Annex A***Axis 1*

Resources devoted to Axis 1 must contribute to a strong and dynamic European Agri-food sector by focusing on the priorities of knowledge transfer, modernisation, innovation and quality in the food chain and on priority sectors for investment in terms of physical and human capital.

The Measures are:

- ❖ Promoting knowledge and improving human potential through:
  - Vocational training and information actions, including diffusion of scientific knowledge and innovative practises, for person engaged in the agricultural, food and forestry sectors;
  - Setting up of young farmers\*\*;
  - Early retirement of farmers and farm workers\*\*;
  - Use of advisory services by farmers and forest holders; and
  - Setting up of farm management, farm relief and farm advisory services, as well as of forestry advisory services\*\*.
  
- ❖ Restructuring and developing physical potential and promoting innovation through:
  - Modernisation of agricultural holdings;
  - Improving the economic value of forests;
  - Adding value to agricultural and forestry products;
  - Co-operation for development of new products, processes and technologies in the agriculture, food sector and forestry sectors;
  - Improving and developing infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry; and
  - Restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and introducing appropriate prevention measures\*\*.
  
- ❖ Improving the quality of agricultural production and products by:
  - Helping farmers to adapt to demanding standards based on Community legislation\*\*;
  - Supporting farmers who participate in food quality schemes; and
  - Supporting producer groups for information and promotion activities for products under food quality schemes.

[\*\* These Measures will not be implemented in Wales as they either (a) do not fit with the nature of the Welsh agriculture / forestry sectors, (b) are provided for through other mechanisms, or (c) are contrary to the policy of the Welsh Assembly Government (e.g. paying farmers to meet welfare and other statutory standards).]

## Axis 2

Resources devoted to Axis 2 must be used to protect and enhance the EUs' natural resources and landscapes in rural areas. They must contribute to the 3 EU-level priority areas: biodiversity and the preservation and development of high nature value farming and forestry schemes and traditional agricultural landscapes; water; and climate change. The Measures prescribed under Axis 2 must be used to integrate these environmental objectives and contribute to the implementation of the agricultural and forestry Natura 2000 network, to the Gothenburg commitment to reverse biodiversity decline by 2010, to the objectives laid down in Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (the Water Framework Directive) and to the Kyoto Protocol targets for climate change mitigation.

The Measures are:

- ❖ Targeting the sustainable use of agricultural land through:
  - Natural handicap payments to farmers in mountain areas;
  - Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas;
  - Natura 2000 payments and payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC;
  - Agri-environment payments;
  - Animal welfare payments; and
  - Support for non-productive investments
  
- ❖ Targeting the sustainable use of forestry land through:
  - First afforestation of agricultural land;
  - First establishment of agroforestry systems on agricultural land;
  - First afforestation of non-agricultural land;
  - Natura 2000 payments;
  - Forest-environment payments;
  - Restoring forestry potential and introducing prevention actions; and
  - Support for non-productive investments.

## Axis 3

The resources under Axis 3 must contribute to the overarching priority of the creation of employment opportunities and conditions for growth in rural areas. The Measures must be used to promote capacity building, skills acquisition and organisation for local strategy development and also help ensure that rural areas remain attractive for future generations. In promoting training, information and entrepreneurship, the particular needs of women, young people and older workers must be considered (we will be adding to these groups).

The Measures are:

- ❖ Diversifying the rural economy, comprising:
  - Diversification into non-agricultural activities (farming families only)\*\*;
  - Support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises with a view to promoting entrepreneurship and developing the economic fabric; and
  - Encouragement of tourism activities (small scale only).
- ❖ Improving the quality of life in rural areas, comprising:
  - Basic services for the rural economy and population;
  - Village renewal and development; and
  - Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage.
- ❖ Training and information for economic actors operating in the fields covered by the Axis
- ❖ Skills acquisition and animation with a view to preparing and implementing a local development strategy

[\*\* This Measure will not be implemented in Wales as it is ring-fenced for farming families only and experience with previous schemes supported either through the Structural Funds or the current RDP has shown that this type of scheme is not well taken up. Farming families will be eligible as micro-enterprises.]

#### *Axis 4*

Axis 4 is targeted at supporting the Leader approach. It must contribute to the priorities of the other Axes, particularly Axis 3, but must also target the horizontal priority of improving governance and mobilising the endogenous development potential of rural areas.

Resources available under the Axis must be used to facilitate, in the context of a community-led local development strategy building on local needs and strengths, the combination of all three objectives – competitiveness, environment and quality of life / diversification. It is targeted at developing integrated approaches involving farmers, foresters and other rural actors to safeguard and enhance the local natural and cultural heritage, raise environmental awareness and invest in and promote speciality products, tourism and renewable resources and energy.

The activities that can be supported are:

- Area-based local development strategies intended for well-identified sub-regional rural territories;

- Local public/private partnerships (known as Local Action Groups or LAGs);
- Bottom-up approach with a decision making power for LAGs concerning the elaboration and implementation of the local development strategies;
- Multi-sectoral design and implementation of the strategy based on the interaction between actors and projects of different sectors of the local economy;
- Implementation of innovative approaches;
- Implementation of co-operation projects; and
- Networking of local partnerships.

## Discover UK – Wales Season

### 拥抱英国 – 威尔士季

#### Background

As the UK becomes better known in China, the British Council has decided to launch Discover – UK, an entertaining and informative information campaign to promote the four countries of the UK from June 2006 to June 2007. This will take its Chinese audiences on to the next level in understanding the contemporary diversity and unique constitutional arrangements that define today's UK.

The promotion, which lasts for 3 months for each country, began with Scotland, followed by England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Wales Season is running from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

The British Council China/Wales has been working in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government, Wales International Consortium and others to promote the best of Wales through the BC's websites in parallel with off-line themed events to highlight Wales.

#### Target Audience

Young and educated people in China who would like to know more about the UK especially Wales.

#### Communication Objectives

The aim of the campaign is to reach more target audience and let them have in-depth understanding about Wales's distinct nature in education, culture, arts, science, tourism, history, modern lifestyle and achievements.

#### Key Elements

##### 1. Online campaign

An online Wales Feature section has been produced on BC China website [www.britishcouncil.org.cn](http://www.britishcouncil.org.cn) with 100-200 articles organized under 9 themes during the promotional period -

#### Themes

From 1 January- 31 January: *Food & Drink, Music& Arts, History and Politics, Education in Wales*

From 1 February- 28 February: *Geography, tourism, Folk culture & Legends, Education in Wales*

From 1 March- 31 March: *Language & Literature, Sports, Festivals, Education in Wales*

The information will stay permanently on the websites after the intensive promotion period.

##### 2. Offline events & activities

A Wales Corner has been set up at the Front of House of all 4 offices from 1 January to demonstrate the culture of Wales to visitors, lasting for the whole campaign period. Lectures and Welsh themed events are also being

undertaken throughout the three month period – see activities below for more details.

## **PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES - Interim Evaluation**

### **1. Online campaign:**

- An online feature on BC site and EduUK site with 100 articles about Wales arts, history, politics, food and drinks and education;
- 2 interactive themed games including online quiz and puzzle jigsaw;
- Online promotion at partners' sites including Qianlong.com, 51edu.com, Chinaren, Sina, Cernet, Beiwai Online, uk.cn and QQ.com;
- Online promotion at other BC sites including EdUK and in2english;
- 2 lectures live broadcasted online at Qianlong, QQ Beijing and QQ Chongqing;
- Monthly themed newsletter to 100,000 BC Online community members.

### **RESULTS and FIGURES (till 2 Feb 07)**

- **35,000+** visitors to Wales feature on BC sites;
- **100,000** visitors to the splash page on Qianlong and QQ
- **120,000** visitors to the online webcast event at Qianlong
- **10,000** members opened the monthly e-newsletter

### **2. Offline activities**

- Wales corners were set up from 1 Jan at the Information Centres in all the 4 offices to demonstrate Wales-themed materials. Posters of Wales landscape and people are put up at the Information Centres during the whole Season.
- A lecture in CQ on Wales culture and lifestyle by Kevin Higgins Director of British Council Wales in Chongqing.
- A lecture/media gathering in Beijing on Wales culture and education system for media and BC online community members. The speaker was Virginia West, the Director of the Wales Int'l Consortium. She also hosted an alumni gathering in Guangzhou and attended the annual alumni ball in Shanghai

### **RESULTS and FIGURES (till 2 Feb 07)**

- **80** audience attended the presentation in Chongqing, 80 Beijing.
- **400** UK alumni participated into the annual ball in Shanghai
- **50** Welsh alumni joined Virginia at the gathering in Guangzhou.

### **3. Printed/Audio/Video materials**

- Wales Season highlights were advertised on BC's outgoing events newsletter.
- Wales education+ lifestyle highlights were featured at the Education UK You Post publication with over 40,000 circulation per issue.
- Reference materials provided by Welsh Assembly Government, Welsh International Consortium and Welsh Arts International are all on display at Information Centres.
- Wales music and promotional videos are played at information centres and offline events.

**Activities to come:**

- Media gathering on modern dance by Welsh dancer Henri Oquiki in Beijing
- 2 flash game featuring Welsh icons online
- E-media visit to Wales
- Feb / March: 2 Open Weekend events featuring Wales in Shanghai
- March: Flag waving competition
- March: Cardiff university lecture
- March: China Daily splash page on Wales
- March: Education Exhibition in Chongqing and Gangzhou City
- March: Creativity in Education Exhibition in Chongqing