

European & External Affairs Committee

EUR2 03-05 (p1)

Date:14 April 2005

Time:09:00 am

Venue:Committee Rooms 3 and 4, National Assembly for Wales

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. Members to note the content of the report.

Background

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

First Minister's International Activities

27 - 28 February Attendance at the St David's Day programme in Brussels - I attended a number of events in Brussels and held meetings to celebrate St David's Day. I attended and addressed a St David's Day dinner hosted by the Brussels Welsh Society. I held a first meeting with Danuta Hübner, the recently appointed Commissioner for Regional Policy, providing an opportunity to build rapport and have an exchange of views on regional relative Gross Value Added (GVA) levels and EU budget negotiations. I also took the opportunity to invite the Commissioner to Wales, which she accepted in principle. I attended and spoke at a WLGA seminar: "Making Europe Work for Welsh Local Government". I had a meeting with Sir John Grant, Permanent Representative of the UK to the EU. I attended and spoke at a University of Wales, Swansea event an "New solutions to old problems through Life Science: from bio-nanotechnology to deep computing". I met Commissioner Vice-President Margot Wallström to discuss a range of issues and invited her to visit Wales.

1 March Visit to Iraq to Celebrate St David's Day with Welsh Soldiers and Units - I met soldiers with the two Welsh Regiments serving with British Forces Iraq – the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and 1st The

Queen's Dragoon Guards as well as soldiers from Major General Riley's own Regiment, The Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

3 March Reception for the Foreign Diplomatic Corps - Along with Jane Hutt and Sue Essex I hosted a remarkably successful reception for foreign diplomats and representations from the London based international press at the FCO in London, successful not only because of the high level of diplomat guests, but for the excellent food provided by the Welsh Culinary Team but also the superb musical entertainment provided by students from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

11 March Dr Lubomír Zaoralek - I received a courtesy call from the Chairman of the Czech Chamber of Deputies Dr Lubomír Zaoralek. Mr Zaorálek and his colleagues visited Britain at the invitation of the Speaker of the House of Commons and visited the Assembly to learn about devolution in the UK after spending two days in Westminster. The guests made a visit to the Pierhead to see how the National Assembly for Wales is informing the public about its activities, the New Assembly Building and the current Chamber.

11 March Meeting with Mr Ian Bond, the British Ambassador to Latvia - I met with Mr Ian Bond, the new HM Ambassador to Latvia. We discussed the close and productive relationship between Wales and Latvia that has grown considerably since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on 13th May 2004.

17 March Attendance at the St Patrick's Day Reception, Brunel House - I participated in the celebrations for St Patrick's Day and attended a reception to further existing links with Wales and Ireland.

2 - 6 April Overseas Trade Mission to Vietnam - I led Wales Trade International's trade mission. I met with Graig Shipping in Vietnam following the award of a large shipbuilding contract with VINASHIN and undertook a programme of visits to organisations in Hanoi & Ho Chi Minh City.

13 April Meeting with the Mexican Ambassador, HE Juan Jose Bremer - I met the Ambassador on his first visit to Wales. The Ambassador also met other key players in Wales including WTI, WDA and the Presiding Officer.

Other Issues

Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe) (JMC(E)) - 15 March

I was not able to attend JMC(E) due to prior commitments. Jackie Brown attended on my

behalf. Discussions focused on the UK Presidency, Better Regulation, Working Time Directive and the Spring European Council. Further dates have not been advised.

Croatia

The December 2004 European Council decided that EU accession negotiations with Croatia should open on 17 March 2005. This was on the proviso that Croatia fully co-operated with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

On Wednesday 16 March it was announced that EU foreign ministers had postponed the opening of talks. Ministers want Croatia to fully co-operate with the ICTY by handing over General Ante Gotovina. He is accused of crimes against humanity and faces charges of killing 150 Serbs and expelling 150,000 others in 1995 from the Krajina region.

No new date has been set for the talks but these would commence as soon as the Council has established that Croatia is co-operating fully with the ICTY.

Report On St David's Day Promotion of Wales

Once again this year we have utilised St David's Day as a platform to promote Wales internationally, as it is one of Wales' unique selling points.

St David's Day is the day of our patron saint and a day to be proud of our unique history and heritage but it is also a day where we can promote our modernity.

This year we orchestrated the following activity:

Dubai

Economic Development and Transport Minister Andrew Davies visited Dubai and undertook a full business programme to coincide with the 1st Anniversary of the Opening of the Wales Trade International Office (WTI). During his visit he officially opened a Showcase of Wales in Dubai which featured art, design, music, tourism, food and drink, higher education and science and technology through interactive exhibits from Techniquest.

The showcase was successful and was visited by over 70,000 people (25% ex-pats and 75% local population).

The media coverage was widespread with over 20 press articles and four hours of live broadcast radio exposure.

Wales Week in New York

A Week of Welsh Events for the public was held 26 February - 5 March. The events incorporated

theatre, literature, opera, comedy, Welsh food and drink, photography, art, fashion, rock music and a Dylan Thomas Walking Tour.

On 1 March the Empire State Building was once again lit up in the colours of the Welsh flag.

There was a significant amount of media coverage - more than has previously been achieved.

St David's Day Reception for the Diplomatic Corps - Thursday 3 March

I hosted a successful reception for foreign diplomats and representatives from the London based international press at the FCO in London.

The purpose of the reception was to raise the profile of Wales among foreign diplomats, many of whom have not visited Wales, to encourage them to visit and to thereby strengthen potential beneficial links across a range of sectors.

The reception provide a showcase for Wales with food and drink provided by the Welsh Culinary Team, led by team captain Graham Tinsley, Chef of the Castle Hotel, Conwy and entertainment provided by students from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

Other party Leaders attended the event.

St David's Reception in Brussels

While I was not able to attend the St David's Day reception in Brussels, I was represented by Tamsin Dunwoody-Kneafsey Deputy Minister for Economic Development and Transport. The event was very successful with over 400 guests attending from the EU institutions and regional offices in Brussels including the UK's ambassador to the EU and the US' Deputy Ambassador.

It is clear that guests were very impressed with the food from Wales, which showcased the True Taste award winners. I am very pleased that the catering company from Brussels is considering offering a Welsh menu along with their traditional French, Italian and Spanish because of the quality of the produce.

This event is now firmly on the Brussels calendar and makes a real contribution to raising our profile among decision-makers in what is an increasingly crowded market place for 'profile'.

Overseas Posts – Promotion of St David's Day

As usual I sent a St David's Day message to all FCO Posts overseas via FCO telegram.

59 Posts carried the message or an article on St David's Day.

There were two occasions where St David's Day celebrations coincided with Trade Missions. In Prague members of the trade mission joined the Welsh Community in Prague in a reception at the British Embassy. WTI organised shipment of sparkling white wine from the Gwinllan Ffynnon Las vineyard in Aberaeron for the event. In Helsinki a similar reception was held where Welsh sparkling wine again featured as well as 'leek coracles'.

Wales World Nation Website

A special front page was designed for the website with St David's Day appearing in the languages of the site (English, Welsh, French, Spanish, Japanese and German).

Rhodri Morgan AM
First Minister

Eeac First Minister's Report - Annex A

Date	Assembly Minister / Official / Division	Event	Objectives	Outcomes
24 February	Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning	Dr. Luisa de los Angeles Domingez Rodrigez from the University of Cienfuegos, Cuba & Selwyn Williams University of Wales Bangor (Meeting was in Cardiff)	to discuss their Cuban Collaboration Programme project on furthering community development links between Wales and Cuba.	The Minister was able to suggest Cuban contacts for Bangor to approach in respect of their Community Development Study Tour next Spring; Selwyn Williams agreed to write to the Minister setting out Community Development Cymru's recommendations for a more strategic delivery of provision.

<p>27 - 28 February 2005</p>	<p>First Minister</p>	<p>St David's Day programme (Brussels)</p>	<p>attended and addressed a St David's Day dinner hosted by the Brussels Welsh Society.</p> <p>held a first meeting with Danuta Hübner, the recently appointed Commissioner for Regional Policy, providing an opportunity to build rapport and exchange of views on regional Gross Value Added (GVA) and EU budget negotiations. I also took the opportunity to invite the Commissioner to Wales, which she accepted.</p> <p>attended and spoke at a WLGA seminar: "Making Europe Work for Welsh Local Government".</p> <p>had a meeting with Sir John Grant, Permanent Representative of the UK to the EU.</p> <p>attended and spoke at a University of Wales, Swansea event an "New solutions to old problems through Life Science: from bio-nanotechnology to deep computing".</p> <p>met Commissioner Vice-President Margot Wallstrom to discuss a range of issues and invited her to visit Wales.</p>	<p>Objectives achieved. Commissioner to visit Wales (dates to be agreed)</p>
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1 March 2005	First Minister	Visit Soldiers from the 1 st Battalion The Welsh Guards, 1st Queen's Dragoon Guards and other Welsh Soldiers stationed in Iraq.	To celebrate St David's Day with Welsh Soldiers	Objective achieved. Celebrated St David's Day with Welsh servicemen and women posted to the Basra region
3 March 2005	First Minister Jane Hutt AM Business Minister Sue Essex AM Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services	Reception for the Foreign Diplomatic Corp	Attended the reception for the Foreign Diplomatic Corp along	Raised the profile of Wales among foreign diplomats, many of whom have not visited Wales, to encourage them to visit and to thereby strengthen potential beneficial links across a range of sectors
9 - 13 March 2005	Carwyn Jones AM Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside	The Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development -NRG4SD in Sumatra	Government Forum, considering Sustainable Reconstruction of regions hit by Tsunami	NRG4SD first General Assembly adopted the following: NRG4SD Strategy 2005-2011 Activities report of the Network during 2002-2004 Guidelines for Tsunami Solidarity Action Taskforce

				<p>Lake Toba Call</p> <p>Policy papers on Sustainable Forest Management and Fair Trade</p>
11 March 2005	First Minister	Meet the British Ambassador to Latvia	Met Mr Ian Bond, the new HM Ambassador to Latvia	Briefed the Ambassador on the close and productive relationship between Wales and Latvia
11 March 2005	First Minister	<p>Dr Lubomír Zaorálek</p> <p>Chairman</p> <p>Czech Chamber of Deputies and colleagues</p>	Mr Zaorálek and his colleagues visited at the invitation of the Speaker of the House of Commons and visited the Assembly to learn about devolution in the UK after spending two days in Westminster.	<p>Learnt about devolution in the UK after spending two days in Westminster.</p> <p>The guests visited the Assembly at the Pierhead to see how the National Assembly for Wales is informing the public about its activities, the New Assembly Building and visited the current Chamber. They then attended a lunch hosted by The Deputy Presiding Officer, Dr John Marek AM</p>
16 March 2005	<p>Andrew Davies AM</p> <p>Minister for Economic Development and Transport</p> <p>EEAD2</p>	<p>Wales Interreg IIIB & C Best Practice and Networking Event</p> <p>Jury's Hotel, Cardiff</p>	To bring together practitioners from across Wales with projects approved under Interreg IIIB&C. The aim was to focus on the successful implementation of projects under the current programmes and to discuss the development of the co-operation objective post 2006.	The Minister addressed the event which attracted over 80 participants largely from the public sector covering a wide range of expertise. Presentations were given on progress on the current programmes, including financial procedures, the Wales Spatial Plan and sustainable development, and the latest position on post 2006 co-operation.

				The afternoon workshops provided further lively discussions on these issues.
17 March 2005	First Minister	Attend the St Patrick's Day Reception, Brunel House	To further the existing links with Wales and Ireland	Objective achieved that strengthened links between Wales and Ireland.
17 March	Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning	EARLALL General Assembly meeting, Florence, Italy	The Minister attended the EARLALL General Assembly meeting in Florence in her capacity as Vice President of the Association. Membership of EARLALL provides a valuable opportunity for European regions to work together on strategies and programmes for lifelong learning. The Minister tabled two papers, one detailing recent key Welsh developments in Education and Lifelong learning, and the other updating member on EU Policy developments and suggesting a forward strategy for the Association.	The Minister's attendance and status at these meetings further cements relationships with the other EARLALL regions and provides an opportunity for raising the profile of Wales within Europe. Through membership of EARLALL we are also undertaking work on a number of collaborative projects with EARLALL partner regions.
21 March 2005 First Minister Visit by Mr Nguyen Van An, President, National Assembly in	First Minister	Visit by Mr Nguyen Van An, President, National Assembly in Vietnam + delegation	To make contact with the First Minister prior to his visit to Vietnam in April	The President and the First Minister discussed his up and coming visit to Vietnam. The President also met the Presiding Officer and paid a visit to Graig Shipping who are currently working in market.

Vietnam + delegation				
21 - 25 March 2005	Carwyn Jones AM Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside	Oxfam sponsored visit to Ghana	Meeting farmer representatives plus informal discussions with Ministers of Trade, Agriculture and Finance about impact on Ghanaian farm interests of US and EU dumping of agricultural produce.	Objective achieved. Also advised on WAG position re Fair Trade under Sustainable Development Plan, together with approach for further reform to EU CAP.
22 March 2005	Sue Essex AM Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services	Meeting on Location Strategy with Irish Officials, Dublin	To discuss the Irish Equivalent with Irish Officials	Objective achieved. The visit also afforded the opportunity to make comparisons with the Irish Decentralisation Programme and study their lessons learnt, in order to inform our own Location Strategy
23 March 2005	Sue Essex AM Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services	Meeting on Spatial Planning with Irish Officials, Dublin	To discuss the Irish Equivalent with Irish Officials	Objective achieved. Discussions centred on the commonality between the two Governments' approach to their Spatial plans.
2 - 6 April 2005	First Minister	Overseas Trade mission to Vietnam	To lead WTI's trade mission. To meet with Graig Shipping in Vietnam following award of large shipbuilding contract with VINASHIN and to undertake a programme of visits to officials and organisations in Hanoi & Ho Chi Minh City.	Full programme of meetings and visits achieved.

13 April 2005	First Minister	Meeting with the Mexican Ambassador - HE Juan Jose Bremer	Ambassador's first visit to Wales so this is an opportunity for him to meet the First minister and other key players in Wales	This initial contact with Ministers and other key players in Wales was a catalyst for developing a meaningful relationship in the future to develop economic, cultural and educational co-operation
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