

EUROPEAN & EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Date: 14 October 2004
Time: 09:00 am
Venue: Committee Rooms 3 and 4, National Assembly for Wales,
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. Members to note the content of the report.

Background

3. The Committee last met on 1 July. This paper provides an update.

First Minister's International Activities

1 July. Meeting with the Korean Ambassador, London. Follow on from the visit to Wales of HE Mr Lee, Tae Sik, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea in May this year. Discussed the future prospects of the Korean economy and Korea's approach to economic development, relations with other far East countries, particularly in light of the expansion of the Chinese economy. Also discussed Korean/Welsh links and the possibility of future trade mission.

1 July. The 228th American Independence Day Reception, London. Attended celebration reception of US independence.

6 July. The Irish Consulate Reception. Attended reception to celebrate the enlargement of the European Union and the Irish Presidency.

20 & 21 July. Visit by the Latvian Commissioner. I met the then shadow Latvian Commissioner, Sandra Kalniete, over dinner at Miskin Manor on 20th July and at the Royal Welsh Show (RWS), Builth Wells on 21 July during her short visit to Wales. At the RWS, Ms Kalniete accompanied me for courtesy calls on the NFU, FUW, Young Farmers and CLA stands and later met the Minister for Countryside, Environment and Planning, Carwyn Jones, at the Welsh Assembly Government pavilion. Discussions centred on the exchange of information and sharing of best practice between Wales and Latvia. Ingrida Udre has subsequently been nominated as the Latvian Commissioner.

31 August - 1 September. Visit by a group of journalists based in the UK but working for Chinese publications, radio and TV. I met with a group of journalists to raise the profile and knowledge of Wales in China and to give the journalists an

opportunity to question me about my forthcoming trip to China. The two day programme also included interviews with the Welsh Development Agency, Wales Trade International, Wales International Consortium, tours of the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff Castle, Swansea Technium & Rhosilli Bay.

4 – 9 September. Visit to Shanghai, Xiamen and Beijing. I accompanied a trade mission of some 18 companies to China. I also met with senior Chinese politicians and led, on behalf of the UK Government, at the Chinese International Fair for Investment and Trade where, for the first time, Wales had its own stand and exhibition. The objectives of my visit also included encouraging Welsh companies to export to China, opening the WDA offices in Shanghai, opening the offices of Graig Shipping and Warwick International, launching the Wales International Consortium's ELI Foundation Programme and generally raising the profile of Wales in China.

30 September. Farewell Reception for the Japanese Ambassador. I attended the Farewell Reception for the Japanese Ambassador in London.

1 October. Lunch with Jim Carroll, Consul General of Ireland. I attended a lunch with Jim Carroll, Consul General of Ireland who has now left Wales to become the No.2 at the Irish Embassy in London.

12 & 13 October. Visit by Jean Yves Le Drian, President of the Brittany Regional Council. I met Jean Yves Le Drian, Regional President, and a delegation of 10 regional councillors, 10 cultural organisations, journalists and support staff. The Breton delegation was in Wales on a study visit, exploring the way different bodies (National Library, Welsh Books Council, S4C, etc) manage culture, Welsh language and creative industries.

Other Issues

Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe) (JMC(E)) – 14 September.

I attended this meeting that addressed the Working Time Directive and the new Commission and European Parliament.

On the Working Time Directive we discussed the impending College discussion of the Commission's draft proposals. Since this meeting, the Commission has adopted a draft legislative proposal to amend the existing Working Time Directive. Details can be found at the following link:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2004/sep/working_time_directive_proposal_en.pdf

In its draft legislative proposal, the Commission has taken on-board member states' views on compensatory rest and on-call working (SiMAP/Jaeger judgements). It proposes to create a new category of "on-call" time where the "inactive" part of on-call is not counted as working time. As regards compensatory rest, the Commission proposes that this rest be taken within 72 hours rather than immediately as set out in ECJ case law.

On the individual opt-out, the Commission is proposing that a dual system be introduced. The individual opt-out will require prior collective agreement or agreement among social partners where appropriate. Where this is not possible (i.e. where the necessary

structures for collective agreement did not exist), only then will the individual opt-out be available but with reinforced conditions to prevent abuses. The Commission has also proposed that the reference period for calculating the average working week be extended from the current 4 months to up to 1 year in certain circumstances.

The legislative proposal has now been transmitted to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament for consideration.

We also discussed the composition of the new Commission and the opportunities to build up links with the new European Parliament.

“Wales in a New Europe : EU Regional Policy Post 2006” - 15 September

On 15 September I addressed the fourth meeting of the Wales European Forum, the focus of which was EU Regional Policy post 2006. The Forum, which was held at the University of Wales, Newport (Caerleon), was a joint event between the Welsh Assembly Government and the European Commission Representation in Wales. Other key speakers included John Neve (DTI), Ronnie Hall (DG Regional Policy), Tom Jones (WCVA), Chris Holley (WLGA), Santiago Loranca-Garcia (DG Employment & Social Affairs) and Jan Royall. Over 200 people attended, mainly from the public, private and voluntary sectors across Wales and contributed to interesting and thorough discussions about the future of regional policy.

A report of the proceedings is attached at Annex B of Paper 3 – New Structural Funds Regulations before the Committee today.

Environmental Technologies Workshop – 28/30 September

A group of leading young scientists, environmental experts and managers from eight of the new EU Member States (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) visited Wales to explore solutions for some of the environmental problems facing the UK and Central Europe. The visit was arranged by the Welsh Assembly Government in conjunction with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Council as part of the UK Government's Crossroads for Ideas initiative. The initiative provides new opportunities for exchanging ideas, experiences and skills, and for building new networks and partnership with the new Member States. During their stay they visited leading institutions and businesses, including Cardiff University's Geo-Environmental Research Centre, the Millennium Coastal Park, the University of Glamorgan and the Swansea Technium.

Rhodri Morgan AM
First Minister

EEAC FIRST MINISTER'S REPORT – ANNEX A

Date	Assembly Minister/Official/ Division	Event	<u>Objectives</u>	Outcomes
1 July 2004	First Minister	Meeting with the Korean Ambassador	Discussed Wales/Korean links. Relations with other Far East economies. Korea's approach to economic development. Possible future trade mission.	Objective achieved
1 July 2004	First Minister	Attend the 228 th American Independence Day Reception	Celebratory reception.	Objective achieved
6 July 2004	First Minister Alun Pugh	Attend the Irish Consulate Reception	To celebrate enlargement of the EU and the Irish Presidency	Objective achieved
12/13 July 2004	External Affairs Division Officials only	Visit to Wales by outgoing Welsh Affairs Officer in the US Embassy and his replacement	To meet the new Welsh Affairs Officer to update him on Assembly policies and encourage events and knowledge of Wales generally	Objectives achieved
20 July 2004	External Affairs Officials only	Visit to Wales by a group of Senior Civil Servants from Guangdong Province, China	To raise the profile of Wales in China and to publicise the First Minister's trip to China in September. Group were studying British politics in Oxford University	Objectives achieved during a very successful visit
10 August 2004	Alun Pugh	Watch Berlin Youth Orchestra - Berlin	To attend the concert to support the National Youth Orchestra of Wales in their attendance at the Young Euro Classic Festival. To meet the Ambassador and other dignitaries. To hand over the Ceremonial Key for the Wales Millennium Centre.	Provided support to the National Youth Orchestra of Wales (NYOW) who played a concert on the 10 August as part of the Young Euro Classic Festival in Berlin.

11/12 August 2004	Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services: Sue Essex and External Affairs Officials	Visit to Wales by HE Shaikha Aisha Khalfan Jamail Al-Siyabiyah, Minister for Craft Industry, Oman	To give the Minister the opportunity to learn about the craft industry in Wales, how it is being supported by government and non-governmental institutions, to learn about new craft technologies and investigate training opportunities in the UK for young craftsmen.	This successful programme included visits to the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans, Craft in the Bay, National Assembly for Wales, Product Design Research Centre University of Wales Institute Cardiff & National Museum & Galleries. Meetings were held with the Chief Executive of Cultural Enterprise Service, Chairman of the Makers Guild, Chairman of the Arts Council of Wales etc.
12 August 2004	Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services	Hosted a lunch with the Omani Minister for Crafts, Cardiff Bay	Request from EEAD for a female Minister to host a lunch.	<p>The Omani Minister welcomed the opportunity of meeting a Welsh female minister.</p> <p>Her objectives of learning about crafts in Wales, how they are supported by the government and non-governmental institutions were also met over lunch by the Finance Minister introducing her to the other guests which included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman the Arts Council of Wales • Head of Arts in the Welsh Assembly Government • Director Mission Gallery, Swansea • Claire Curneen, Ceramist and Lecturer Arts School University of Wales Cardiff • Chief Executive Cultural Enterprise Service
17 August 2004	External Affairs Officials only	Visit to Wales by a group of Senior Civil Servants from Guangzhou City, China	To raise the profile of Wales in China and to publicise the First Minister's trip to China in September. Group were studying British politics in Oxford University	Objectives achieved during a very successful visit

23 August 2004	EEAD officials and Sandy Mewies Chair of the European & External Affairs Committee	Reception hosted by the European Centre for Training & Regional Cultures (ECTARC) for participants from the Four Motor regions held Llangollen	Wales association with the "Four Motor Regions" (Baden-Württemberg, Catalunya, Lombardia, Rhône-Alpes) dates back to the early nineties. This reception was part of a reciprocal language course held each year in one region for scientists, administrative staff of higher education and regional government staff. Attendance at this event showed the Assembly Government's commitment to the relationships with each of the 4 Motor regions and to the importance of learning other European languages.	Objectives achieved
27 August 2004 – 7 September 2004	Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning Andrea Nicholas-Jones HED, DfTE	Overseas Visit to New Zealand	The ELL Minister undertook a collaborative learning visit to New Zealand. The New Zealand Ministry of Education hosted the visit. During the time in New Zealand a full programme of meetings and visits enabled the forging of links with partners and benchmark Wales's progress as a Learning Country against a highly regarded education service. The visit focused on collaborative learning based on the similar socio-economic patterns, and education systems in both countries, forging links with partners in New Zealand and allowing benchmarking of our own progress as a Learning Country against an education service that is dealing in an innovative manner with many of the key issues that we ourselves wish to address.	The Minister intends to support the continued development of evidence based education and skill policy in Wales by exploiting opportunities for shared learning with the education community in New Zealand. New Zealand monitors and evaluates its policy programmes as we do. The visit allowed facilitated discussions with teachers, school leaders, education managers, policy makers and academics. The Minister is actively following up opportunities for future networking between officials.
31 August - 1 September 2004	First Minister & Officials from External Affairs Division	Visit by a group of journalists based in the UK but working for Chinese publications, radio and TV	To raise the profile and knowledge of Wales in China and to give the journalists an opportunity to question the First Minister about his forthcoming trip to China.	A two day programme included interviews with the Welsh Development Agency, WalesTrade International, Wales International Centre, tours of the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff Castle, Swansea Technium & Rhosilli Bay

4 - 9 September 2004	First Minister, Private Secretary, Press Officer & Head of External Relations	Visit by the First Minister to Shanghai, Xiamen and Beijing	The First Minister accompanied a trade mission of some 18 companies to China. He also met with senior Chinese politicians and led, on behalf of the UK Government, at the Chinese International Fair for investment and Trade. Welsh stand at Fair Objectives of the visit also included encouraging Welsh companies to export to China, Opening the WDA offices in Shanghai, opening the offices of Graig Shipping, visiting Warwick International and generally raising the profile of Wales in China	Objectives achieved.
8 September 2004	Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning Lynsey May HED, DfTE	EARLALL Board Meeting	Attended the EARLALL Board Meeting 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. Discussion on Wales' paper on the introduction of an EU policy update as a standing agenda item. Members to update the Association on relevant lifelong learning developments within their region.	To be confirmed
16 September 2004	Human Resources and External Affairs Officials only	Visit by 15 senior Chinese public sector officials	From the Welsh perspective to raise the profile of Wales in China & from the visitors perspective to learn about the Assembly's personnel strategy, civil service recruitment & staff performance appraisal	Objective achieved.
16 – 20 September 2004	Alun Pugh	Athens Paralympics - Greece	Meet with Team GB at Ambassadors reception and supported the 24 Welsh Paralympians at Athens.	Reinforced the Assembly's commitment toward the Social Model of Disability as well as providing tangible evidence that we are committed to tackling the issue of social inclusion.
20 September 2004	European & External Affairs Officials.	Visit to Barcelona to meet officials of the Government of Catalunya	The National Assembly for Wales has had a Co-operation Protocol with the Government of Catalunya since 6 April 2001. The objective of the visit was to discuss progress on the aims of the Co-operation Protocol and to explore the desire and opportunities for both sides to develop new and existing links.	Objective achieved.

28 September 2004	Minister for Economic Development and Transport Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services	The Hon David Campbell MP, Minister for Regional Development, Small Business and Minister for the Illawarra Constituency, New South Wales, Australia	The Minister is coming to the UK and Ireland to look at Economic Development and Regeneration.	Objectives of the study tour met. Relationship with New South Wales strengthened.
28 September 2004	Minister for Economic Development and Transport	Environmental Technologies Workshop	One of a series of 8 themed workshops around the UK. Young professionals from each of the 8 central European countries have been chosen to participate. The Assembly Government hosted this event in collaboration with the FCO and the British Council.	A successful event that provided the opportunity to exchange ideas, experiences and skills.
28/29 September 2004	WEFO Officials	EU commission's Open days Brussels	Primarily aimed at delegates from the 10 new member states who joined in May 2004. A wide variety of workshops and events are being held in offices and venues across Brussels.	To hear the experiences of other regions / authorities involved in Structural Funds activity.
6/7 October 2004	European and External Affairs Officials	Part of UK Study Tour by 11 representatives of Latvian Municipalities	To develop a greater understanding of Wales and local governance	To hear experiences
Actual date to be confirmed between 18/29 October	European and External Affairs Officials	Study visit to Wales by the Mayors of 4 major Latvian cities	English Language Training with CELT (British Council)	Visits and activity around study programme to develop knowledge of governance and other issues.
12/13 October 2004	First Minister	Visit of Jean Yves Le Drian President of the Brittany Regional Council and a delegation of 10 regional councillors, 10 cultural organisations, journalists and support staff	Jean Yves Le Drian was appointed President of Brittany in May 04. This is his first official visit to Wales which has a memorandum of understanding with Brittany	Strengthening of the relationship with Brittany

