

# European and External Affairs Committee

## EUR(2) 07-05 (p.1)

**Date: 22 September 2005**

**Time: 09:00 - 12.30**

**Venue: 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 in Llangollen on the 7<sup>th</sup> July. This paper provides an update.

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

- 8 July 2005 European Cultural Tourism Network - I gave the closing speech at the Network's second annual conference held at the Wales Millennium Centre. Wales is leading in the development of this network and the event was badged as an EU Presidency event.
- 11 July 2005 UK Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers Competitiveness Council - I hosted a reception in the Impressionist Gallery of the National Museum of Wales for Research and Economic/Industry Ministers, and local stakeholders and, later, gave the opening address at the formal dinner.
- 19 July 2005 Meeting with HE Mariano Fernandez, Chilean Ambassador to the UK - I met His Excellency Mariano Fernandez in London. This followed our initial meeting during the Ambassador's visit to Wales last October.
- 31 August 2005 Meeting with Artis Pabriks, Latvian Minister for Foreign Affairs – The Minister was in Wales to attend the "Gymnich", the informal meeting of all the EU Foreign Ministers on 1

and 2 September. This provided an excellent opportunity to discuss a wide range of EU issues and to re-affirm Wales' and Latvia's commitment to the MOU that was signed in Newport on 15 May last year. Also present was HE Indulis Berzins, Ambassador of the Republic of Latvia to the UK.

- 1 September 2005 Meeting with HE Carlos Miranda, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to the UK - I met the Ambassador during his first visit to Wales prior to his meeting with the Spanish Foreign Minister on the occasion of the "Gymnich".
- 1 September 2005 UK Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers "Gymnich", Celtic Manor, Newport - I co-hosted with the Foreign Secretary a lunch reception for the 25 EU foreign ministers and two EU commissioners. I later hosted an evening reception attended by political journalists from all 25 EU member states as well as those from the candidate countries. The reception was a great opportunity to raise the profile of Wales and showcase our food, drink and music with high profile media coverage throughout Europe. Gymnich is the accepted shorthand term for the informal get-togethers of EU Foreign Ministers.
- 6 September 2005 Meeting with His Excellency Herr Thomas Matussek Ambassador for the Federal Republic of Germany to the UK This was a good opportunity to discuss the relationship between Wales and Germany and the Memorandum of Understanding with Baden-Wuerttemberg. The Ambassador visited the Royal Mint and Robert Bosch during his stay. I also hosted a lunch for the Ambassador and business representatives.
- 8 September 2005 Meeting with the Botswana/De Beers Mining Company I met with officials of the Botswana Government, representatives of De Beers and Debswana – a mining company jointly owned by the Government and De Beers during their visit to Wales. The delegation was interested to see how we approach sustainable development and public/private sector partnership working in Wales. They met with Cardiff Bay Harbour Authority and NHS Estates Wales during their visit.

## **Other issues**

### **Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe) (JMCE) 14<sup>th</sup> September 2005**

- The meeting scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> July was postponed. The next meeting is on the 14<sup>th</sup> September which I will attend. Items for the agenda include the UK Presidency, Better Regulation and an update on the Informal Meeting of Heads of State and Government. I will provide members with an oral update.

### **Action points arising from last meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

- Arrangements are in hand to invite Committee Members to a meeting and dinner during the

programme for the visit of Commissioner Danuta Hübner on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2005.

- Officials agreed to provide a note of the meeting of the College of Commissioners. This is attached at Annex A

Rhodri Morgan AM  
First Minister

### EEAC First Minister's Report

Date	Assembly Minister/ Official/ Division	Event	Objectives	Outcomes
7 July 2005	First Minister	Dinner with the Burgomeester and representatives of the City of 's-Hertogenbosch	To strengthen the connections between 's-Hertogenbosch and Wales.	The party's visit included visits to Caerphilly Castle, HMS Cardiff, Penderyn Distillery, Brecon and the Headquarters of 160 Brigade. They also attended the Wales remembers 1939 - 45 event at Cooper's Field. The feedback from the Burgomeester and representatives of 's-Hertogenbosch has been very positive and very complimentary. They are looking to strengthen the links even further.

8 July 2005	First Minister	European Cultural Tourism Network, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference, Wales Millennium Centre	The First Minister gave the closing speech. The objective of the conference was an exchange of experience and best practice between professionals working in the field of cultural tourism across Europe. Wales is leading in the development of this network. It was badged as a UK Presidency Event and was part funded by INTERREG IIC ECTN project.	The conference, which was attended by 139 delegates, from 14 countries, agreed to issue a "Declaration" to the European Institutions, on the future development and management of cultural tourism in Europe. This draft "Declaration" has been circulated to the delegates for their comment and approval and will be finalised in September.
11 July 2005	First Minister  Minister for Economic Development and Transport	Competitiveness Council Dinner	The First Minister hosted a joint reception for the Research and Economics/ Industry Ministers, officials and local stakeholders in the National Museum of Wales. He then hosted a private dinner for the EU Ministers and EC Commissioners who attended the Competitiveness Council  Minister for Economic Development and Transport attended both reception and dinner and also attended the working sessions of the council	
19 July 2005	First Minister	Lunch with the Chilean Ambassador	The First Minister met with HE Mr Mariano Fernandez in London.	

20 July 2005	Alun Pugh AM	Udmurtian study visit	To gather practical information on the mechanisms of the broadening of the Welsh Language	Possibility of sending Welsh Football coaches to Udmurtia, waiting for input of FAW. Discussions re sending WNO Director to assist with a theatre production continuing
21 July 2005	ELL Minister  Megan Jones/ Cathy Madge Strategic Policy Unit	informal meeting with Young Libyans	A group of 30 young people from Wales and Libya met the ELL Minister during the second part of their unique exchange ('the Green Desert Project') which aims to improve the 'people-to-people' link between the two countries. They met the Minister towards the end of their fortnight in Wales and the Libyan young people were able to discuss experiences of their first visit here. The group wanted to meet the Minister because of the National Assembly's good reputation for youth involvement in decision- making and to be able to share their experiences in both countries.	There was discussion of Wales' major youth organisations and also of the relevance of the cultural and environmental issues (which formed the project work of the exchange), to the work of the Assembly. The 'Green Desert Project' will launch a trilingual website (Welsh, English and Arabic) about the exchange later in the year.

6-10 August 2005	Minister for Economic Development and Transport	Interceltic Festival, Lorient	The Minister led a delegation of County Councillors and other interested parties on a visit to marina developments.	<p>- Minister met with the President of Brittany to further links following the First Minister's signing of the Memorandum of Understanding.</p> <p>- To take forward lessons from French Marina development that can be incorporated into the Marina Strategy for Wales.</p>
8 August 2005	Minister for Health and Social Services	Visit to Dublin	The Minister met with the Office of Tobacco Control and other relevant parties to discuss smoking in public places.	Increased awareness of wider impact of smoke free legislation and associated issues.
31 August 2005	First Minister	Meeting with Artis Pabriks Latvian Foreign Minister and HE Indulis Berzins Latvian Ambassador	The Foreign Minister was in Wales to attend the 'Gymnich.' The meeting was a good opportunity to discuss relations with Latvia.	
1 Sept 2005	First Minister	Co-host the lunch reception for Foreign Ministers at UK Presidency "Gymnich"	The First Minister co-hosted a reception for foreign ministers with the Foreign Secretary before hosting an evening reception for some 200 journalists from throughout the EU.	Raised the profile of Wales in playing a part in the EU Presidency.

1 Sept 2005	First Minister	Visit of His Excellency Carlos Miranda Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to the UK	A Courtesy call on the Ambassador's first visit to Wales.	Discussions revolved around the many links between Wales and Spain including Groupa Celsa, the Ford Plants in Bridgend and Valencia, Cardiff Wales Airport and the Memorandum of Understanding with Catalunia
4-7 Sept  2005	Local Government Public Services Committee	Visit to Denmark and Holland and Belgium	<p>The visit is to gather evidence for the scrutiny project into electoral arrangements.</p> <p>The itinerary included:</p> <p>A visit to Denmark to look at young people's participation in the electoral system;</p> <p>A visit to Brussels to look at bilingual voting and a possible meeting with EU Members and officials;</p> <p>A visit to Holland to look at their systems of electronic voting.</p>	
4-10 Sept 2005	Minister for Economic Development and Transport	Trade Mission to USA	<p>Minister led trade missions in San Francisco to promote inward investment and trade to Wales.</p> <p>Minister met with Sony CEO Sir Howard Stringer and the Consul General, Sir Philip Thomas in New York.</p>	

6 Sept 2005	First Minister	Meeting with His Excellency Herr Thomas Matussek  Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the UK	Meeting during a programme which included visits to the Royal Mint, Robert Bosch Ltd and Cardiff Bay Barrage.	Wide ranging discussion held including the relationship between Wales and Germany, integration of the former GDR, the imminent German elections and recent expansion of the EU.
8 Sept 2005	First Minister	Meeting with the Botswana/De Beers Mining Company	Visit to Wales by Botswana Government officials, representatives of De Beers and the Debswana mining Company to look at sustainable development and public/private sector partnership working.	Interesting discussions held covering issues such as the high instance of HIV/AIDS in Botswana & the responsibility of employers to protect and education their workforce, Cardiff University's mining dept (now closed), conversion of diamond wealth into infrastructure and the need for diversification.
8 Sept 2005	Alun Pugh AM	Visit of Chinese delegation	Examination of training facilities in advance of 2008 Olympic Games	

## Parliamentary Briefing Note

### College of Commissioners' Visti, 1 July 2005

The Commission visit on 1 July marked the start of the UK Presidency of the EU. The Prime Minister said that he was delighted that the Scottish and Welsh First Ministers were participating as well as UK Ministers.

HMG told Commissioners it would use the Presidency to:

- Try to reach a future financing deal
- Make progress on the Services and Working Time Directives, as well as the Better Regulation Agenda
- Take forward the G8 Africa and climate change agenda, as well as the Middle East Peace Process



- Build on the EU's work to counter terrorism, organised crime and illegal migration
- Take effective collective action on foreign policy and development issues, showing the EU's relevance to its citizens
- Uphold the EU's existing commitments on enlargement.

The Prime Minister announced that the UK would host an informal meeting of Heads of Government in the UK to build greater consensus on what constitutes an appropriate and competitive modern European social model. The meeting is likely to be at the end of October. No venue has yet been selected but the style of the meeting is likely to be country retreat.

The Prime Minister agreed to hold a Tripartite Social Summit before the informal Heads of Government meeting to inform discussion. The Commission will also produce a paper.

The Commission noted that the new Structural Funds Regulations would come to the Council for approval in October at the earliest and depended on agreement of the budget. Working up guidelines, frameworks and programmes could take up to two years. The Commission would do all it could to enable programmes to be put in place and expenditure made as quickly as possible. HMG underlined its commitment to agreeing the Regulations during the UK Presidency so that detailed planning could get underway as soon as agreement was reached on future financing.

The Commission undertook fully to support the UK Presidency and looked forward to it being a success.

The Scottish First Minister noted Scotland's important constitutional role on EU issues. The First Minister for Wales noted Wales' strong interest in an early budget settlement and speedy implementation of new structural funds programmes.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

21 July 2005