

# European and External Affairs Committee

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**Title: Report from the Wales Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association**

## **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this paper is to inform the Committee of the work of the Wales Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and to invite its feedback to the Branch as it develops its future policy, strategy and objectives.

## **Background**

2. The National Assembly for Wales has been a Member of the CPA since 1999. The CPA is a Commonwealth wide inter-parliamentary association. There are some 170 parliamentary branches at national and provincial level. Activity is co-ordinated by an International Secretariat based in London. The CPA aims to promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance. Wales is a Member of the British Islands and Mediterranean Grouping (BIMR) within the CPA. Further information on the CPA may be found at:

<http://www.cpahq.org>

3. All Assembly Members are automatically made members of the Branch on appointment. Branch activities are co-ordinated by an Executive Committee of four Assembly Members elected each year at an Annual General Meeting. The Branch is funded from the Assembly Commission budget. The Branch pays an annual membership subscription to the International Secretariat. The Branch provides an annual report to Assembly Members and occasional reports on specific events and activities. The Branch has recently migrated from the intranet to the Assembly website in order to make its activities more publicly available. Further information on the Wales Branch of the CPA may be found at:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/abthome/abt-nafw/abt-assembly-international/abt-international-cpa.htm>

4. This is the Branch's first presentation to the European and External Affairs Committee during the Third Assembly. The practice has developed of the Branch seeking to inform the Committee of its activities at least annually.

## **Activity**

5. The Branch provides a focus for the Assembly's relations with other Commonwealth legislatures and for the consideration of Wales' relations with other Commonwealth countries. A copy of the Annual Report approved at the November 2007 Branch AGM is attached at Appendix 1 as background.

6. Delegations are formed from Members to attend the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and the annual BIMR Regional Conference.

7. Tailored programmes are provided for visitors from other parts of the Commonwealth at the Assembly.

8. The Branch has developed a long term link with the Parliament of Lesotho. From March 8-14 the Branch will support an attachment programme for a Member and Clerk from the Senate's Committee on HIV/AIDS at the Assembly. This builds on a previous outward programme in October 2007 involving Mike German AM and John Grimes to deliver a training seminar for the National Assembly's new portfolio committees.

9. Individual Members have been supported through a Branch Fellowship Scheme to visit other Commonwealth parliaments and assemblies to learn from others and share experience. Members have also attended a range of seminars and conferences hosted by other branches.

10. Every year the Branch celebrates Commonwealth Day at the Assembly. This has provided opportunities to engage young people in the Assembly and Commonwealth issues. This year's celebration will be on Tuesday 11 March and will involve:

Schools from across Wales staging displays on the 2008 Commonwealth Day theme 'The Environment - Our Future';

A plenary debate on Wales and the Commonwealth;

A reception for non-government organisations, community associations and individuals linking Wales with the Commonwealth.

11. The Branch Executive Committee will consider a paper on policy, strategy and objectives together for the period until May 2011 at its 26 February meeting. This presentation offers an opportunity to review and discuss the Branch Executive's conclusions with the EAC. A copy of the paper is included at Appendix 2.

## **Summary / Recommendations**

12. The Wales Branch of the CPA forms an essential component of the Assembly's external relations. It provides an opportunity to

engage with other parliaments and assemblies and for the Assembly to act alongside others in contributing to the promotion of best practice in parliamentary democracy internationally. The review of policy and strategy provides an opportunity to establish focus to the Branch's activities to ensure it serves the best interests of the Assembly. The Committee's input represents an opportunity for consultation and feedback to inform this process.

## **Appendix 1**

### **COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES BRANCH EXECUTIVE REPORT TO THE AGM FOR THE PERIOD 1 NOVEMBER 2006 - 31 OCTOBER 2007**

#### **Background**

The National Assembly for Wales unanimously agreed a motion signed by the four party leaders to apply for admission to membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) on July 7 1999. Wales was formally welcomed into the CPA at the General Assembly meeting in Trinidad on 19 September 1999.

The Branch Executive meets once a term, on the basis that any other Branch Members who wish to be present are welcome to attend. An AGM of the whole Branch is held each autumn.

#### **Branch Structure**

##### **All Assembly Members**

"President:" The Rt. Hon the Lord Elis-Thomas PC AM

"Vice President:" Rosemary Butler AM

C"hair:" Alun Cairns AM

"Vice Chairs:

"Jeff Cuthbert AM ("Vice" John Griffiths AM from 24 October 2007)

Mike German AM

Janet Ryder AM ("Vice" Elin Jones AM from 24 October 2007)

"Secretary:

"Claire Clancy ("Vice" Paul Silk from 12 February 2007)

#### **CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Branch has maintained its position as an active Member of the CPA. It has sent delegates to conferences and seminars in the UK and overseas. It has built on the links established with the Parliament of Lesotho and has developed further experience in the provision of parliamentary strengthening programmes. The Branch has hosted a range of visitors from across the Commonwealth visiting the Assembly.

#### **ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING THE PERIOD OF THE REPORT:**

**Caribbean Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, 6-12 January 2007.** Supported by the Branch sponsorship scheme, Nick Bourne AM attended the 1<sup>st</sup> Caribbean Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference on the island of Trinidad and presented a paper on the 'Scrutiny and the Role of the Opposition'.

**Commonwealth Day, 13 March 2007.** Commonwealth Day was celebrated on Tuesday 13 March at the Assembly. A seminar was held in the Siambr Fach for students from Commonwealth countries studying in Wales. Over 20 countries were represented on the day with students coming from Aberystwyth, Bangor and south Wales universities to make presentations on the Commonwealth Day theme for 2007 'Respecting Difference: Promoting Understanding'. At the invitation of the CPA Headquarters Secretariat the Branch also sent two young people from Wales to attend the Commonwealth Day Observance in London.

**British Isles and Mediterranean Region Conference, 14-17 May 2007.** Rosemary Butler AM, Branch Vice President represented the Assembly at the British Isles and Mediterranean Region Conference hosted by the Northern Ireland Assembly in Stormont.

**Royal Opening of the Senedd, 4 June 2007.** Invitations were extended to Presidents of the Branches of the British Isles and Mediterranean Region of the CPA. The Isle of Man, Northern Ireland and Scotland Branches were all represented at the ceremony.

**Parliamentary Seminar Inward Visit, 19 July 2007.** The Branch hosted an inward visit to the Assembly by a delegation of some 35 parliamentarians attending a Parliamentary Seminar hosted by the CPA UK Branch at the Palace of Westminster. The Wales Branch provided a cross-party panel of Assembly Members to provide delegates with an introduction to Wales and Welsh politics and hosted a lunchtime reception attended by both the Presiding Officer and the First Minister.

**53<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, 21-30 September 2007.** The Deputy Presiding Officer led a delegation that also included Alun Cairns AM and Mohammad Asghar AM to attend the 53<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in New Delhi from 21-30 September.

**Parliamentary Strengthening in Lesotho, 29 September - 6 October 2007.** Mike German AM supported by Committee Clerk John

Grimes delivered a two day committee skills training seminar in Maseru for the Chairs and Clerks of the National Assembly's five new portfolio committees. The seminar also provided an opportunity to report back on the progress of education and health links between Wales and Lesotho.

**Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar, Edinburgh, 28 October - 3 November 2007.** The Deputy Presiding Officer attended a Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar hosted by the Scottish Parliament and chaired a workshop on 'Access to Information'.

**Miscellaneous Commonwealth Visitors to the Senedd.** The Branch provided Members to assist in the provision of programmes for Commonwealth visitors to the Assembly:

High Commissioner of Lesotho, 30 November 2006

Uganda Parliament, 5 December 2006

Tanzanian Government, 24 January 2007

Speaker of St Helena Legislative Council, 10 May 2007

Kwa Zulu Natal Provincial Legislature, 24 May 2007

Parliament of Western Australia, 31 May 2007

Sri Lankan Parliament, 2 July 2007

Nova Scotia Provincial Legislature, 13 July 2007

## **DEVELOPMENTS:**

**Change of Secretary.** Claire Clancy took over as Branch Secretary from Paul Silk on her appointment as Chief Executive and Clerk to the Assembly on 12 February 2007.

**Change of Branch Vice President.** Rosemary Butler AM took on the "Ex Officio" appointment of Branch Vice President on her appointment as Deputy Presiding Officer.

**Change of Branch Executive Vice Chairs.** Janet Ryder AM and Jeff Cuthbert AM took over Executive Committee responsibilities from Elin Jones AM and John Griffiths AM at the 24 October meeting of the Branch Executive. This was the first meeting of the Branch Executive after the appointment of Elin and John to Ministerial positions.

**Branch Representation on CPA Executive Committee.** The Branch took over responsibility for fielding a British Isles and Mediterranean Region representative to the CPA Executive Committee. Alun Cairns AM was nominated to provide the representative in his role as Branch Chair.

## **FORWARD LOOK:**

**Branch Sponsorship Scheme, (Ongoing).** Members are reminded of the availability of this scheme and encouraged to look for opportunities to apply for support for study visits to other Commonwealth Parliaments and Assemblies.

**Climate Change Seminar, 27-30 November 2007.** Darren Millar AM will represent the Branch at a seminar on Climate Change at the Westminster Parliament hosted by the CPA UK Branch.

**British Isles and Mediterranean Region Conference, 12-15 May 2008.** The Gibraltar Branch of the CPA will host the 39<sup>th</sup> BIMR Conference

**Commonwealth Day, 11 March 2008.** Commonwealth Day will be celebrated at the Senedd.

**Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, September 2008.** The 54<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in September 2008.

## **Appendix 2**

### **COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION WALES BRANCH POLICY AND STRATEGY**

#### **PURPOSE**

1. To establish policy and strategy guidelines and a provisional forecast of activity for the CPA Wales Branch for the period of the Third Assembly.

#### **BACKGROUND**

2. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) consists of the national, provincial, state and territorial legislatures of the Commonwealth. The CPA aims to promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance.

3. There are some 170 branches Commonwealth-wide. The National Assembly for Wales unanimously agreed a motion signed by the four party leaders to apply for admission to membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) on July 7 1999. Wales was formally welcomed into the CPA at the General Assembly meeting in Trinidad on 19 September 1999. The CPA is administered from an International Secretariat based in London. It is divided into nine geographic regions. The Wales Branch is a member of the British Islands and Mediterranean Region.

4. Since 1999 the Branch has been an active participant in the work of the CPA by:

sending delegates to the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and the annual BIMR Conference;

participating in parliamentary seminars and conferences organised by other branches;

hosting the 2002 BIMR Conference and a 2003 Commonwealth Secretariat / CPA conference at the Assembly;

accommodating requests from other CPA Branches to send individual members and delegations to visit the Assembly;

supporting Assembly Members' professional development through a Fellowship Scheme to support study visits to other parliaments;

co-ordinating an annual Commonwealth Day event at the Assembly involving young people;

engaging in a programme of exchange with the Parliament of Lesotho including parliamentary strengthening and raising awareness within the Assembly and across Wales of development issues within the Kingdom.

5. All Assembly Members are automatically made Members of the Branch. The Branch is funded from the Assembly Commission Budget. Activities are co-ordinated through a Branch Executive Committee of four Assembly Members elected at the Branch AGM. Secretariat support is provided from within the Assembly Staff. A website has recently been constructed to ensure Branch activity is carried out in an open and transparent manner <sup>(2)</sup>.

## **POINTS OF REFERENCE**

6. This plan takes two main points of reference from which policy, strategy and objectives derive:

The CPA International Secretariat corporate objectives for the period 2008-2012. These objectives are included for reference at Appendix 1.

The corporate objectives set by the Assembly Commission.

## **BRANCH POLICY**

7. The policy of the Branch is:

to strengthen parliamentary democracy and good governance in parliaments, legislatures and other democratically elected institutions throughout the Commonwealth and elsewhere;

to use the Commonwealth as a means of widening engagement in the work of the Assembly;

to work towards an informed parliamentary community;

to further co-operation among Commonwealth parliaments and legislatures;

to focus resource and activity on existing Welsh international links and on contemporary themes for the Assembly;

to deliver objectives mindful of the core values of the Assembly - in an open, transparent, sustainable and efficient manner.

## **STRATEGY**

8. The Wales Branch strategy achieves Branch policy by delivering a programme of focussed activity within a set of priorities and key objectives. Branch objectives and priorities will be reviewed at the beginning of each financial year, revised as necessary and published.

### **Objectives for 2008-2011:**

**Objective 1. To act as an advocate for participative parliamentary democracy by sharing experience and strengthening parliamentary capacity within the Commonwealth and elsewhere, focussing efforts where there are particular links with Wales. To include:**

Continuation of links and exchange with the Parliament of the kingdom of Lesotho. Delivering effective and sustainable programmes in Lesotho and Wales that strengthens the capacity of the parliament to serve its citizens;

Building on experience gained with Lesotho, develop a programme of parliamentary strengthening support to the (non-Commonwealth) Somaliland House of Representatives;

Deliver effective programmes for parliamentary visitors to the Assembly;

Working closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the CPA International Secretariat, government departments at UK and Wales level, the British Council, international parliamentary and democracy building organisations, other Commonwealth and non-government organisations and civil society.

Submitting themes for consideration at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference to cover; funding of political parties, encouraging public participation in politics and engagement with parliaments, representation and participation of women and young people in politics.

Raise the profile of the Assembly and its aspiration to widen engagement in politics within plans for celebration of the CPA centennial in 2011.

**Objective 2. To raise awareness of Wales' links to the Commonwealth and issues of Global Citizenship as a means of widening engagement in the work of the Assembly by:**

Delivering effective events and activities including annual Commonwealth Day celebration;

Working closely with parliamentary, Commonwealth, government departments, international organisations, non government organisations and civil society

**Objective 3. To work in co-operation with others towards an informed parliamentary community by:**

Delivering effective programmes and activities;

Active participation in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, British Isles and Mediterranean Region, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians and other conferences.

Explore the possibility of staging an event for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians conference at the Assembly.

**Objective 4. To deliver activity mindful of the core values of the Assembly - in an open, transparent, sustainable and efficient manner.**

Production and publication of an annual report of activities;

Posting of activity reports to website;

Balance income and expenditure and manage budget in line with Assembly Commission expectations;

Look for alternatives to air travel and ways of minimising impact wherever possible. Ensure carbon offsetting against necessary travel undertaken.