

EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

**Date:** 31 October 2002  
**Time:** 2:00pm  
**Venue:** Committee Room 3&4, National Assembly Building  
**Title:** WELSH REPRESENTATION, BRUSSELS

**INTRODUCTION**

1. This note provides an update on developments on the future shape of Welsh representation in Brussels. A further oral update will be provided at the meeting.

**BACKGROUND**

2. The paper I put to the Committee's meeting on 10 July (EUR-05-02(p6)) set out the proposed functions of the Assembly Government office in Brussels, and referred to the process by which the requirements of other Welsh interests were to be determined.

**DEVELOPMENTS**

3. The most significant development since July has been the decision of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to proceed with its withdrawal from the Wales European Centre (WEC) next March, and to establish its own dedicated presence in Brussels, co-located with other Welsh interests, while at the same time being open to joint working opportunities.

4. Following the WLGA decision, a number of discussions have explored options to ensure suitable representation of other Welsh interests, particularly the remaining WEC members. WEC members have been consulted on their preference with regard to two possible options – a federal office in which members would be free to employ staff in the Brussels premises, or a partnership body of a small group of key members, offering services to other bodies on the basis of Service Level Agreements. A WEC Board meeting is being held on 28 October to agree in principle on the preferred way forward. Further detailed discussions with other stakeholders, WLGA and the Assembly Government will follow, with a view to the WEC Board on 11 December taking a final decision.

5. As indicated in my paper to the July meeting, I have had discussions with a number of ASPBs about their requirements. I have made clear that the form of representation in Brussels is entirely a matter for them. I understand some of them would be interested in participating in whatever arrangement is put in place, outside the Assembly Government office.

6. I have also had discussions with the Deputy Presiding Officer about the needs of the Assembly as a corporate body. At the last meeting of the Committee the First Minister made clear his commitment to providing facilities and briefings for all Assembly members through the Assembly Government office in Brussels. The office of the Presiding Officer is still considering how the Assembly's needs could be met and no decision has yet been taken.

7. I will continue to keep Committee members informed of developments.

**MICHAEL GERMAN AM**

**DEPUTY MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**AND WALES ABROAD**

**OCTOBER 2002**