

COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Date: 25 November 1999

Time: 9.30 am

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

Title: REPORT ON THE WALES EUROPEAN FORUM ON FRIDAY, 22 OCTOBER 1999

Purpose

1. To report back on the first meeting of the Wales European Forum which took place on Friday 22 October 1999 and to provide an outline programme for the next meeting of the Forum in April 2000.

Recommendation

2. Committee members are invited to note the content of this report.

Background

3. The first meeting of the Wales European Forum on European Affairs was

held on Friday 22 October at Cardiff International Arena.

4. The Forum was attended by over 100 delegates from a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

5. The First Secretary gave a short opening address before introducing European Commission Vice President Neil Kinnock to deliver a speech about the new Commission's prospects and the implications for Wales. For the remainder of the day, delegates were divided into smaller working groups. Each group was given a presentation by an expert in their particular area on a number of issues on the European agenda, including Transport Policy, State Aid, Equal Opportunities and Welsh Representation in Brussels. The groups were then invited, through discussion, to explore those issues and report back to the Forum, via a rapporteur.

6. The day was generally well received and the working groups and plenary sessions

stimulated lively debate.

7. A full report of the proceedings is in preparation and will be circulated to all delegates and committee members shortly.

8. At its meeting on 14 October, the Committee agreed to hold a second

Forum in April 2000. It is proposed that the second meeting should take place towards the end of April 2000 in North Wales. Experience of the first Forum suggests that it would be preferable to complete the business in a half-day, and a morning session is proposed (to be followed by a buffet lunch). A suggested overall theme for the Forum is "Europe and Business". The Forum will be based on a similar format to the October meeting, involving a mixture of plenary and working group sessions. Invitations to attend will be extended to a wide range of private sector bodies and organisations as well as to public bodies working in the field of business and economic development. Suggested themes for the working group sessions are "The Euro and Business in Wales", "The Impact of European Legislation on Business" and "European Union Enlargement and its implications for Welsh Business". A programme for the half day conference is being prepared.