

### Welcome to our committee update

This update of the Committee's recent activities is aimed at widening engagement in the Committee's work and helping you to provide information and expertise to officials and Members. It has been produced by the Clerking team which supports the Committee.

It has been another busy term very much framed by the Pandemic. The main focus of activity for the Committee has been around how COVID-19 recovery should look. Members also took evidence from Transport for Wales on future of the Rail Franchise, the author of an OECD report on Wales' economic development and held their annual scrutiny session with the Development Bank of Wales. Full details on all of these are below.

The Committee's twitter feed [@SeneddEIS](#) carries all our latest news, and details of inquiries and future committee meetings. It will help keep you informed of consultation deadlines and other developments and decisions taken in light of Covid-19. The Committee wishes all its stakeholders well at this difficult time.

### Work undertaken – Autumn 2020

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#### Covid-19 Recovery

The Committee kicked off the autumn term with its [COVID-19 recovery inquiry](#): looking at what recovery should look like, and how Welsh Government could “build back better”.

On [16 September](#) a panel of academics and think tanks discussed the pandemic's effects on the Welsh economy, businesses and young people. Professor Dylan Jones-Evans from the University of South Wales highlighted the importance of digital skills and David Hagendyk, Director for Wales Learning and Work Institute called for greater investment in adult education and skills.

On [23 September](#), a panel of business representatives and trade unions gave us their take. Leighton Jenkins of CBI Wales highlighted the huge amount of uncertainty facing businesses, concerns shared by Amy Bainton of FSB Wales, who also brought the long-term impact of remote working to the forefront of discussions.

Remote working and its impact was also a feature of our [30 September](#) session on transport recovery. Members heard evidence from stakeholders including Transform Cymru and Transport Focus, giving a better understanding of passenger behaviour throughout the pandemic and the impact on Wales' transport system. David Beer from Transport Focus highlighted the significant drop in passenger numbers and stressed the importance of encouraging passengers to travel again.

On **7 October** representatives of sectors hit hardest by the pandemic, such as retail, hospitality and manufacturing, talked Members through the greatest challenges facing them, and the effectiveness of measures put in place by Welsh Government. Although the Economic Resilience Fund was very much welcomed, witnesses painted a bleak picture, and called for further measures to kickstart recovery.

On **14 October**, Members looked at how we could ensure no one was left behind by the recovery. This session focused on how to tackle youth unemployment and how to ensure people with protected characteristics were given the support they need to prosper in the 'new normal.' This highlighted how the pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and the importance of ensuring minority groups are fully supported on the road to recovery.

Ensuring a recovery for all was also the focus on **4 November**, along with a 'green recovery'. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, who called for greater investment from Welsh Government in housing, broadband and infrastructure, was joined by Friends of the Earth Cymru and RSPB Cymru, all stressing the need to address the climate emergency in recovering from the public health emergency.

On **11 November**, the Committee took evidence from the Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales and Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, and now aims to report on this inquiry early in the New Year.

## Development Bank of Wales

Annual scrutiny with the **Development Bank of Wales on 11 November** covered a lot of ground, from recent loans to

businesses to future priorities, the impact of remote working, and equality issues.

## Decarbonisation of Transport

On 9 September, Welsh Government **responded** to the Committee's **report** on Decarbonisation of Transport. All 16 **recommendations** were accepted and a plenary debate was held on **2 December**.

## Procurement in the Foundational Economy



On 17 September, the Committee received a **response** to its **report** on the role of public procurement in the foundational economy, and a plenary debate was held on **11**

**November**.

## Barriers facing small home building firms

The Committee put forward ten recommendations to Welsh Government in its **report**. Welsh Government accepted nine of these on **23 September**.

## Rail moves into public ownership

Following the **22 October** announcement that the Wales and Borders Rail Services would be transferred to public ownership

Members invited James Price, the Chief Executive for Transport for Wales (TfW), for an urgent session covering the transfer on [18 November](#). The Committee will be following developments closely.

## Regional Skills Partnerships

At the same [18 November](#) meeting, representatives from Regional Skills Partnerships discussed how the pandemic might affect Wales' skills requirements and their response to the pandemic and skills required for recovery.

## Degree Apprenticeships



On 27 November, the Committee published its [report](#) (PDF 1 MB) which contained 12 recommendations. The Government's response is expected in late January 2021.

## OECD Report on Regional Investment

The Committee was briefed by the author of an OECD report: **“The Future of Regional Development and Public Investment in Wales, United Kingdom”**, commissioned by Welsh Government. The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales told the Committee on [25 November](#) that he was giving serious consideration to the recommendations, including the proposal to create a new Regional Development body.

## Forward Work Plan

### Remote Working: Implications for Wales

On [7 December](#) the Committee launched a [consultation](#) for its inquiry into Welsh Government's ambition for 30% of Welsh workers to continue to work remotely in future, either from home or from local 'community hubs'. The Committee will examine the potential effects of the policy for Wales, including positive and negative impacts on the economy, business, town and city centres, workforce and skills, health and wellbeing, inequalities, the environment and transport. **Consultation closes on 17 January 2021**, with oral evidence sessions in December and January.

### Budget Scrutiny

On 13 January the Committee will undertake annual scrutiny of Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2021-22.

### South East Wales Transport Commission

On 20 January the Committee will receive a briefing from Lord Burns on the Commission's final [report](#) and recommendations.

For the latest information on the Committee's work programme in 2021 please follow us on [Twitter](#) or check our [webpage](#) for updates.

## Remit

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The Committee was established on 28 June 2016 to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters, encompassing (but not restricted to): economic development; transport; infrastructure; employment; skills; and research and development, including technology and science.

## Contact details

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## Committee Members

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Committee Chair:  
**Russell George MS**  
Welsh Conservatives



**Suzy Davies MS**  
Welsh Conservatives



**Hefin David MS**  
Welsh Labour



**Vikki Howells MS**  
Welsh Labour



**Joyce Watson MS**  
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**Helen Mary Jones MS**  
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