

Welsh Parliament

Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

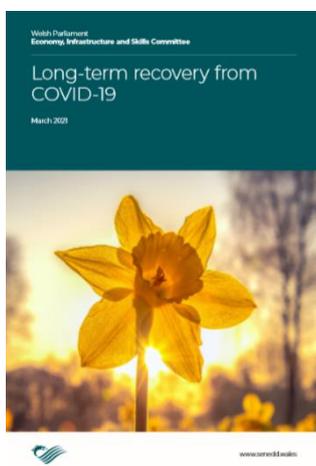
Welcome to our committee update

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.

On 7 April the Senedd enters its 'pre-dissolution period' and all committee activity will cease ahead of the election which is scheduled for 6 May. As a result this will be our last committee update. We hope you have found them useful, if you have any feedback please let us know using the contact details below.

Response to Covid-19

Throughout the Spring term, with Covid restrictions in place the Committee continued to meet weekly via video link on Zoom. On **3 February** the Committee took evidence from the Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales, Ken Skates, and Deputy Minister Lee Waters, on the latest position with COVID-19 business support. This was followed up again on **10 March** at the Committee's final ministerial scrutiny session of this Fifth Senedd.



The Committee published its report - "**Long-term recovery from COVID-19**" on 4 March. The report sets out a holistic approach to recovery for the entire Committee's

remit and includes 53 recommendations on how Wales' recovery should look for Wales' economy, infrastructure and skills. Members debated the Report in Plenary on **9 March**. The report sets out a long term view of recovery so the recommendations will be for the next Welsh Government to implement.

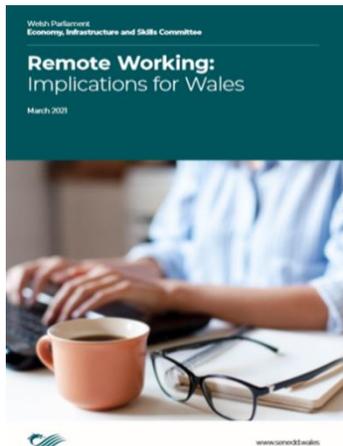
Remote Working: Implications for Wales

The Committee concluded its inquiry into Welsh Government's long-term ambition for 30% of Welsh workers to continue working from home or close to home, including at community-based hubs. On **13 January**, representatives from urban centres and community hubs discussed the impacts of remote working on Wales' towns and cities.

On **27 January** Members focused on equality issues and also took **evidence** from a panel of experts in Finland and

the Netherlands to gain an international perspective on homeworking. On [3 February](#), the Committee spoke with representatives from the bus industry, including Jane Reakes-Davies – Managing Director of First Cymru Buses. Witnesses highlighted the impacts of homeworking on the bus industry and gave their take on Welsh Government support, including the Emergency Bus Scheme.

On [24 February](#), Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport Lee Waters, and Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government Hannah Blythyn, discussed the implications of the remote working proposals. Lee Waters said the Committee’s recommendations would be “very helpful” in shaping the policy on remote working.



On 10 March, the Committee published its [report](#). It covered a lot of ground including the effects of remote working on mental health and

wellbeing of workers, the environment, businesses and communities. The report sets out 15 recommendations aimed at ensuring the incoming Welsh Government fully addresses the far-reaching socio-economic impacts of increased remote working.

The Committee commissioned two pieces of academic research, led by [Professor Alan Felstead of Cardiff University](#), and [Dr Darja Reuschke](#) of

the University of Southampton, and their papers were published alongside the Committee’s own report. As the report was issued so close to the end of the Fifth Senedd, a 30 minute plenary debate on the Committee’s recommendations was secured on 17 March.

[South East Wales Transport Commission](#)

On [13 January](#), Members were briefed by Lord Burns, Chair of the South East Wales Transport Commission, on the Commission’s final [report](#) findings and recommendations.

[Welsh Government Draft Budget: 2021-2022](#)

On [20 January](#), the Committee was joined by the Minister for Economy Transport and North Wales and Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport for scrutiny of the Welsh Government’s Draft Budget for 2021-22. On 5 February, the Committee published its scrutiny [report](#) on the budget and the successor Committee will address the response received from the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd on [5 March 2021](#).

[Degree Apprenticeships](#)

On 29 Jan, the Committee received a [response](#) to its report on Degree Apprenticeships. All 12 recommendations were accepted by Welsh Government.

[Broadband connectivity and closing the digital divide](#)

Members welcomed BT Wales, Openreach and Ofcom Wales to

Committee on **10 February** to give an update on broadband and connectivity issues. Kim Mears OBE, Managing Director at Openreach confirmed that Openreach was “on track” to meet the deadline of March 2021 to connect 26,000 premises.

City and Growth Deals Update

On **3 March**, the Committee held its annual session on the progress of City and Growth Deals across Wales. Witnesses updated Members on how the Deals had evolved over the course of the year and highlighted where more progress was needed.

Legacy Reporting

The Committee held its final meeting in private on 17 March and agreed its legacy report. The report was published on **26 March**. It summarises the Committee’s work over five years and suggests priorities for the work of the successor Committee. The Committee regrets not being able to engage more fully with stakeholders in preparing its legacy report under the pressures of the pandemic, but hopes it gives a solid basis for the successor Senedd Committee(s) to set their own strategic direction.

A Big Thank You to Stakeholders

The Committee is supported by an integrated team of clerks, researchers, lawyers, translators and interpreters, and specialists in broadcast, ICT, digital and graphic design, communications and citizen engagement. We join

Members in thanking stakeholders for their strong engagement with Committee work over the past five years. Your contributions have helped Members to better scrutinise and hold the Welsh Government to account, and have informed their recommendations to influence and steer Welsh Government policy. We look forward to continued strong relationships with all those with an interest in policy and legislation on the economy, infrastructure and skills in the Sixth Senedd.

Remit

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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