

Mark Drakeford MS  
First Minister  
Welsh Government

8 October 2021

## Ministerial scrutiny of international relations

Dear Mark,

The Committee extends its thanks to the Welsh Government officials who attended its meeting on Wednesday 15 September 2021 to provide Members with a technical briefing. As outlined to officials in the meeting, the Committee would be grateful for further information on a number of matters arising following the session. These are outlined under the relevant subheadings below.

### International strategy

The Committee notes that the Welsh Government launched its international strategy in January 2020, at a time when there was a dedicated minister for the subject. The Committee also note that a number of areas previously within the remit of a dedicated international relations minister now sit within your portfolio. Given the length of time that has passed since the strategy was launched and the absence of a dedicated minister for international relations, please could you indicate how international relations and engagement is being coordinated across government?

The Committee also requests the following information in relation to the strategy:

- an outline of the progress made against each action plan as well as how progress will be measured over the course of their lifespan;
- an outline of the budget and resource allocations for the previous and current financial year for the strategy and each of the action plans. Where possible, this information should outline how funding and resources is shared between each of the action plans. If there are also other budgets allocated towards other international activity within Welsh Government, the Committee would be grateful for this information also; and
- an outline of how money spent by the Welsh Government on its international relations work has changed year on year since June 2016.

### Overseas offices

You will be aware that in the Fifth Senedd, the Welsh Government provided the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee with quarterly performance reports on the activity of its overseas offices. This Committee requests that this arrangement continue during the Sixth Senedd through the publication of an annual report instead of quarterly. To assist the Committee in its scrutiny of the work of the overseas offices, it would be grateful if the report could outline the progress made by each office against the objectives they have been set, as well as the number of staff and budget allocated for each overseas office.

### **Wales in Europe and priority regional and country relationships**

The Committee notes how responsibility for 'Wales in Europe' is a dedicated part of your portfolio and the Programme for Government states that the Government will retain an office in Brussels.

Please could you provide information on:

- if the Welsh Government intends to publish a Wales in Europe strategy reflecting the new UK-EU arrangements; and
- the Welsh Government's current and future engagement with EU institutions.

### **Covid-19 pandemic**

With regards to the Covid-19 pandemic, could you describe:

- how, the pandemic has impacted on the Welsh Government's delivery of the international strategy and its wider international engagement activities; and
- the long term impact of the use of digital engagement on the Welsh Government's communication and engagement with international partners? Related to this, the Committee would also welcome your assessment of the impact of the pandemic on maintaining existing relationships as well as the Welsh Government's ability to forge new relationships.

### **Other areas**

As you will be aware, the Committee has an expansive remit which also includes culture, communication, the Welsh language and sport. As a result, the Committee is eager to explore the role of international relations through the prism of the other portfolios within its remit. The Committee would be grateful if you could:

- outline the short and medium term priorities for international relations within these portfolio areas; and
- provide an update on any assessments of soft power carried out by the Welsh Government, including its participation in any recent or upcoming studies and/or surveys.

### **Attendance at meetings**

The Committee requests an opportunity to discuss the matters outlined above with you. The Committee is scheduled to meet on the following dates:

- 10 November 2021
- 24 November 2021
- 8 December 2021

- 15 December 2021
- 19 January 2022
- 2 February 2022
- 2 March 2022
- 16 March 2022

If none of the scheduled dates are suitable, the Committee can request an additional meeting slot in order to accommodate your availability.

I would be grateful if you could respond to this letter by no later than 5 November 2021.

Yours sincerely,



Delyth Jewell MS

Chair

Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

