



Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref

Delyth Jewell MS  
Chair  
Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport  
and International Relations Committee

01 November 2021

Dear Chair

I am writing in response to your letter of 8 October which requested further information on our international relations work following your session with my officials in September.

### International Strategy, Action Plans and Overseas Offices

The decision to move International Relations into the First Minister's portfolio allows me to lead on the delivery of our international work across government. I have a dedicated department which oversees the delivery of our international work as outlined in our International Strategy. The department takes forward our international engagement through the activity set out in our action plans, it delivers our Wales and Africa activity led by the Minister for Social Justice, and it supports Welsh exporters, works with inward investors and develops an effective trade policy for Wales under the Minister for Economy. The department also works across Welsh Government in areas such as Climate Change, Education, Science and Innovation, Major Events, Culture, Sport, Welsh Language and Communications to support their international work where appropriate. All of our cross-government work is brought together through the action plans which were published at the end of 2020 and provide more detail on the delivery activity contained within the International Strategy.

Each of the action plans contains a series of short and long term objectives which contain a mix of tangible and intangible outcomes. Where outcomes are tangible, such as our ambition to create a global network of 500,000 Welsh diaspora, measurable targets are in place at key points throughout the five year lifespan of the International Strategy. We also have KPIs in place with third party delivery partners where applicable.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

[Gohebiaeth.Mark.Drakeford@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Mark.Drakeford@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I note the Committee’s request for an annual report in relation to the activity of our Overseas Network and my officials will provide this information at the end of the financial year.

Budgets

An outline of the budget allocated to fund our International Engagement activity since 2016-17 is set out below:

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Budget</b> |
|-------------|---------------|
| 2016-17     | £390,000      |
| 2017-18     | £410,000      |
| 2018-19     | £355,000      |
| 2019-20     | £920,000      |
| 2020-21     | £1,848,000    |
| 2021-22     | £3,220,000    |

The reason for the increase in funding in 2020-21 and 2021-22 was an increase in budget agreed as part of the International Strategy.

This is further broken down for the last two financial years by action plan, and cross-cutting activity, as follows:

|   | <b>2020-21</b>    | <b>2021-22</b>    |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Priority Regional Relationships and Networks  | £30,000           | £100,000          |
| Public Diplomacy and Soft Power   | £1,274,000        | £1,332,000        |
| Diaspora Engagement   | £180,000          | £260,000          |
| Wales and Africa – contribution to the separate Wales and Africa budget to deliver extra support to the Size of Wales Mbale Tree Planting programme – a commitment in the International Strategy. | £350,000          | £350,000          |
| Cross-cutting activity  | £14,000           | £1,178,000        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>£1,848,000</b> | <b>£3,220,000</b> |

The International Engagement budget funds activity including bilateral engagement, St David’s Day, international celebrations such as Diwali, major international events (e.g. World Expo, Rugby World Cup), initiatives such as our Wales in Germany 2021 programme, marketing, communications and our diaspora contracts. Our overseas network of offices supports this activity, as does the International Relations team in Wales working with stakeholders in Welsh Government, Wales and internationally.

Wales and Europe

The relationship with the EU continues to evolve post-Brexit and, whilst we continue to consider what Wales wishes to achieve through its European engagement, the context is also evolving given ongoing difficulties in the EU-UK relationship. I look forward to a considered, engaged and business-like approach from the UK Government, particularly around the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA). However, until this is better resolved and there is a stable relationship between the EU and the UK, our strategic approach will be lacking a key foundation. Nevertheless, I do believe that it is helpful to be clear about what the principles and purpose of our European engagement are, and to continue to develop these in a transparent and concrete way. Our approach is governed by the recognition of the need for positive engagement with Europe, on the basis of the principles and for the

reasons set out in my [January 2021 letter to Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen](#). As I said there, I want Wales to “play a constructive role as a bridge between the EU and those in the UK who continue to be guided by the sound principles that have helped to found and to develop the EU’s policy-making, as well as ours.”

The EU-UK relationship continues to evolve. Our future engagement with the institutions will therefore also evolve, particularly the way that UK Government and Devolved Administrations work with the specialised committees, and similar entities, established under the TCA. In the meantime, officials maintain formal contact with institutions where possible and appropriate; but also with the individuals who make up those institutions such as MEPs, individual officials and Brussels representatives of Governments. The imminent appointment of the Welsh Government’s Representative on Europe, recently advertised, will add a positive and significant extra dimension to this.

## Covid-19

The action plans, which support the International Strategy, were developed against a backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and published in November 2020. They have been developed with Covid-19 in mind and take into account the restrictions placed upon us with regards to the travel and face to face meetings that are associated with developing our international relations.

The pandemic has resulted in a shift to digital-first communication in the international sphere. Since March 2020, we have successfully delivered a series of digital engagements, including the Wales in Germany 2021 themed year, Diwali 2020 and digital events to celebrate St David’s Day. This approach has enabled us to engage with more people internationally and reduced barriers to engagement, such as cost and time to travel. This experience has been valuable and will have a lasting impact on the way we work – hybrid events will be the future, delivering engaging experiences to digital and in-person audiences.

However, it has also been very clear during this period that face-to-face meetings and events are still important to deepen our existing relationships and forge new ones. These benefits cannot be replaced by purely digital engagement – hence the continued importance of our overseas offices.

## Other Areas

The priorities for our cross-cutting international work are contained within the [International Relations through Public Diplomacy and Soft Power action plan](#) published in 2020. This sets out our work using Sport, Culture and the Welsh Language as a means to develop our international relations as well as the communications and branding used to amplify our messaging. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic remains at the forefront of our approach to undertaking our international activity and, where necessary, we will adapt our approach to take account of any limitations placed on us either here in Wales or overseas.

The [2020 Anholt Ipsos Nations Brand Index \(NBI\) report](#) was published in September 2021 and is an assessment of Wales’ international and domestic reputation. 2020 was the first year that Wales took part in the NBI so this sets the baseline for any future surveys and studies.

Future Meetings

Finally, I note the list of dates that you have provided in order to facilitate my appearance before the Committee. My Diary Secretary will respond in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**MARK DRAKEFORD**