

Committee update

Autumn 2023 – Spring 2024

Welcome to our sixth committee update

This is the sixth bulletin for the Senedd's Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee. It provides an overview of the Committee's recent activities and planned work to help you stay up to date and engage with the Committee's work.

It has been produced by the Clerking team which supports the Committee. If you have any feedback, please let us know using the contact details below.

Contact details

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Current Work

Budget Scrutiny

The Committee kicks off the spring term with scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2024-25 and will report by Monday 5 February in time for a plenary debate on the Draft Budget on Tuesday 6 February.

Development Bank of Wales

The Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the [Development Bank of Wales](#) and will be holding oral evidence sessions in Spring 2024.

A [consultation](#) is currently live and will run until 4 January 2024.

Research and Development

The Committee held a [consultation](#) as part of a one-day inquiry into [Research and Development](#), which ran from 4 October to 15 November and received 15 responses.

At its meeting on [30 November](#), the Committee received oral evidence from Funding bodies, higher education organisations, and businesses.

A short report will be published in 2024.

Nuclear Power and the Welsh Economy

The Committee held a [one-day inquiry](#) at its meeting on [26 October](#) and received evidence from the Nuclear industry and unions, nuclear development companies, Anglesey County Council and Ambition North Wales, and academics.

A short report will be published in January 2024.

Future of Welsh Steel

The Committee held a series of evidence sessions focusing on the future of Welsh steel. It heard from the Secretary of State for Wales at its meeting on [28 September 2023](#). The Committee then received evidence from the Minister for Economy at its meeting on [11 October 2023](#), and then met with the trade unions – GMB, Unite, and Community Union at its meeting on [30 November](#).

Cost of Living

The Committee's focus on skills included following up its work on [Cost of Living](#) pressures and progress with the Young Persons Guarantee. On [28 September](#) Members heard from Careers Wales, training providers and the WLGA, following on from the [Cost of Living pressures and the Young Persons Guarantee session](#) held on 24 November 2022.

The Committee wrote to Welsh Government to follow up on 26 October and received a response on 23 November.

Recent Activities

City and Growth Deals

At its meeting on 13 September the Committee received updates on City and Growth Deal activity in each of the four economic regions of Wales:

Mid Wales Growth Deal
Cardiff Capital Region City Deal
Swansea Bay City Deal
North Wales Growth Deal

Trade and Ports

As a follow-up to Members' visit to the Port of Holyhead in June, the Committee held a session on Trade and Ports this term. The Committee discussed the Border Target Operating Model and the Windsor Framework with the Minister for Economy, Katy Hayward, Professor of Political Sociology at Queens University Belfast, and Andrew Potter, Professor of Transport and Logistics at Cardiff University on 11 October.

Post-EU regional development funding



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The Committee published its report into Post-EU regional development funding on 12 September 2023.

The Committee received responses to its recommendations from the UK Government and from Welsh Government.

A debate was held in Plenary on Wednesday 8 November 2023.

Visit to Brussels



Committee Members visited Brussels on 15 and 16 November.

The primary purpose was a fact finding mission to meet with key MEPs and organisations who work in areas related to the Committee’s remit, including trade, agriculture, fisheries and research and development.

Members also met with representatives from the UK Mission to the EU (UKREP), governments and organisations with whom the Welsh Government has strategic partnerships. These included:

- François Alfonsi MEP – Member of the Regional Development Committee (REGI) and the Foreign Affairs Committee
- Louisa Santos – Deputy Director of Business Europe, Zoe Compston – Counsellor Goods, Health and Environment, UK Mission to the EU

- Eleanor Vaughan – Head of Office, and Gavin Lewis – Head of Economic, Social and Regional Policy, Welsh Government Office in Brussels
- Branwen Miles – Senior Policy Advisor, Oana Neagu – Director of General Affairs, Ksenija Simovic – Senior Policy Advisor for Trade and International Affairs, Niall Curley – Soil and Biodiversity, Thomas Sanchez – Livestock and Interim Animal Welfare & Phytosanitary – Copa-Cogeca, European representative body for farming and farming unions
- Katy Adams – Senior Policy Officer, British Agricultural Bureau
- Fergus McReynolds – Director of EU Affairs, Institute of Export and International Trade
- Catherine Marston – Strategic Development Officer, Welsh Higher Education Brussels.

A wide range of issues were discussed during the visit. These included the relationship between Wales, the UK and the EU, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement including fisheries aspects, the Border Target Operating Model; Welsh representation on the UK Domestic Advisory Group, and issues relating to tariffs and rules of origin on batteries and electric vehicles;

Agricultural issues including reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, nature restoration measures and the sustainability agenda, and organics equivalence; and Higher Education and research and innovation, including the Taith international exchange programme, and opportunities for collaboration through the Horizon programme.

This visit helped to strengthen links between the Committee and its EU counterparts and relevant organisations at a European level.

UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly



The Committee Chair has been represented on the UK-EU PPA on an alternate basis by Luke Fletcher and Sam Kurtz. The Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, Huw Irranca-Davies MS, also attends. The most recent meeting was held at the House of Lords on 5-6 December and a report of that meeting will be published in due course. The last report was noted

by the Committee on 26 October and the First Minister's response on 30 November.

General Ministerial Scrutiny

The Committee continues to hold regular scrutiny sessions with the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd, and the Minister for Economy.

The Committee held a general scrutiny session with both Ministers on Wednesday 13 December.

Forward Work Programme

The Committee has agreed its work programme into Spring 2024. The published work programme indicates the current intentions of the Committee at the time of publishing; however, it may change at any time to respond to external events. The Committee's work is expected to include looking at the Sustainable Farming Scheme and support for farmers, including the Habitat Wales scheme and Farming Connect; the Green Economy and skills for net zero; support for apprenticeships; the Future of Welsh Steel; access to banking; and Trade issues including implementation of the Windsor Framework, the Border Target Operating Model and trade agreements.

Remit

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021, with a remit encompassing (but not restricted to): economic development, regeneration, skills, trade, research, and development (including technology and science), and rural affairs.

Committee Members



Committee Chair:
Paul Davies MS
Welsh Conservatives



Hefin David MS
Welsh Labour



Luke Fletcher MS
Plaid Cymru



Samuel Kurtz MS
Welsh Conservatives



Vikki Howells MS
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