

Y Gwir Anrh/ Rt Hon Eluned Morgan AS/MS
Prif Weinidog Cymru/First Minister of Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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

SeneddCulture@senedd.wales

28 January 2025

Dear Delyth,

I am writing in response to your letter of 23 December, which requested further information following my attendance at the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister on 13 December 2024.

The answers to each of your questions have been set out in the annex to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan

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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.

Annex A - Response

International Strategy and Delivery Plan

As we approach five years since publication of the International Strategy, I have asked my officials to prepare a Delivery Plan which will set out our key priorities for the coming year. It will set out where we can have the maximum impact on the global stage. I plan to share this with the Committee in the coming weeks.

In addition to sharing the document, I would be happy to request that officials provide the Committee with a technical briefing prior to the release of the Delivery Plan.

Progress against the actions supporting the International Strategy and accompanying action plans

As I have previously explained, the world has changed dramatically since the launch of the International Strategy. We have faced significant geopolitical shifts, a global pandemic, and a war in Europe. These events have necessitated a flexible and adaptive approach from both the Government and the Strategy itself. Consequently, some of the actions outlined in the 2020 document are no longer relevant or feasible and we have progressed in areas that were not identified five years ago such as sports diplomacy and also gender equality in sub-Saharan Africa. These women's empowerment projects have delivered life-changing impacts: providing better livelihoods for women, promoting gender integration to fight the effects of climate change, challenging FGM practices, gender based violence, period dignity barriers, and helping girls to complete their education.

Inward investment is not mentioned in detail in the International Strategy; however, since its publication, inward investment results show that there have been more than 215 investment projects from foreign-owned companies, which have created, retained and/or safeguarded more than 20,000 jobs. In 2020, the number of foreign-owned companies in Wales was 1,315, whereas the latest figures available (2023) show that Wales is home to more than 1,480 foreign-owned companies, employing almost 175,000 people and demonstrating a confidence in Wales as a place to do business.

As I mentioned during my appearance before the Committee, my priority is for officials to focus on delivering tangible outcomes rather than reviewing or rewriting existing strategies. Instead, we will provide a comprehensive overview that clearly demonstrates progress against the international strategy's three core objectives.

The measurable economic outputs of the International Strategy will be reported as usual. Inward investment results will be published annually by the Department for Business and Trade, while export statistics will be released quarterly by HMRC. In addition to these measurable outputs, our annual report provides information on the areas which are difficult to measure, in particular by highlighting the success of certain initiatives through the use of case studies.

Raising Wales' profile and positioning it as a globally responsible nation are, by their nature, difficult to measure. Nonetheless, we will prioritise promoting Welsh soft power, as it enhances Wales' reputation, builds goodwill, and creates valuable opportunities, with long-term benefits outweighing these challenges. We have a very important year ahead as we celebrate and build links between Wales and Japan but also mark 'first ever moments' including the Women's Football Team playing at the European Championships in Switzerland and the hosting of an investment summit in Wales.

The Committee will be aware that five Action Plans underpin the International Strategy, and officials will continue to report on these Action Plans, as they have done to date through our Annual Report.

Delivering the International Strategy across government

In addition to the International Relations and Trade Directorate, the main directorates responsible for delivering against the ambitions in the Strategy are:

- Business & Regions
- Communities and Equalities
- Culture, Sport & Tourism
- Circular Economy
- Education
- Energy & Climate Change
- Health
- Marketing & Brand
- Sustainable Futures
- Welsh Language Policy

Priorities for the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) review

The initial priorities set out in the letter of the 20 June included:

- The need for a veterinary and plant health (SPS) agreement.
- Addressing issues relating to mobility of workers and provision of services.
- The need for improved arrangements on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications.
- Exploring options to re-join EU programmes such as Erasmus and Creative Europe.

In addition to these priorities, we have also identified several additional areas where discussions could focus, including:

- Ensuring retention of EU Data Adequacy for Welsh businesses trading with the EU.
- Seeking Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs), particularly on conformity assessments to reduce trade friction.
- Addressing export issues around Live Bivalve Molluscs (LBMs)
- Discussions around rules of origin to enable businesses to use increased supply chains and trade tariff free.
- Effective electricity trading arrangements.

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning and I have met with the UK Government and set out the Welsh Government's priorities.

Welsh Government technical briefing about the TCA implementation review

The EU and UK have not yet agreed the terms of references for the implementation review of the TCA and no negotiations have taken place. Therefore, at this point in time, there is very little we can brief the Committee on.

Expectations are that the review of the TCA will primarily focus on a review of the implementation of the existing agreement; as such, expectations are that significant changes being made to the text of the agreement are unlikely. I will ensure that my officials provide you with the technical briefing, based on the terms of references for the review, once they are known.

Evaluation of the 'Wales in France' year.

The evaluation of the Wales in France was always intended as an internal document to inform and continue to improve our approach to the in year campaigns, but I have asked my officials to cover the findings of the report as part of the technical briefing to the Committee on the Delivery Plan.

Engagement with the UK Government for 'Wales In' 2026

We are going through a period of increasing dialogue with the FCDO on range of international issues including our 'Wales and...' years. This relationship is important to align our international activity and explore how the FCDO can support the Welsh Government's international objectives. For instance, officials are actively engaged in discussions on the UK Government's Soft Power Council and International Education Strategy, ensuring that Welsh priorities are effectively represented in these workstreams.

Plans for 'Wales In' years including future locations

The evaluations of the "Wales in..." years play a significant role in shaping the planning and programming for future initiatives. Each year is different, and it remains a relatively new initiative. Over the past five years we have learned a great deal with the early years of Germany and Canada being impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. With this context in mind, we are continuously learning and refining our approach each year, building on the successes achieved so far. Evaluations remain a crucial element of this process, helping us to adapt and improve over time. An example of how findings of evaluations have influenced plans for our now 'Wales and' years include the change from the word 'in' to using 'and' to highlight the relationship between both countries.

Welsh Government Representative on Europe

The role of the European Representative is unique in nature and has been celebrated by other Devolved Nations, and wider international counterparts, as an innovative way in which to promote Wales' interests and engage with European institutions and networks. I am pleased to announce that Derek will continue in this role until January 2026.