

# Cross-Party Group Minutes

## Cross Party Group Details

**Cross Party Group Title:**

**Senedd Cross Party Group for Europe**

**Date and time of meeting:**

Tuesday 2nd December 2025 12.30 to 1.20pm

**Location and state of holding (in-person/ remote/ hybrid):**

Conference Room A, Ty Hywel – in-person and hybrid

**Was the meeting an Annual General Meeting:**

Yes

No

**Name of Group Chair:**

Mick Antoniw, Senedd Member

**Name of Secretary and Organisation:**

Dr Caroline Turner & Elizabeth Lendering, Wales for Europe

**In Attendance - Name/title/organisation:**

Mick Antoniw Senedd Member

Cefin Campbell Senedd Member

Adam Price Senedd Member

Anthony Slaughter, Leader Wales Green Party and President Wales for Europe

Geraint Talfan Davies, Wales for Europe

Dr Caroline Turner, Wales for Europe

Elizabeth Lendering, Wales for Europe

Katie James, Wales Arts International

## **Apologies**

Delyth Jewell, Senedd Member

Alun Davies Senedd Member

Dr Charles Smith, Wales for Europe

## **Summary of meeting:**

**2. Minutes** – Minutes of the meeting 14<sup>th</sup> October 2025 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

All actions completed.

## **3. Recent Developments:**

- Wales for Europe attendance at Party Conferences – it has been useful to attend some of the Conferences held in South Wales during the Autumn, and has provided an opportunity to talk to people, get people to sign-up to Petitions and Newsletters
- Flags in the Wind Conference at Chapter Theatre 24<sup>th</sup> February 2026 (evening event), to mark four years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine – speaker agreed is Alistair Shephard, Interim Head of International Politics at Aberystwyth Universities. Other potential speakers are being approached.
- Wales for Europe is preparing a Manifesto for the Election – it will be published within the next few weeks
- Feedback from the Domestic Advisory Group's meeting in Cardiff on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> November – Katie James provided an update. Eluned Haf and Zelig Flach are representing Wales on one of DAG's sub-groups. There are strong voices within the creative sector, with a campaign starting soon from the Cultural Exchange Coalition, aiming to remove barriers to touring, support cultural exchange and drive growth. A survey conducted by Arts Infopoint UK of the cultural sector will be launched soon about rejoining Creative Europe and cultural collaborations (it will be a temperature check, undertaken across the UK/EU). The CPG agreed to raise these issues with Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary at the next meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January.

The Group discussed arrangements leading up to the next Senedd Election and arrangements for the next Senedd, and emphasised the importance of ensuring that the issues that the group focuses on continue to receive attention:

- Ensuring that the Manifestos of those parties who wish to improve links with the European Union contain suitable references, and that the forthcoming Wales for Europe Manifesto could help to inform this eg access to the Single Market, access to European Investment Bank funds (Wales cannot access alone, so this would require the EU and the UK Government to re-visit for the whole of the UK but could be key to access funding for Celtic Sea projects)
- That the Welsh Government elected in May 2026 should push for alignment with the EU to ease trade
- The potential for a new Welsh Government to align with the governments of Scotland and Northern Ireland, and have a different relationship with the European Union (eg by having Shadow MEPs)
- The importance of re-establishing the Senedd Cross Party Group on Europe early after the Senedd elections in May 2026.

#### **4. Settled – Rhys Hughes-Evans**

The purpose of this item was to hear about the work of Settled, and the issues that face EU and Ukraine citizens living in Wales. Settled was set up in 2019 to support EU citizens, with its remit extended in 2022 to support Ukraine citizens who moved to England and Wales after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Settled provides Level 3 advice for people living in Wales, and is funded by the Welsh Government and the Home Office. There are currently 8,000 women and children from Ukraine living in Wales.

Key issues currently being experienced by EU citizens living in Wales:

- The Scheme remains open for late applications, for relatives who wish to joining their families, and for those with pre-settled status who have lived less than 5 years in the UK; there are currently around 40,000 pre-settled EU citizens living in Wales who need to move to settled status soon.
- Home Office statistics for June 2025 show 400 applications per month from Wales – some transitioning from pre-settled to settled status, others are late applications (no status); there is no break-down of these figures.
- Late applications – since August 2023, requirements have been tightened by the Home Office – applicants have to show reason for lateness, and there are evidential tests to pass to prove that the reasons are acceptable; if applicants don't pass these tests, they don't get a Certificate of Application, which is the key to access work and public funds whilst applications being processed.

- The evidential burden is quite high – continued residence in the UK for 5 years, which can be challenging for vulnerable cohorts eg homeless people, stay-at-home partners (mainly women), survivors of Domestic Abuse eg if there is no proof of residency through documents, such as utility bills, Council Tax etc. This can lead to failed applications, with these individuals having to leave the UK.
- The automation process introduced by the Home Office is positive. However, it works on HMRC and Border Force data, and an applicant has to prove residency. Settled help people to collate and collect evidence.
- There is a misconception by members of the public and by some service providers that children born in the UK are automatically British – this is not true, and many parents are unaware that they need to apply for settled status on behalf of their child. This is not widely understood, and there could be a growing and unknown cohort of children who do not have status, and may only become aware later in life when they apply for services eg from the NHS etc; they need to apply now.

In terms of Ukrainians living in Wales:

- The Ukrainian Family Scheme is now closed; the Ukrainian Extension Scheme for those already here has also ended.
- The Homes for Ukraine scheme remains open – people can still come to the UK if they have a sponsor.
- Since February 2025, the those who have already applied through the Ukrainian Extension Scheme can apply to stay for a further 18 months and there will be a scheme for a further 24 months.
- All schemes allowed for individuals to stay, work and receive benefits for three years. There is a narrow 28 days window to apply for an extension, but individuals cannot apply before their existing scheme expires; the window to apply is quite small, the issues encountered can be complex and applicants need to provide evidence.
- Processing can take up to 6 months, leading to uncertainty for applicants. This can have a knock-on effect on education, housing and employment eg employers may not be willing to offer jobs towards end of the 3 years.
- Any time in the UK does not count towards permanent residency – people may have deep roots in UK, their property in Ukraine may be damaged and they may have to move at end of these schemes in 2-3 years' time.

To summarise:

- Rules change regularly due to political focus
- There are still lots of people who need support

- There is a need for sustainable funding for organisations such as Settled since there is an advise desert in Wales.

## Discussion

Mick Antoniwi asked what happens if applicants are refused? Rhys explained that individuals and their families have to leave; they may also have to leave if they break their UK residency. There are around 40,000 people in Wales who have successfully gained pre-settled status, but most need to move to settled status - some will transition smoothly, for others the process will be more complicated, and some may have already left.

Geraint Talfan Davies observed that it appears that there are appalling trip-wires in place for individuals and families due to the complexity of the rules and regular changes to the rules.

Mick Antoniwi asked whether language is an issue? Rhys said that yes, it can be an issue for some people, but Settled have multi-lingual capacity within the team so that they can provide support.

Mick Antoniwi asked whether the Senedd could help eg its Advice Service? Rhys explained that the Equalities Committee is a vocal supporter; their final report has been published recently, where they recommend continued funding for Settled.

Cefin Campbell asked what happens when the war in Ukraine ends – will Ukrainians living in Wales have to return or can they stay? Rhys explained that there is no provision for Ukrainians to stay in the UK under the current Visa scheme when it expires. They cannot apply under a different scheme because the current time won't count towards other schemes. Schemes may change, of course.

Mick Antoniwi commented that there is a lot of uncertainty, in particular for Ukrainians from the occupied territories in Eastern Ukraine. It will also be difficult for those with limited links with Ukraine after many years away, in particular for children who may have limited links and language ability in the future. He explained that this is a EU-wide issue, not just for the UK, and affects around 10million people.

**Action** – circulate the report recently published by the Senedd's Equalities Committee (see link below).

[Final report November 2025.pdf](#)

**5. Any Other Business** – none

**6. Forward Work Programme and Future Meetings**

#### Future meetings:

- 21<sup>st</sup> January 2026 - meet the Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Rebecca Evans, to outline the CPG's findings
- Ambassador Pedro Serrano, EU Ambassador to the UK – should hear before Christmas the details of his visit to Wales in 2026
- Final meeting in March – would be useful to focus on the impact of Brexit on one further sector, such as Higher Education.

#### Action Points:

- Caroline to draft a note to be presented to the Cabinet Secretary in January, summarising the Senedd CPG's discussions over the past nine months
- Confirm date of EU Ambassador to UK's visit to Wales (Caroline Turner)
- Continue to explore an item for March with the HE sector (Caroline Turner)

Cefin pointed out that it will be 10 years since the Referendum on Brexit in 2026, which could resurrect the debate and create further momentum, and asked whether there are any plans to mark this milestone. Elizabeth explained that Wales for Europe are arranging a Conference to mark this on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June. The meeting discussed possible days of the week that may enable Senedd Members to attend.