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Chair
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language,
Sport, and International Relations Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff
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12 March 2026

Dear Delyth

Thank you for the Committee's work over the last five years scrutinising the Welsh Government's approach to International Relations. I was pleased to receive a copy of your report Mission Cymru: Principles for International Relations which I believe provides some helpful guidance for future governments to consider when they set out their approach identifying and delivering their international priorities.

I have provided my response to each of the Committee's recommendations and principles in the enclosed report.

I also want to take this moment to reiterate my view, which I believe is shared by this report, that our international work is as important now as it ever was. At this very moment, we are staring at an uncertain and unpredictable future as we reflect on the fourth anniversary of the illegal invasion of Ukraine, and further significant global conflict.

When the International Strategy was published in January 2020, no-one could predict that a few short weeks later the world would go into lockdown and remain off limits for many months, and in some cases, for more than a year. Clearly, this had a significant impact on delivering the ambitions set out in the Strategy as our international activity was placed on hold.

Since Covid restrictions were lifted, our international delivery has gone from strength to strength, responding to opportunities as they arise and delivering results for Wales. I was especially proud to host the Wales Investment Summit at the end of last year. This Summit was the culmination of 12 months hard work by my International Relations and

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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.

Trade team, building on the relationships they have developed with companies through soft power work and promoting Wales's offer to potential investors. The Summit has delivered £16 billion in investment for Wales and will continue to bring further investment into Wales for years to come.

The Mission Cymru report acknowledges that much has been achieved, often with limited resources. When some challenge our international work, or even the rationale for doing so, your findings are an important contribution to the argument that we must work even harder to realise the important work of Wales on the world stage. A nation which has looked to secure partnerships, collaborations and even friendships to improve the lives of people here and across the world.

I would also like to take this opportunity to provide some feedback on the report where I believe that the views or work of the Welsh Government have not been represented clearly.

Wales-Ireland Relationship

Our relationship with Ireland is important and enduring. I am focussed on ensuring that we now use our well-established partnership to deliver. I was disappointed to read that the report states that I recently declined to appear before the Committee to discuss the Wales-Ireland Shared statement 2030 without providing the reasons and context for my decision. I declined attendance because it was only six months since the document was signed and therefore way too early for a meaningful discussion about delivery. There have also been recent changes within the Irish Government in relation to responsibilities for international relations. However, I also welcome the Committee's interest in this relationship, and I confirmed that my officials would work with the Committee to ensure an informative and beneficial visit to Ireland for you to see directly how the Shared Statement is being delivered. I was also pleased that my officials in Ireland were able to provide a technical briefing to you prior to the current Shared Statement's publication, giving an important insight into its content, preparation and plans for delivery.

Bilateral Agreements

Our international relationships are important and focussed on delivery. I would like to remind the Committee that the Catalonia and Basque Country Agreements were signed on 8 January 2026, and details were published on the Welsh Government's website on 14 January 2026 – two weeks prior to the publication of Mission Cymru.

Regarding the wider international bilateral agreements that are in place across the Welsh Government, my predecessors and I have repeatedly said that the agreements on our international webpages are those which are managed by the International Relations team and have a cross-cutting function. Bilateral agreements in individual policy areas are managed and delivered by the respective teams. As you reflect, a new government may wish to consider how this information is presented.

Reporting and Evaluation

I am proud of our first ever International Strategy. It was developed in a different time globally and much has changed over the last six years. I am pleased that the vast majority of actions have been delivered as set out in my written evidence. The calculations I provided were based on the actions in the International Strategy and the four action plans that are within the remit of the CCWLSIR Committee's scrutiny. The Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee (ETRA) scrutinises the delivery of the

Welsh Government's approach to export support and trade policy, therefore, the most recent Export Action Plan report to ETRA was provided as a courtesy to aid understanding of the whole suite of action plans rather than to be included in any final assessment of the work to deliver our international relations activity and this was clearly communicated.

In terms of external evaluation, we previously agreed on 27 January that consideration would be given to an external evaluation of the International Strategy. I am pleased that officials have been able to brief Committee on key aspects of our work such as through technical briefings.

Appearance at Scrutiny Sessions

The Committee report noted that '*while often useful, scrutiny via correspondence is no replacement for in-person exchanges*'. I and previous First Ministers have set out the reasoning for an annual in-person scrutiny session. The next government will be able to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the current model.

Budget Scrutiny

Since January 2022, successive First Ministers have provided written and oral evidence, answering questions on budgets on 14 different occasions, providing figures and breakdowns of allocations as requested by the Committee.

Prior to the 2022-23 financial year, there was limited scrutiny of the International Relations budget by the Committee, reflecting inconsistency of the Committee's approach to scrutiny within this area.

First Ministers have consistently responded to the Committee's requests for information on the International Relations and International Sustainable Development budgets, learning lessons on our approach to this scrutiny year on year and providing more detailed breakdowns as requested. This is demonstrated by the comprehensive 2025-26 budget paper provided to Committee ahead of the annual scrutiny session in June 2025.

It was not always possible to provide a full breakdown of budget allocations as the Committee has requested them prior to final budget allocations, while discussions on funding decisions were ongoing; this included funding to partners. Where this was not possible to provide, the Welsh Government articulated this.

Partners

I was disappointed to see that no references were made in the report to our Strategic Partners approach which brings a collective Team Wales together to deliver our international work. The Urdd, Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, Wales Arts International and Academi Heddwch all play an important role in working with the Welsh Government to deliver a mutually beneficial international delivery programme. I was pleased to see that our partners were asked to provide evidence, but I am sure that they will be as disappointed as I am to see that the report says "*Stakeholders should be better utilised.... The Welsh Government should partner as much as possible to break down resource barriers and draw on the impressive level of expertise at its doorstep*". Our broader Team Cymru approach attracts global interest and praise. It shows how we can work together to further our international aims and improve outcomes at home.

Benefits

Measuring the benefits of soft power in an international context is a challenge that many nations find difficult and has been a subject of scrutiny by the Committee for the last Senedd term. However, I would like to provide examples of the many things that have been achieved since the Welsh Government's first International Strategy was published in January 2020 and has endured a difficult geopolitical climate. These are a strong foundation for our international work in years to come.

- Overseas offices work closely with UK embassies to maintain a focus on Wales, build understanding of the proposition in Wales and progress investment leads. This has resulted in multiple inward investment missions from international companies to Wales, in priority areas such as semiconductors and life sciences, with some strong examples of working together to advance projects and land new investments.
- Overseas offices work closely with international industry clusters and organisations to extend our outreach and build visibility. For example, over the last four years we have worked closely with WindEurope, which represents the entire value chain of wind energy in Europe. Through this work, we have significantly raised the visibility of the investment opportunities in Wales. In April 2025, I addressed the main stage at WindEurope's annual conference and met with CEOs and business leaders from across the continent to encourage investment in Wales.
- Overseas Offices can also facilitate swift action when issues arise. A recent example includes the facilitation of the Holyhead Taskforce. The Taskforce brought together ports, government officials on both sides of the Irish Sea, and wider stakeholders to support the movement of goods. This cooperation was highlighted during the prolonged closure of Holyhead port in the winter of 2024-25 and, most recently, in January 2026 when the port was again briefly closed due to damage.
- Our office in North America identified that the unveiling of the statue of Welsh woman Martha Hughes Cannon from Llandudno was an important opportunity for Wales. Born in Llandudno, she became the first female senator, and we used this historic connection to create economic connections between Utah and Wales, to support the creation of the scholarship in Utah in key areas including life sciences, fintech and aerospace, and support a trade mission from Utah to Wales.
- In 2024 and following the Wales in France year, our France Office developed connections with UNESCO. Less than two years later, we have seen Wales profiled at Mondiacult – the world's largest culture policy event. Our work on language has been profiled at the highest levels through UNESCO facilitating international connections aimed at preserving and revitalising indigenous languages, with Welsh Government policies on the Welsh language being hailed as best practice. Through the work undertaken by Wales, minority languages have been formally adopted as a UK Delegation priority, with Wales leading delivery without HMG oversight. This represents a structural shift in the UK's approach and reinforces trust in Wales's credibility, capability and the value Wales can bring to the UK's international offer. Wales's footprint within the organisation has expanded, including Aberystwyth Ceredigion being named as a City of Literature.

- Our France office supported the Tour de France bid coming to Wales as early as 2023. Located at the British Embassy in Paris, the team facilitating a lunch hosted by the British Ambassador to France for the Wales and wider UK bid team with ASO (the organising company of the Tour based in France). The office also hosted the Director of the Tour de France at the Wales vs France 6 Nations match in Paris with the support of the WRU.
- Our team in Germany worked with German manufacturer WEPA to advance a major investment at its Maesteg plant in 2025, reducing energy, water use, and emissions. Team Germany facilitated key engagements and helped to progress funding which supported the investment. The project boosts production, safeguards 325 jobs and strengthens Wales' green manufacturing sector.
- The Wales and Japan 2025 campaign generated several tangible outcomes:
 - Secured high-value international partnerships, strengthening Wales' global trade, culture and education links.
 - Opened new commercial pathways for Welsh innovation, including collaboration between Llusern Scientific and FUJIFILM Healthcare UK.
 - Deepened academic excellence and research links, connecting Welsh higher education with leading Japanese institutions.
 - Raised Wales' cultural profile internationally, formalising long-term museum partnerships with Oita and Himeji City Museum of Art.
 - Delivered education outcomes for Wales, with Japanese students set to study and spend time in Welsh communities from 2026.
- As part of our Wales in India year in 2024, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Wales and the Government of Kerala to support additional and ongoing ethical recruitment from India to Wales. This agreed to recruit up to 250 nurses, doctors and other healthcare professionals during 2024-25 benefitting the NHS here in Wales whilst providing employment opportunities and experience for health care workers from India.

These are just a few of the benefits that our approach to international engagement and international sustainable development have delivered.

My thanks to you and the Committee members for your work over the last Senedd term.



Eluned Morgan



The Welsh Government's Approach to International Relations

Response to the CCWLSIR Committee Report (January 2026)

12/03/2026

In January 2026, the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee submitted its report on the Welsh Government's Approach to International Relations (titled Mission Cymru: Principles for International Relations). The report includes two recommendations and 12 principles for any future government to implement in its approach to developing its international relationships. This is the Welsh Government's response to those recommendations.

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1. Response to Recommendations

This chapter sets out the Welsh Government's response to the recommendations made by the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee in its report *Mission Cymru: Principles for International Relations*. The recommendations are considered in turn, outlining the Welsh Government's position and providing context on how they align with current practice and future approaches to Wales's international relations.

Recommendation 1

The Welsh Government should provide its response to this report and each of the Mission Cymru principles.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government welcomes the constructive points and proposals put forward in Mission Cymru and provides its response to each of the principles as set out below.

Recommendation 2

Future governments should adopt Mission Cymru as a set of core principles for Wales's international relations.

Response: Accept in Principle

It is not appropriate for one government to set the policy and agenda for a future administration. However, by setting out our response to each of the principles below, this current Government can demonstrate how the Committee's report could support future international relations policy development.

2. Response to Principles

This chapter sets out the Welsh Government's response to the principles outlined in the Committee's report. In responding, the Welsh Government has sought to balance support for the Committee's overarching ambitions with the need to retain appropriate flexibility for the Government to respond to any future events or situations. Each principle is therefore considered in turn, setting out the Welsh Government's position and reflecting current practice, lessons learned, and the practical considerations that would inform the development of any future approach to Wales's international relations.

Principle 1

Future governments should adopt Mission Cymru as a set of core principles for Wales's international relations.

Response: Accept in Principle

As we are now nearing the end of this Senedd term – we would assume that any future administration including the current incumbent administration would want to set out a new refreshed policy and direction in relation to International Relations.

Principle 2

Future governments should ensure that a responsible Minister is subject to scrutiny for Wales's international relations in the same way as any other portfolio Minister. Scrutiny arrangements should have parity with the expectations placed on all Cabinet Secretaries.

Response: Accept in Principle

There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. Whilst a dedicated Minister for International Relations provides more time for scrutiny and a focal point for setting out a government's approach to its international work, it does not bring with it the profile of a First Minister as a figurehead to deliver our international agenda. Wales's profile has increased since the First Minister assumed responsibility for the international relations portfolio, but this has come at the cost of providing time for physical appearances at scrutiny sessions due to other pressing responsibilities and issues. However, the Senedd does have an opportunity to scrutinise the First Minister on a weekly basis, during First Minister's Questions. The Committee Chairs used one of their scrutiny sessions with the First Minister to focus entirely on International Relations.

Principle 3

Future governments should adopt a proactive and constructive approach to working with other governments in the UK to maximise opportunities for Wales and to feed in a Welsh perspective.

Response: Accept

This government already works very closely with governments across the UK to maximise opportunities for Wales. The current Welsh Government has worked with other UK governments at Ministerial and official level to ensure that Wales is represented on the international stage. The Welsh Government works with the UK and Devolved Governments at Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee (IMSC). IMSC provides a valuable opportunity to ask questions about the policies and approach of other governments, as well as updating on our position and activity. Together with the Scottish Government, we have regularly called for a dedicated inter-ministerial group for international relations, but this has not happened.

In addition to the formal rhythm of IMSC, other important gatherings of groups such as the Celtic Forum provide an opportunity to come together with the Devolved Governments and our Celtic partners. Most recently, the Celtic Forum met in Glasgow to discuss collective challenges and opportunities and consider where there could be the potential for collaboration.

Principle 4

Future governments should have a concise, focused and clear strategy, guided by high-level ambition and a small number of overarching aims. All international activity and arrangements should be clearly set out and explained. Focused actions should flow from, and contribute directly to, key objectives and measurable targets.

Response: Accept in Principle

The International Strategy of 2020 was the Welsh Government's first ever strategic document setting out our approach to international relations. The strategy was clearly focused on three key objectives: To raise the profile of Wales internationally, to grow the economy and to establish Wales as a globally responsible nation.

As the first strategy of its kind, there would always be lessons to learn in delivering this ambition, which were exacerbated by the global pandemic closing international borders just a few short weeks after publication and forcing a review of our approach to delivery and priorities in a very different world months

later. It is this flexible approach that has stood us in good stead to respond to positive opportunities as they arise that were not in the original Strategy, such as the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, and to re-assess our approach to activities that were not delivering as anticipated, such as our approach to diaspora engagement. All of these lessons learned will lay the foundation for a future approach to our international activity.

Our international work has been hailed as an exemplar by some attracting global attention. Our Team Cymru approach was showcased at the World Congress on Sports Diplomacy in the Basque Country and our broader work on international relations was profiled at the Symposium on Strategic Subnational Diplomacy in Washington DC.

Principle 5

Future governments should reach an agreement with the responsible Senedd committee on what information will be provided. Formal notification of key milestones in international relations, including new/renewed international agreements, should be within scope of this agreement.

Response: Accept in Principle

In line with Principle 4, it is important to remain flexible and open to opportunities in order to maximise the benefits of our international work. This government has agreed to provide the Committee with information, such as notifying when new bilateral agreements are signed and providing information about overseas visits. The significant disruption as a result of Covid at the start of the International Strategy's delivery period meant that certain ambitions were not deliverable within the time frame set out. Whilst efforts could be made to agree how the reporting of certain milestones could be agreed with the Committee from the outset, it should be made clear that sometimes international events can influence the deliverability of those milestones including those experienced during this period such as the Covid pandemic, the war in Ukraine and events in the Middle East. On the other hand, there may be new opportunities which can be grasped which were not part of the original Strategy like Wales qualifying for the first time in the UEFA Women's Euro 2025 tournament.

For example – the International Relations and Trade team took the lead role in delivering the highly successful Investment Summit hosted in Newport in December leading to an investment of £16bn for the Welsh nation. Whilst this was not explicitly referenced in the original international strategy – it was

significant in delivering on its three core aims, in particular, to grow the economy by attracting inward investment.

Principle 6

Future governments should maintain a dedicated space on its website to celebrate key relationships and to publish international agreements.

Response: Accept in Principle

It will not always be possible to publish the details of our bilateral agreements on the Welsh Government's website, as sometimes our partners may be unwilling to share these publicly. However, improving the availability of information on our international relationships is something that will be explored in more detail with the Welsh Government's web team.

Principle 7

Future governments should adapt and mainstream a Team Wales approach for joint working with stakeholders across its international relations activity.

Response: Accept

This is already being done, and our Team Wales delivery model is something that we celebrate and share globally. The publicly available independent evaluation of our World Cup delivery in Qatar acknowledges the success of this approach.

Principle 8

Future governments should put in place reporting arrangements at the start of a future international relations strategy. Regular reports should cover all international relations activity and be structured against key objectives and measurable targets. They should be easily accessible in one place on the Welsh Government's website and proactively shared with the Senedd.

Response: Accept in Principle

The Committee has provided important advice in terms of expectations around reporting. The response to this has been to provide significant information, including a quarterly report on progress against the International Delivery Plan. A future government may wish to consider the lessons learned from this approach and the Committee's recommendation to set out clear reporting arrangements from the start. This reporting structure needs to take account of the limited resources within the International Relations and Trade team.

Principle 9

Future governments should initiate regular independent evaluations and participate in soft power indexes. Their results should be published on the Welsh Government's website and proactively shared with the Senedd.

Response: Accept in Principle

Whilst regular independent evaluations of our work are useful, this must be balanced against the time and cost implications. Currently, evaluation is undertaken of stand-alone activity, for example the Qatar World Cup or Wales in France 2023. Value for money must be factored in against our ability to deliver our international relations work.

The Welsh Government currently contributes to the Nations Brand Index (NBI), which measures the impact of soft power across global nations. The NBI provides a useful platform upon which to benchmark Wales's visibility and impact but its results and trends are limited in their effectiveness because Wales has only been part of this survey since 2020.

Principle 10

Future governments should ensure that financial information on international activity provided to the Senedd relates to the key objectives and measurable targets in its international strategy.

Response: Accept in Principle

Lessons have been learned in our approach to presenting our financial information in the three years since the Committee started to scrutinise the budget. Financial information linked to objectives can be provided to the Committee but, it must be noted that soft power does not always provide measurable targets and that the Welsh Government must retain the flexibility to respond to international events, and reassign budgets, as opportunities arise as per Principles 4 and 5.

Principle 11

Future governments should ensure that resource for international relations is sufficient to realise their strategic ambition.

Response: Accept in Principle

Many areas of government would benefit from additional and necessary resource to deliver ambition. It is for a future government to determine resource

allocations, but the Committee's findings that a significant amount is being delivered with limited resources is recognised.

Principle 12

Future governments should utilise stakeholders to relieve resource constraints. They should ensure sustained collaboration is core to the design and delivery mechanisms of future international strategies to enable the pooling of resource, capacity and expertise.

Response: Accept in Principle

The Welsh Government was pleased to see that the Committee's report recognises the quality and breadth of delivery that that is undertaken with relatively small resources – both financial and people. Our stakeholders, including our Strategic Partners (the Urdd, the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, Wales Arts International and Academi Heddwch) are all an important part of Team Wales and their work is a fundamental part of our ability to deliver with limited resources. Examples of this joint working are:

- The Urdd has enabled young people to travel overseas, promoting the Welsh language while developing valuable skills. A recent visit to Kenya allowed staff, apprentices and volunteers to apply their coaching and leadership training in practice, supporting and empowering young women. Participants developed transferable skills including communication, teamwork and problem-solving, which they have brought back to strengthen youth work, coaching programmes and community initiatives in Wales.
- Wales Arts International supported Hijinx Theatre to tour Japan as part of the Wales and Japan Year 2025. The production, featuring traditional Japanese stringless puppetry performed by learning disabled and autistic Welsh artists, enhanced Wales's international reputation for inclusive, innovative cultural practice while creating lasting partnerships and professional development opportunities.
- The Future Generations Commissioner has supported Welsh public bodies to build global partnerships which strengthen delivery of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. In 2023, an exchange between Cardiff Council and Nantes Métropole shared best practice on urban climate and biodiversity, contributing to ongoing improvements in long-term planning, nature-based solutions and community engagement in Cardiff.

- In 2023-24, Academi Heddwch led celebrations marking the centenary of the Women's Peace Petition, signed by over 390,000 women in Wales. As part of this celebration, educational resources were developed for schools across Wales to introduce this peace heritage and inspire young people to take action. Since June 2025, the online resources have been accessed by 750 schools.

The Welsh Government welcomes the Committee's recognition that more can be done with more resource. However, as demonstrated by the examples provided above, it was disappointing that the collaborative work of our Strategic Partners was not explicitly referenced in the Committee's report.