



House of Commons
Welsh Affairs Committee

Work of the Committee in 2007

Third Report of Session 2007–08

Report and formal minutes

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The Welsh Affairs Committee

The Welsh Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales (including relations with the National Assembly for Wales).

Current membership

Dr Hywel Francis MP (*Labour, Aberavon*) (Chairman)
Mr David T.C. Davies MP (*Conservative, Monmouth*)
Ms Nia Griffith MP (*Labour, Llanelli*)
Mrs Siân C. James MP (*Labour, Swansea East*)
Mr David Jones MP (*Conservative, Clwyd West*)
Mr Martyn Jones MP (*Labour, Clwyd South*)
Rt Hon Alun Michael MP (*Labour, Cardiff South and Penarth*)
Mr Albert Owen MP (*Labour, Ynys Môn*)
Mr Mark Pritchard MP (*Conservative, The Wrekin*)
Mr Mark Williams MP (*Liberal Democrat, Ceredigion*)
Mr Hywel Williams MP (*Plaid Cymru, Caernarfon*)

Stephen Crabb MP, Wayne David MP and Jessica Morden MP were Members of the Committee during 2007.

Powers

The committee is one of the Departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the internet at www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/welsh_affairs_committee.cfm. A list of reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this volume.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee is Nick Wright (Clerk), Llinos Madeley (Committee Specialist), Christine Randall (Committee Assistant), Annabel Goddard (Secretary), Jim Lawford (Chief Office Clerk) and Rebecca Jones (Media Officer).

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Introduction

1. This Report is the seventh annual report from the Welsh Affairs Committee to the House and covers the work of the Committee during 2006-07.
2. In May 2002 the House agreed a resolution setting out “illustrative tasks” for select committees. In June 2002 the Chairman of the Liaison Committee wrote to all committees setting out guidance on committee objectives and core tasks, with the intention that those core tasks be reflected in committees’ annual reports. Since 2003, a number of committees have set out their achievements against those common objectives and core tasks in tabular form. The Liaison Committee welcomed that approach and encouraged other committees to adopt that practice.

Table 3 Core tasks of Select Committees (In this Table, entries under Department refer to Government Departments scrutinised by the Committee and are not restricted to the Wales Office)

| | Government and Commission Policy Proposals | Examination of Deficiencies | Departmental Actions | Associated Public Bodies | Major Appointments | Implementation of Legislation | Draft Legislation | Expenditure | Evidence from Minister | Public Service Agreements |
|---|--|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Legislative Competence Orders in council | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | √ | | √ | |
| Welsh prisoners in the prison estate | √ | √ | √ | | | | | √ | √ | |
| Energy in Wales: follow-up inquiry | √ | √ | √ | | | | | | √ | |
| The proposed Legislative Competence Order in Council on additional learning needs | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | √ | √ | √ | |
| Wales Office Annual Report | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | | √ | √ | |

3. The Welsh Affairs Committee’s role differs from that of many departmental select committees. While our role is to scrutinise the Wales Office, that Department does not carry out the functions of a traditional department. As the Secretary of State said in evidence to the Committee “we are not a spending department”.¹ Rather, the Secretary of State for Wales is the key Government figure liaising with the devolved

¹ Evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee on the Wales Office Annual Report, 24 July 2007, Q 6

administration in Wales and represents Wales' interests in the Cabinet and in Parliament.² Therefore many of the core objectives set out by the Liaison Committee are not applicable to the Welsh Affairs Committee. For example, the Wales Office does not have responsibility for any public bodies or agencies, it does not oversee major appointments and its public service agreements come under the Ministry of Justice.

4. However, the Committee does have a very important role to play in providing a link between the UK Government and the National Assembly for Wales. That role is reflected in the words of Standing Order Number 152 which, in addition to the usual paragraph requiring it to scrutinise the expenditure, administration and policy of the Wales Office, adds the duty of establishing and maintaining relations with the National Assembly for Wales on behalf of the House of Commons.³ The significance of this aspect of the Committee's role has greatly increased during the past year with its involvement in the pre-legislative scrutiny of proposed Legislative Competence Orders in Council. This development is considered in more detail later in this Report.

Policy scrutiny

5. Scrutiny of Government policy is a core task. During 2007 the Committee was involved in four inquiries, had published four reports and one transcript of an evidence session with the Secretary of State. The inquiries were: Welsh prisoners in the prison estate, Legislative Competence Orders in Council, a follow-up to our earlier inquiry into Energy in Wales, and the proposed Legislative Competence Order in Council on additional learning needs. The Committee has also been taking evidence in its major inquiry into globalisation and its impact on Wales since January 2007.
6. These inquiries cover the work of the Home Office, Wales Office, Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, Department for Work and Pensions and the Border and Immigration Agency.

² www.walesoffice.gov.uk

³ Standing Order 152

The work of the Committee

Legislative Competence Orders in Council

7. The Government of Wales Act 2006 allows the National Assembly for Wales to seek to enhance its legislative powers by way of Legislative Competence Orders in Council. It was envisaged at the start of the process that the Welsh Affairs Committee would play a key role in these procedures.
8. The Government of Wales Act 2006 introduced a new procedure whereby the National Assembly for Wales can bring forward proposals which would extend the Assembly's law-making powers by way of Legislative Competence Orders in Council. The Orders do not themselves change the general law for Wales - they pave the way to subsequent changes in the law applying to Wales within the devolved areas of legislative competence. They do this by adding new "Matters" to the "Fields" of legislative competence set out in Schedule 5 of the Government of Wales Act 2006.
9. These proposals for draft Orders may be introduced by the Welsh Assembly Government, by committees of the National Assembly, or by individual Assembly Members. They are subject to pre-legislative scrutiny by committees of the Assembly appointed for this purpose and, potentially, by committees of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Whitehall agreement ("clearance") is a necessary pre-requisite before a proposed Order is referred by the Secretary of State for Wales to each House at this pre-legislative scrutiny stage.
10. Following the pre-legislative scrutiny stage, the National Assembly may agree an actual draft Order. This may take account of committee recommendations (from either its own committees or Westminster) following pre-legislative scrutiny. The draft Order must then be laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State for Wales - and he or she may still decline to do so at this stage. If the draft Order is laid, it is considered by both Houses of Parliament, and may be debated by them. Draft Orders at this stage are not amendable and can only be approved or rejected. If approved by both Houses, and once it is given the royal assent in the Privy Council, direct law-making powers are devolved to the Assembly within the scope of the Order in Council. The Assembly then makes those laws in the form of Assembly Measures, which must be passed by the National Assembly but which require no further approval by either Whitehall or the UK Parliament.
11. In order to consider the implications of this procedure, we held an evidence session with interested parties from the Wales Office and the National Assembly of Wales, and received written evidence from interested groups on the new provisions and how it was envisaged the process would operate in practice. We published our Second Report on *Legislative Competence Orders in Council* in June 2007.
12. At that time we welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the process by being involved in the pre-legislative process of proposed Orders in Council and the opportunities for working jointly with committees of the National Assembly this

offered. However, we also expressed our concern at the implications this would have for our own programme.

13. We were also concerned at that early stage that while this procedure had been designed with a high degree of specificity in mind, “Matters” added by primary legislation were likely to be much more general in nature, without the same opportunity for specific and detailed pre-legislative scrutiny.
14. We anticipate that in 2008 part of the pre-legislative scrutiny of proposed Legislative Competence Orders in Council will involve working jointly with committees of the National Assembly of Wales.
15. In its response to our Report, the Government welcomed the Committee’s willingness to work jointly with committees of the National Assembly for Wales, and appreciated the Committee’s need to balance the work entailed by undertaking pre-legislative scrutiny of Order in Council proposals in the context of its wider programme of work. The Government considered that it will be a matter for the Committee to determine the appropriate level of pre-legislative scrutiny, and whether the Committee may need to draw on additional legal advice. The Government has given the Committee responsibility for identifying circumstances in which it believes that it would be more appropriate for the Welsh Grand Committee to undertake scrutiny of some proposed Orders, and said that the Welsh Affairs Committee could invite MPs with an interest to comment during its own scrutiny of proposed Orders.
16. The Government noted the Committee’s views on effective co-ordination and joint scrutiny with Assembly committees, and anticipated that individual Assembly Committees would keep us informed of their planned work on proposed Legislative Orders in Council, to enable the Committee to plan its work programme.
17. The Government noted our concern that to continue to add Matters by primary legislation could be a device for a general rather than a specific extension of Assembly powers, responding that framework powers will have the same level of detailed scrutiny and testing by amendment as any other proposed provision in a Bill, and will be subject to amendment during the passage of the Bill. The recent changes to Bill committee consideration would also provide additional opportunities for scrutiny.

Proposed Legislative Competence Order in Council: Additional learning needs

18. The Committee has undertaken its first examination of a proposed Legislative Competence Order in Council, on the subject of additional learning needs. The proposed Order would expand Field 5 of Schedule 5 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 by adding a new matter, Matter 5.17, relating to education and training for “persons who have a greater difficulty in learning than the majority of persons of the same age” and for “persons who have a disability”. In this context, this is intended to include persons who have a “physical or mental impairment”.⁴

⁴ Explanatory note to the draft National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) Order 2007

19. In our Report we expressed regret that on this occasion the process had not worked as anticipated, ruling out the possibility of working jointly with the committee of the National Assembly for Wales which was also appointed to conduct pre-legislative scrutiny on this proposed Order. We also express our hope that in future greater clarity on the identifiable need for an Order would be provided, as well as a clearer indication of the most immediate legislative proposals (“Measures”) likely to be brought forward under the terms of the Order, if approved.
20. Nonetheless, we agreed on this occasion that a Legislative Competence Order was the most appropriate way forward for this proposal, but recommended that the proposed Order be amended to refer to the World Health Organisation’s definition of disability. We recommended that the proposed Order should be proceeded with.

Welsh prisoners in the prison estate

21. The Committee undertook an inquiry to examine concerns about the holding of Welsh prisoners in prisons outside Wales, in many cases a long distance from their homes. The Government is planning to create 8,000 new prison places by 2012 including some in Wales, and it was therefore timely to examine the provision currently available. We believe that the devolution of powers to the National Assembly for Wales and current reforms to the criminal justice system offer an opportunity to develop an approach to offender management, rehabilitation and re-offending in Wales which is better suited in the Welsh context than are the current arrangements, and likely to be more effective.
22. During the inquiry we took oral evidence from 30 witnesses, and received written evidence from many more. We visited prisons and other secure facilities in South Wales, the South West of England, and the North West of England.
23. Our Third Report, *Welsh prisoners in the prison estate*, was published on 6 June 2007.⁵ In our Report we noted that there are only four prisons in Wales, all of which are in the south of the country. There is little provision for juvenile and young offenders, and no prisons at all for women. All of this has far-reaching consequences for prisoners, their families and the agencies working with them. The situation is exacerbated by current overcrowding on the prison estate. The delivery of health, education and rehabilitation services to these prisoners is affected and it reduces the likelihood of successful resettlement on release.
24. We recommended that new prison places should be provided in North Wales, together with increased capacity for all ages in South Wales. The case for providing new custodial facilities is particularly strong for juveniles and young men, as we believe that holding children in custody in institutions outside Wales, sometimes at a considerable distance from home, is unacceptable.
25. We also recommended that there should be a new approach to the treatment of female prisoners, with the provision of small, community based custodial centres for women in Wales, and the development of a network of locally-based residential women’s centres.

⁵ 3rd Report from the Welsh Affairs Committee, *Welsh prisoners in the prison estate*, HC 74, Session 2006-07

26. We also recommended that improvements should be made to Welsh language provision for Welsh prisoners across the prison estate, having received evidence that the language needs of Welsh speaking prisoners are not being met within the prison system. This issue is more acute when Welsh prisoners serve their sentences in English prisons, and particularly for juvenile offenders whose first language is Welsh.
27. Our Report followed the publication of the report into women prisoners by Baroness Corston.⁶ Many of our recommendations and conclusions were later reflected in the findings of the report by Lord Carter.⁷
28. In its response to our own Report, the Government noted the range of our recommendations and noted that these “are all current issues that the Government is considering as part of the programme to increasing the overall prison capacity in England and Wales, and in developing a devolved commissioning role for the National Offender Management Service in Wales”.⁸ Wales has been included in the Government’s planning process for increasing the capacity of the prison estate.
29. We were pleased to note that the Government accepted almost all the recommendations made in Baroness Corston’s *Review of women with particular vulnerabilities on the criminal justice system*. We were particularly pleased to see that our own recommendation that community-based provision and services for women is to be developed, and that more is to be done to avoid the use of custody for those women offenders who do not need to be in custody. We questioned whether current custodial settings are the most suitable and effective way of dealing with women prisoners.⁹
30. In his report, Lord Carter said “an estates strategy should be produced that deals with all offenders, and in particular the specific needs of women and juvenile offenders”, a conclusion which reflects some of the main recommendations in our own Report.¹⁰ Lord Carter also called for the modernisation of the prison estate by the construction of large “Titan” prisons, and for the Government to implement a package of measures which could moderate the demand for custody in accordance with the Government’s strategy to reserve custody for the most serious and dangerous offenders.
31. In a statement to the House of Commons on 5 December 2007 on the Carter report, the Secretary of State for Justice announced funding for additional prison places, including the building of new prisons. We await with interest to see if any of those new facilities will be sited in Wales, and so meet the need for additional prison capacity through Wales, particularly in North Wales where none currently exists.

⁶ Report by Baroness Corston *Review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system*, 13 March 2007

⁷ *Securing the future: proposals for the efficient and sustainable use of custody in England and Wales*, Lord Carter of Coles, 5 December 2007

⁸ *Welsh prisoners in the prison estate, Government Response to the Welsh Affairs Committee Report*, Cm 7195

⁹ Government’s response to the report by Baroness Corston *Review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system*, 6 December 2007

¹⁰ *Securing the Future: Proposals for the efficient and sustainable use of custody in England and Wales*, Lord Carter of Coles, 5 December 2007

Energy in Wales: follow-up inquiry

32. Following our major inquiry of 2005-06 into the energy mix in Wales, we undertook a short follow-up inquiry which examined the future for coal production in Wales and its economic, social and environmental impact, together with the development of sustainable technologies and measures to encourage microgeneration.
33. We concluded that there is a good future for the coal mining industry in Wales given the remaining large reserves of coal and the supply of highly skilled labour, and that it is sensible to ensure a diversity in the source of the supply of coal to the generating sector.
34. We were not convinced that alternative technologies would be able to produce sufficient electricity to fill an anticipated power generation gap of about 22 gigawatts by 2015. We believe that coal-fired power generation will continue to play a valuable and significant role and that Welsh coal has a critically important role to play in this process.
35. The Committee reaffirmed its earlier support for renewable and sustainable energy technologies. We therefore welcome the Government's announcement of a further detailed study of the Severn barrage proposal, but urge that the most careful assessment is made of the environmental impact which such a project would have. We also urged the Government to reconsider the level of financial support it gives to the Centre for Alternative Technology's WISE project (Wales Institute for Sustainable Education), which provides information and training on all aspects of sustainable living.
36. The Committee awaits the Government's response to our inquiry.

Globalisation

37. The Committee decided to undertake a major inquiry into globalisation and its impact on Wales, on which it began taking evidence in January 2007. The inquiry, on which we are continuing to take evidence into 2008, covers four main aspects:

Employment – including the relocation of jobs; the implications of EU enlargement for employment prospects in Wales; the impact of eastern and southern Asia on manufacturing and service industries in Wales; skills shortages and how these can be addressed, both internally and externally.

Population and population movement - including demographic change in Wales and its implications for the personal care of senior citizens; the balance between urban and rural communities in the context of the Wales Spatial Plan, and migration flows.

Food production and supply - including food production; the role of the major supermarkets, their supply chains and the operation of the voluntary code of practice; public sector food procurement, and local sourcing.

Broadcasting and the creative industries - including the changing nature of public service and independent broadcasting in Wales; the end of analogue; the growth of local radio stations; Welsh language and other minority language provision;

coverage; changes to viewing and listening patterns; employment in the creative industries, and lessons from other parts of the world.

38. Our inquiry has proved to be worthwhile, and it has highlighted a range of issues which affect Wales and its way of life. Up to the end of 2007 we had received more than 70 submissions of written evidence, and had heard oral evidence from more than 30 groups of witnesses. We thought it important to take evidence on local issues, and so have made three visits to Wales during the course of our inquiry so far, including taking formal oral evidence at Wrexham and in Ceredigion. The significant influence of the new EU countries, particularly in the areas of population movement and the move of manufacturing to areas of Eastern Europe where labour costs are cheaper, quickly became apparent, and we visited the Czech Republic and Poland to examine some of these issues at first hand.
39. During the course of our evidence sessions, the increasing influence of China's economy on Welsh employment patterns and prospects led us to visiting China to see developments there for ourselves. The Chinese economy has developed from a mainly manufacturing base towards high-end service provision. The current scale and pace of change is immediately striking. We also had the opportunity for discussions with representatives of Chinese universities and Chinese graduates of Welsh universities, to understand better the global forces operating on both countries.

Future programme

40. Our programme in the early part of 2008 will be taken up with evidence sessions on the food production and supply and broadcasting aspects of our inquiry into globalisation and its impact on Wales.
41. It is likely that our programme will also include further consideration of proposed Legislative Competence Orders in Council. Early in the new year we will be holding a joint evidence session with a committee of the National Assembly for Wales on one such proposed Order concerning charging for domiciliary care. We regret that the publication of some of the proposed Orders in advance of clearance with Whitehall departments has meant that the opportunity for joint pre-legislative scrutiny has been missed. However we hope to explore the possibility of working more closely with National Assembly committees in the pre-legislative scrutiny of proposed Legislative Competence Orders in future.
42. The Committee has announced that it is to undertake an inquiry examining the provision of cross-border public services for Wales.¹¹ We intend to examine the co-ordination, effectiveness and funding arrangements of cross-border provision relating to education, health, transport, civil service employment and broadcasting. In doing so, we will consider taking evidence jointly with relevant committees of the National Assembly for Wales.

¹¹ Press Notice from the Welsh Affairs Committee, *Announcement of Committee inquiry: Provision of cross-border public services for Wales*, 6 November 2007

Welsh language

43. Under certain circumstances, the Committee is entitled to conduct its proceedings in Welsh. We continue to take oral evidence in Welsh when a witness requests. During 2006-07 we took evidence in Welsh from the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales, at our meeting on Legislative Competence Orders in Council. Welsh may also be used during formal joint working with Committees of the National Assembly for Wales. However, that entitlement does not extend to the production of bi-lingual reports.

Examination of the expenditure and administration of the Wales Office

44. On 24 July 2007 we took evidence from the Secretary of State for Wales and senior officials on the Wales Office Annual Report 2007.¹² As well as considering the policy, finance and administration of the Department, we took the opportunity to question the Secretary of State and his officials on their expectations for the Orders in Council process, and on the targets, objectives and expenditure of the Wales Office.

Legislation

45. A core task of select committees identified by the Liaison committee is “the scrutiny of any published draft bill within the committee’s responsibilities”.¹³ There were no draft bills within our remit in 2006-07, but our work on Legislative Competence Orders in Council is closely related to this task.

Relations with the National Assembly for Wales

46. In 2004 the House of Commons and the National Assembly for Wales each agreed procedures to allow for formal joint working between the Committee and committees of the National Assembly on issues of mutual interest. This procedure, known as “reciprocal enlargement” allows the Committee to invite Assembly Members to attend and participate in the Committee’s proceedings (but not to vote), and for the National Assembly’s committees to invite members of the Welsh Affairs Committee to do likewise. On 13 July 2005 the House amended its Standing Orders so that joint working could be a permanent feature of our work.¹⁴
47. During the 2006-07 Session the opportunity to work jointly with the National Assembly for Wales did not arise, but we look forward to working jointly with the National Assembly committee in the examination of the proposed Order in Council on domiciliary care and hope that joint working will continue to play a part in the Legislative Competence Orders in Council process. We will consider inviting committees of the National Assembly to participate in our inquiry into the cross-border provision of public services for Wales.

¹² Wales Office Annual Report 2007, oral and written evidence (HC 1017-i, Session 2006-07)

¹³ 1st Report of the Liaison Committee, *Annual Report 2003* (HC 446, Session 2003-04), para 6

¹⁴ Standing Order 137A, Select committees: power to work with other committees

48. We have continued to consult with our colleagues at the National Assembly in 2006-07. We took formal evidence from Lord Elis-Thomas AM, Presiding Officer, Jane Hutt AM, Business Minister, Jenny Randerson AM, Chair, Committee on Standing Orders, and from officials on the Legislative Competence Orders in Council process. In addition Jane Hutt AM, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, and officials gave evidence on the proposed Legislative Competence Order in Council on additional learning needs. We heard evidence from Andrew Davies AM, Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks, and officials in relation to our inquiry on globalisation and its impact on Wales.

Visits to Wales

49. Two of our 25 formal meetings were held in Wales. We also held many informal meetings with individuals and organisations in Wales.¹⁵ Over the course of the last year we met with individuals and organisations in the North West of England (in relation to our inquiry into Welsh prisoners in the prison estate), in Swansea, Llanelli, Wrexham, Ruabon, Chirk, Aberaeron, Llandysul and Aberystwyth. We consider these meetings vital to our inquiries as they ensure we can accurately gauge the views and concerns of the people of Wales. We think it is important that the Committee maintains a high profile in Wales.

Events

50. The Committee has also hosted events which have a national or cultural significance for Wales. At the start of the last session the Committee hosted the launch of the *Library of Wales Series*, to which all Welsh MPs and other parliamentarians with links to Wales were invited. In 2007 the Committee hosted a breakfast meeting between Higher Education Wales and Welsh MPs, and a reception for Paul Robeson Jr. to commemorate the bi-centenary of the abolition of slavery. Members of the Committee contributed to the Welsh Grand Committee's debate on Wednesday 12 December 2007 on the Government's Legislative Programme.

Conclusion

51. In 2006-07 we continued to scrutinise Government policy across a number of Departments as it affects Wales, including contributing to the Government's programme for increasing the overall prison capacity in England and Wales, and to its plans for future energy generation. We look forward to continuing this role in 2007-08, within our terms of reference, and we look forward to strengthening our relations with the National Assembly for Wales.

¹⁵ See Annex A

Annex A

Table 1 Subjects covered by the Welsh Affairs Committee in 2006-07

| Subject | Evidence Sessions held in 2006-07 | Sub Committee | Outcome |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Welsh prisoners in the prison estate | 6 | No | Report, June 2007 |
| Legislative Competence Orders in Council | 1 | No | Report June 2007 |
| Energy in Wales: follow-up inquiry | 2 | No | Report, December 2007 |
| The proposed Legislative Competence Order in Council on additional learning needs | 2 | No | Report, December 2007 |
| Wales Office Annual Report | 1 | No | Evidence published December 2007 |

Annex B

Table 2 Visits by the Welsh Affairs Committee in 2006-07

| Location | Purpose of visit |
|---|--|
| North West England | Inquiry into Welsh prisoners in the prison estate |
| Swansea, Llanelli, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend | Inquiry into Globalisation and its impact on Wales |
| Czech Republic and Poland | Inquiry into Globalisation and its impact on Wales |
| Chirk, Ruabon and Wrexham | Inquiry into Globalisation and its impact on Wales |
| Cardiff | In an observer capacity on the proposed Legislative Competence Order in Council on additional learning needs |
| China | Inquiry into Globalisation and its impact on Wales |
| Aberaeron, Llandysul and Aberystwyth | Inquiry into Globalisation and its impact on Wales |

Annex C

Witness feedback forms

1. Since the beginning of 2007 witnesses have been invited to provide feedback on their experience before the Committee, to identify where Committee Members and staff could usefully improve their working practices, and to ensure that the principal way in which we interact directly with the outside world is viewed as favourably as possible.
2. The comments submitted are considered regularly by committee staff, and some changes to the information provided to witnesses in advance of the session have been implemented. For example, links to the archive of previous evidence sessions on the parliamentary website are sent to witnesses, giving them the opportunity to see in advance how the Committee conducts its evidence sessions.
3. The majority of the critical comments we received related to the two evidence sessions in our follow-up inquiry into the energy mix in Wales. Respondents said that there were too many witnesses at the same time, and that as a result some felt they had insufficient time to develop their answers. Comments included: “specific questions were not able to be answered in full due to time constraints”, “the three companies should have been heard separately”, “time was short even though there was a time overrun”, and “we were being rushed”.
4. We agree that there were too many witnesses at these sessions, which may have been unfair on some. We have been taking evidence from smaller groups of witnesses during our globalisation inquiry, and have not received any comments along these lines.
5. One witness commented that they had not been given sufficient notice of their evidence session, and that insufficient information had been provided by staff in advance of that session. This related to a session arranged at short notice on a Committee visit to North Wales. We agree that on this occasion limited notice of the session was given. We endeavour to organise our forthcoming programme some weeks in advance to allow witnesses sufficient time to submit well-considered written evidence, and to allow them to adequately prepare.
6. Committee staff are happy to discuss with witnesses in advance how the Committee conducts its evidence sessions and to give details of any administrative arrangements. If required, staff may also give advice on the main issues the Committee expects to cover during the session.
7. Staff will continue to monitor witnesses’ feedback.

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 5 February 2008

Members present:

Dr Hywel Francis, in the Chair

Mr Martin Jones
Alun Michael

Mark Pritchard
Mark Williams

Draft Report (Work of the Committee in 2007), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 51 read and agreed to.

Annexes read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Third Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

[Adjourned until Tuesday 19 February at 10.00 a.m.]

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2007-08

| | | |
|---------------|---|--------|
| First Report | Energy in Wales: follow up inquiry | HC 177 |
| Second Report | The proposed Legislative Competence Order in Council on additional learning needs | HC 44 |
| Third Report | Work of the Committee in 2007 | HC 325 |

Session 2006-07

| | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|
| First Report | Work of the Committee in 2005-06 | HC 291 |
| Second Report | Legislative Competence Orders in Council | HC 175 |
| Third Report | Welsh Prisoners in the Prison Estate | HC 74 (Cm 7195) |
| First Special Report | Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2006-07, Legislative Competence Orders in Council | HC 986 |

Session 2005-06

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------|
| First Report | Government White Paper: Better Governance for Wales | HC 551 |
| Second Report | Proposed Restructuring of the Police Forces in Wales | HC 751 |
| Third Report | Energy in Wales | HC 876-I |
| Oral and Written Evidence | Energy in Wales | HC 876-II |
| Fourth Report | Future of RAF St Athan | HC 1129 |
| Fifth Report | Current Restructuring of the Police Forces in Wales | HC 1418 |
| Oral and Written Evidence | NHS Dentistry in Wales | HC 771-i |
| First Special Report | Government Response to the Committee's Second and Third Reports of Session 2004-05, Manufacturing and Trade in Wales and Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Bill | HC 433 |
| Second Special Report | Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2004-05, Police Service, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Wales | HC 514 |
| Third Special Report | Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2005-06, Government White Paper: Better Governance for Wales | HC 839 |
| Fourth Special Report | Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2005-06, Proposed Restructuring of the Police Forces in Wales | HC 1431 |

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---------|
| Fifth Special Report | Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2005-06, Energy in Wales | HC 1656 |
| Sixth Special Report | Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2005-06, Future of RAF St Athan | HC 1657 |
| Seventh Special Report | Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2005-06, Current Restructuring of the Police Forces in Wales | HC 1695 |