Committee update
Welcome to the EIS Committee update for this term. In this update you will find a roundup of the Committee’s recent activities, including some information on our reviews into Public procurement in the foundational economy, Access to Banking, the Decarbonisation of Transport, Electric Vehicle Charging, Barriers facing small homebuilding firms, and Regional Skills Partnerships. You will also find some information on our forward work programme. The update has been produced by the Clerking team which supports the Committee’s work. We hope that you will find it helpful as a way to keep up to date with the Committee’s work and as a launch pad to engage with the Committee.

The Committee’s twitter feed @SeneddEIS carries all our latest news, and details of inquiries and meetings.

Work undertaken – Autumn 2019

Public procurement in the foundational economy
The Committee undertook an inquiry into the role of Public procurement in the foundational economy. The Welsh Government recently set out its intention to increase public procurement as part of a drive to ‘create stronger local supply chains and build wealth in communities across Wales.’ We received 22 responses to our consultation and held 6 evidence sessions. The Committee will publish a report in the New Year.

Access to Banking
Following the conclusion of an inquiry into the impact of bank branch closures and the loss of ATMs on individuals, businesses and communities, the Committee published its report on 17 October. It contained 14 recommendations, and was accompanied by an Infographic. The Welsh Government responded. Russell George, Chair of the Committee, led a debate on the report in the Senedd Siambr on 11 December. The video of the debate is viewable on Senedd.tv.

Decarbonisation of transport
The Committee launched an inquiry aimed at influencing the development of the Welsh Government’s revised Wales Transport Strategy, due to be published in 2020. The strategy will include a key focus on moving to lower carbon modes of transport to meet the Welsh Government’s decarbonisation targets and reduce the growing number of Air Quality Management Areas. The inquiry took evidence from a range of stakeholders to explore whether Welsh Government’s transport emissions reduction targets, policies and proposals are achievable and sufficiently ambitious, and whether the vision for decarbonisation is sufficiently innovative.
The Committee will report in the New Year.

**Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure in Wales**

On 3 October, the Committee published its report which contained 8 recommendations. The Welsh Government responded in November.

**Barriers facing small homebuilding firms**

In an inquiry earlier this year the Committee scrutinised the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government, and will report early next year.

**Retention payments**

The Committee held a joint session with the Finance Committee in October to discuss Retention payments in the construction sector. The two committees decided to look further into the issue and will be holding another joint session in the new year.

**Regional Skills Partnerships**

Following the inquiry in May when the Committee scrutinised the Minister for Economy and Transport and the Minister for Education, the Committee published its report on 10 October, which contained 2 detailed recommendations for a change of direction. The Chair of the Committee led a debate on the report and the Government response in the Senedd Siambr on 4 December. During the debate the Minister said he would endeavour to revisit some of the initially rejected responses. The video of the debate is viewable on Senedd.tv.

**Forward Look**

This section contains details of the Committee’s forward work programme. Please note this is provisional, and subject to change according to emerging priorities.

The most up to date information on the Committee’s work programme can be found on our committee page here.

**Scrutiny of the Welsh Government’s Draft Budget 2020-21**

At its first meeting of the New Year, 9 January, the Committee will scrutinise the Minister for Economy and Transport on the Welsh Government’s Draft Budget 2020-21.

**City and Regional Growth Deals - Update**

The Committee will receive further updates on progress with the four City and Regional Growth Deals in the new year.
Transport

The Committee will undertake scrutiny of Transport for Wales, including both rail transport and TfW’s wider remit, and a wide-ranging scrutiny session on transport with the Minister for Economy and Transport in the New Year. The Committee are also planning to hold an introductory session with Lord Burns, chair of the South East Wales Transport Commission.

We are also awaiting the Welsh Government’s introduction of a Public Transport Bill focusing on bus reform.

Degree Apprenticeships

Welsh Government has committed £20m to a three year pilot of degree apprenticeships, which are currently in the areas of Digital, and Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing. The Committee’s inquiry will explore the rationale for degree apprenticeships, the process and criteria for approving them, demand from employers and learners and how it is being managed, and funding issues. It will also look at the recruitment of degree apprentices and personal characteristics of the cohorts so far, to evaluate how they reflect groups under-represented in higher education and wider Welsh Government equality ambitions, including gender balance.

The inquiry will also look at employer engagement, and seek views on the future direction and potential of degree apprenticeships.

Visits

Since we last wrote to you the Committee has undertaken two visits. On 25 September, at the invitation of Transport for Wales, Members visited Canton Rail Depot to see Transport for Wales’ preparations for autumn.

On 5 December the Committee visited ‘Super Computing Wales’ at the Redwood Building at Cardiff University. There Members were shown Cardiff Universities’ super computer “Hawk”. Members also met some academics who explained their work and how they are making use of the super computer to push forward innovation and research.
The committee with “Hawk” having a tour from Professor Roger Whitaker

Team update

We would like the opportunity to thank Gareth Price and Amy Knox who have moved on. Gareth is still at the Assembly as Interim Head of Communications, and Amy has returned to university to do a Masters. We would also like to welcome Robert Donovan who has taken over as Clerk, joining the Assembly from the Red Cross, and Jonathan Smith who is our new Committee Support Officer on secondment from the Assembly’s IT department.

Thank you

The Committee Members and team who support the Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has engaged with the Committee over the autumn term, especially those of you who supplied written evidence or came in for an evidence session, and everyone who is following the Committee’s work. We hope you have a good Christmas and look forward to working with you in the New Year.

Remit

The Committee was established on 28 June 2016 to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters, encompassing (but not restricted to): economic development; transport; infrastructure; employment; skills; and research and development, including technology and science.

The Assembly agreed to reduce the size of Committees in June 2019 - the Committee now has six Members.

Contact details

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