

Welsh Parliament

**Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport,
and International Relations Committee**

Mission Cymru

Principles for international relations

February 2026



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About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddCulture

Current Committee membership:



Committee Chair:
Delyth Jewell MS
Plaid Cymru



Mick Antoniw MS
Welsh Labour



Alun Davies MS
Welsh Labour



Gareth Davies MS
Welsh Conservatives



Heledd Fychan MS
Plaid Cymru



Lee Waters MS
Welsh Labour

The following Members attended as substitutes during this inquiry.



Hannah Blythyn MS
Welsh Labour



Siân Gwenllian MS
Plaid Cymru



Julie Morgan MS
Welsh Labour

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Chair's foreword

As this Senedd's international relations committee, we have had the unique experience of reviewing the Welsh Government's approach to international relations over a period of five years. This has presented us with an opportunity to take our own different approach in how we document our findings in this, our final dedicated international relations report.

We present Mission Cymru: a new set of principles for international relations, and a lodestar by which future governments can navigate. Its adoption would ameliorate many of the issues identified in this report that have arisen from our scrutiny of the Welsh Government. It will be incumbent on our successors in the Seventh Senedd to consider if its principles are met.

As a people on the edge of a continent, leaps of faith course throughout our history. Our long coastline, described so memorably by Jan Morris as "an open door to the world" draws us out to connect with different places and peoples, and them to us. Internationalism is inevitable.

We agree with those who have argued, in giving evidence to us, that Wales should take more confidence on the world stage. This cannot be taken for granted, nor indeed left to chance. We have heard time and again about our invaluable reputation as a welcoming nation. And we have witnessed first-hand the significant amount of goodwill, passion and expertise that advances our international relations every day.

As we enter a time of yet more turbulence in the relations that knit nations together, the need for clear and measurable principles for our own international relations activity has never been greater. Geography may have placed us at the corner of a continent, but Wales's voice must never be marginal.

To those who have helped shape Wales's direction on the world stage thus far, our gratitude is immense. Yours have been the first steps, though a long road stretches before us.

Indeed: the future beckons.

Delyth Jewell MS

Committee Chair

1. Our approach

1. We have taken a different approach to reporting for this inquiry.
2. Rather than issue recommendations for the current government, we have developed Mission Cymru, a new set of 12 principles for Wales's international relations and the approach future governments should take.
3. The principles draw on the wide range of evidence we have received for this inquiry and throughout the Sixth Senedd. They cover all aspects of international relations, from cabinet portfolio responsibilities, strategies, reporting, delivery, and resources.
4. We have spent five years establishing an understanding of the Welsh Government's approach to international relations. We have seen positive examples of meaningful impact demonstrating why Wales has an important contribution to make on the world stage.
5. As this Senedd's international relations committee, we want to make a positive and constructive contribution to our international story that will stand the test of time. We know how vital it is that Wales has a good approach and how important it is that future governments get it right.
6. We call on future governments to adopt Mission Cymru in full. Partial adoption will not produce the intended, or desired, effects. Its adoption would guarantee that Wales consistently delivers on its international relations ambitions and realises its potential. The rich body of evidence we have gathered should, in future, continue to inform the most consequential task of presenting Wales to the world.

Principle 1. Future governments should adopt Mission Cymru as a set of core principles for Wales's international relations.

Recommendation 1. The Welsh Government should provide its response to this report and each of the Mission Cymru principles.

Recommendation 2. Future governments should adopt Mission Cymru as a set of core principles for Wales's international relations.

Mission Cymru

Principle 1. Future governments should adopt Mission Cymru as a set of core principles for Wales's international relations. Page 6

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. Page 15

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. Page 15

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. Page 23

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. Page 30

Principle 6. Future governments should maintain a dedicated space on its website to celebrate key relationships and to publish international agreements. Page 30

Principle 7. Future governments should adapt and mainstream a Team Wales approach for joint working with stakeholders across its international relations activity. Page 31

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. Page 44

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. Page 44

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.....Page 53

Principle 11. Future governments should ensure that resource for international relations is sufficient to realise their strategic ambition.....Page 53

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.....Page 53

2. Introduction

Background

7. International relations and international development assistance and co-operation are reserved matters, as provided by paragraph 10 of Schedule 7A to the Government of Wales Act 2006.¹ However, there is scope for the Welsh Government to act in an international capacity. For example, it can:

- conclude non-binding agreements with other governments in devolved areas;
- hold meetings with counterparts from other countries; and
- make representations about any matter affecting Wales.

8. With the Welsh Government's 2020 International Strategy ("the Strategy") and accompanying actions plans coming to an end in 2025, the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee (the Committee) decided to consider the impact of the Strategy and the Welsh Government's approach to international relations beyond 2025.

Terms of reference

9. We launched our inquiry with the following terms of reference:

- The success of the International Strategy and priorities for the Welsh Government's international relations beyond 2025.
- How the Welsh Government's priority relationships align to the Strategy's aims and objectives.
- The availability of information relating to the Welsh Government's international activities and delivery of the Strategy.
- The Welsh Government's future approach to Wales's international relations.
- How the Welsh Government's international relations activity is resourced.

¹ Government of Wales Act 2006

Evidence gathering

- 10.** A public consultation was launched on 26 July 2024 and closed on 13 December 2024. We received 19 responses to the consultation.²
- 11.** On 29 January 2025, we reviewed the consultation responses received and decided to wait until publication of the Welsh Government's International Delivery Plan before taking oral evidence.
- 12.** On 2 April 2025 we received a technical briefing on the Welsh Government's International Delivery Plan.
- 13.** We held six oral evidence sessions with stakeholders, from 8 to 21 May 2025. We heard oral evidence from the First Minister, Eluned Morgan MS, on 18 June 2025.
- 14.** Claire O'Shea submitted written evidence to the Committee as co-Chair of the Wales Overseas Agencies Group. She was due to provide oral evidence but sadly passed away on 12 May 2025. Claire's evidence is used extensively in this report and was invaluable in informing our approach.
- 15.** We are grateful to all those who contributed to our inquiry. Details of all evidence gathered can be found in the Annexes to this report.

² All responses to the consultation can be found on the [Committee's website](#).

3. Responsibility for international relations

16. International relations returned to the First Minister's portfolio in 2021 after a decision not to reappoint a minister for international relations to the Cabinet (a position held by the current First Minister between December 2018 - October 2020).³

17. In the Sixth Senedd, the First Minister is responsible for:⁴

- international relations including the overseas office network;
- Wales and Africa;
- Wales and Europe;
- national security, including counterterrorism and cyber security; and
- the Ministerial Code, including its international duties.

18. This covers the Welsh Government's international relations strategies, including the International Strategy, four of its five action plans and the International Delivery Plan.

19. Other ministers are responsible for elements of the Welsh Government's international relations.⁵ For example, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS, is responsible for the Strategy's Export Action Plan. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS, was responsible for the Strategy's Wales and Africa Action Plan until it passed to the First Minister in December 2024.⁶

20. Stakeholders have told the Committee that there are advantages and disadvantages to a dedicated Minister or the First Minister holding responsibility for international relations. For example, a dedicated post meant greater Ministerial access but the First Minister's higher profile brings more opportunities.⁷

³ Welsh Government: [Responsibilities of the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language](#)

⁴ Welsh Government: [Responsibilities of the First Minister](#)

⁵ Welsh Government: [Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers](#)

⁶ Welsh Government: [Response to draft budget scrutiny 2025-26](#), page 7

⁷ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [Welsh Government international relations](#)

21. Taith said the loss of a dedicated minister “may have damaged the ability to deliver some elements of the strategy”⁸ and that the dedicated post would improve coordination of government departments and stakeholder involvement.⁹

22. Wales Overseas Agencies Group (WOAG) explained how regular meetings with the First Minister previously took place but that it had “fallen down the priority list, so we don’t have any formal relationship”¹⁰. WOAG said:

“When the strategy was written, Eluned Morgan was the Minister responsible for international relations. And now we look where international relations is, it’s part of the First Minister’s portfolio, and we haven’t met with the current First Minister, we never met with Vaughan Gething, and letters have taken some time to be responded to.”¹¹

23. The British Council said “there are advantages to both models” but that:

“Either model should ensure international connections are across Wales’ priorities, more so since the UK’s exit from the EU, with a core team as the driving force but drawing across all government departments and partners for full impact.”¹²

Working with other governments

24. Historically, domestic intergovernmental cooperation on international and EU relations were contained in two concordats that formed part of a 2013 Devolution Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).¹³

25. In January 2022, the post-Brexit Intergovernmental Relations Review set out new ways the UK’s governments would cooperate across a range of key areas of shared responsibility.¹⁴ An International Relations Concordat was planned but

⁸ WGIR 03: Taith – Consultation response, page 2

⁹ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 8 May 2025, paragraph 284

¹⁰ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025, paragraph 201

¹¹ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025, paragraph 197

¹² WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response, page 7

¹³ Memorandum of Understanding Between the UK Government and Devolved Administrations – October 2013

¹⁴ UK Government: Document collection on Intergovernmental relations

never materialised and the 2013 MoU has therefore not been entirely superseded. The First Minister confirmed in evidence that there had been no progress on the Concordat as of June 2025.¹⁵

26. At a strategic level, intergovernmental relations is overseen by the Interministerial Standing Committee but there is limited information published on this meeting of the UK's governments. For example, a recent Welsh Government notification listed international affairs as an area for discussion, but no further detail was provided.¹⁶

Scrutiny arrangements

27. First Ministers have appeared before the Committee once annually for general scrutiny. Successive First Ministers have declined to appear in person for draft budget scrutiny, a position which the Committee has criticised strongly.¹⁷

28. The current First Minister has also recently declined to appear for Wales-Ireland relations sessions,¹⁸ in contrast to former First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS, who provided oral evidence to the Committee's original 2023 inquiry.¹⁹

29. Since taking office in August 2024,²⁰ the First Minister has not attended Plenary debates on the Committee's international relations reports. Instead, other Cabinet Secretaries have responded as follows:

- The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS, responded to its Culture Shock inquiry in February 2025,²¹ and to the cross-committee report on the implementation of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement in November 2025.²²

¹⁵ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 18 June 2025](#), paragraph 167

¹⁶ Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs: [Copy correspondence in accordance with the Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement - 18 November 2025](#)

¹⁷ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [Report on the draft budget for 2026-27](#), page 48

¹⁸ First Minister: [Correspondence – 8 December 2025](#)

¹⁹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 10 May 2023](#)

²⁰ Welsh Government: [First Minister of Wales](#)

²¹ [Plenary: Record of Proceedings – 26 March 2025](#), paragraph 260

²² [Plenary: Record of Proceedings – 5 November 2025](#), paragraph 269

- The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt MS, responded to the Committee's second annual international relations report debate in May 2025.²³

30. In December 2024, the First Minister attended the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister for a "Wales and the World" themed session, where the Chair of this Committee was in attendance.²⁴

Our view

That the First Minister has declined invitations to attend Committee in person outside an annual session is highly unsatisfactory and contrasts starkly with the approach taken by other Cabinet Secretaries to scrutiny of international matters in their portfolios.

We remain of the view, that it is a matter for the Senedd, and not the Welsh Government, to determine what constitutes appropriate and effective scrutiny, and how such scrutiny should be conducted. While often useful, scrutiny via correspondence is no replacement for in-person exchanges.

As a matter of principle, if a First Minister chooses to take on policy responsibilities, they should make themselves available to be held to account for those responsibilities. If a First Minister is unable to do so due to competing demands on their time, they should consider delegating those responsibilities to another Minister.

In the Seventh Senedd, the responsible Minister should be 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. This includes participation in person in general scrutiny, draft budget scrutiny, inquiries, and ad hoc sessions as required. In-person attendance at committee and other relevant Plenary debates should be recognised as an important and valuable opportunity to make the case for Wales's international relations activity.

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

²³ [Plenary: Record of Proceedings – 21 May 2025](#), item 6

²⁴ [Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister: Record of Proceedings - 13 December 2024](#), paragraph 8

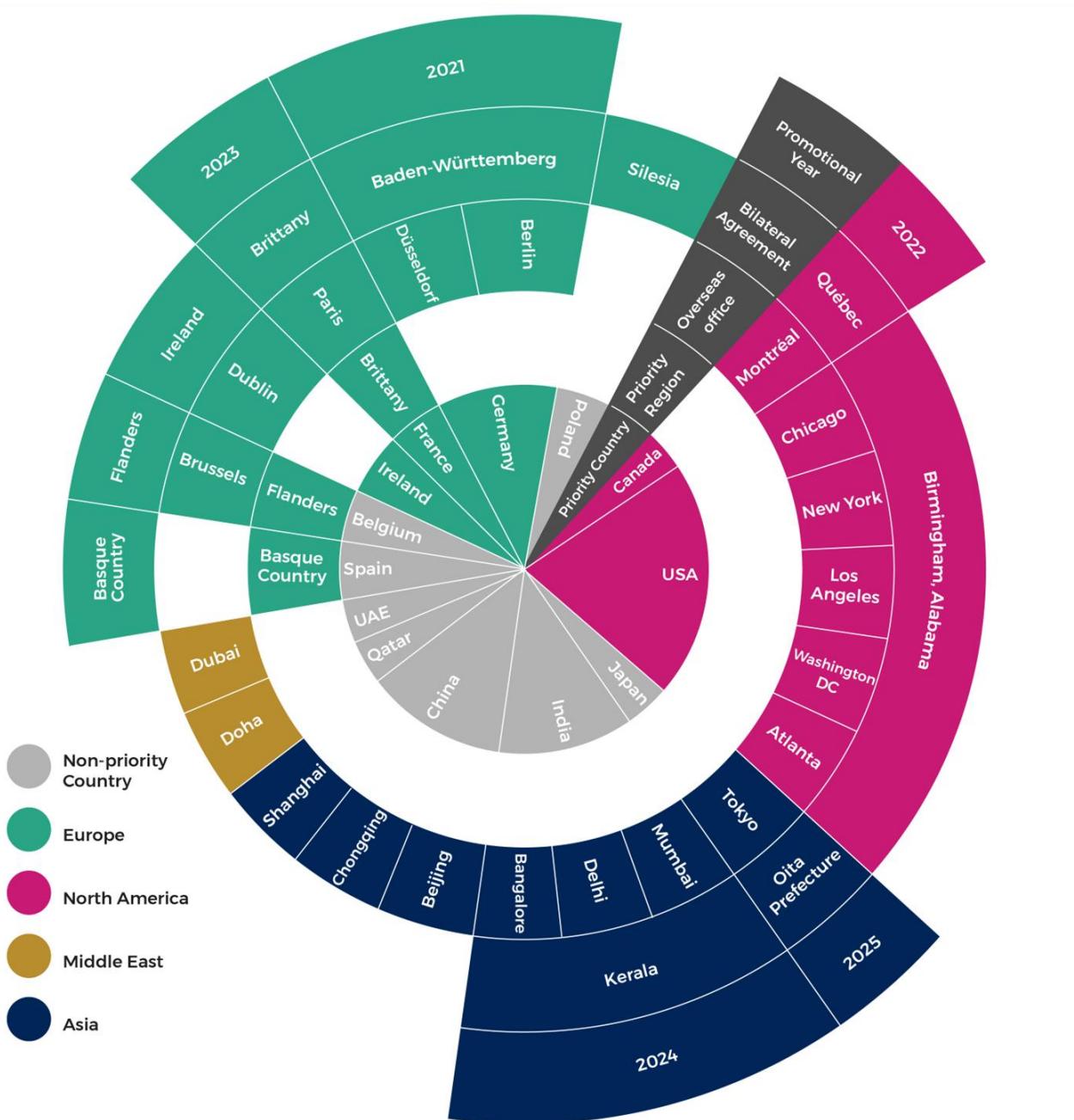
Principle 2. Future governments should ensure that a responsible Minister is subject to scrutiny for Wales's international relations in the same way as any other portfolio Minister. Scrutiny arrangements should have parity with the expectations placed on all Cabinet Secretaries.

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.

4. Welsh Government approach

31. Wales has many international connections, some of which predate the formation of the United Kingdom. These are reflected in its international relations arrangements, shown in Figure 1. These are discussed throughout this report.

Figure 1: Welsh Government's international arrangements



Strategies

32. Since 2020, the Welsh Government has had multiple strategies and action plans in place for international relations and international development.

33. The Welsh Government's International Strategy, published in January 2020, sets three core ambitions to:

1. Raise Wales's profile on the international stage;
2. Grow the Welsh economy by increasing exports and attracting inward investment; and
3. Establish Wales as a globally responsible nation.²⁵

34. In November 2020, the Welsh Government published five action plans to accompany the Strategy on diaspora engagement, priority regional relationships and networks, international relations through public diplomacy and soft power, Wales and Africa, and exports.²⁶

35. Taken together, the Strategy and action plans contain 278 actions, shown in Table 1 below.²⁷

Table 1: Actions listed in the International Strategy and action plans

International Strategy	Diaspora engagement	Priority regional relationships	Public diplomacy and soft power	Wales and Africa	Export Action Plan	Total
62	19	55	74	21	47	278

36. In June 2022, the then First Minister Mark Drakeford MS said he would be "absolutely happy" to discuss a future International Strategy with the Committee as the expiration of the Strategy in December 2025 approached.²⁸

²⁵ Welsh Government: International engagement for Wales Strategy and delivery plan

²⁶ Welsh Government: International action plans

²⁷ Full list of actions contained in the Welsh Government's International Strategy and action plans - 8 May 2025

²⁸ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 23 June 2022, paragraph 64

37. In the following years, First Ministers, Mark Drakeford MS and then Vaughan Gething MS, spoke of a “soft refresh” of the Strategy to cover the time remaining between its expiration and the May 2026 Senedd election.²⁹

38. On 13 December 2024, First Minister Eluned Morgan MS told the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister that a new plan would replace the refresh. Its focus would be on delivering the remaining parts of the Strategy in the time remaining before the election.³⁰

39. The International Delivery Plan (IDP), published on 3 April 2025, states it “will continue to work to deliver the three core aims of the International Strategy”³¹. Its 15 new aims are described as “our top priorities for delivery over the next year”. They are not arranged under the Strategy’s three core aims and do not replicate or link to activities listed in the Strategy and action plans.

40. The Committee understood that the Strategy and actions plans would expire at the end of 2025, and that the new IDP would bridge the gap between the Strategy’s expiration and the 2026 election. However, in November 2025, the First Minister informed the Committee that the Strategy and IDP will both expire in March 2026:

“The next financial year reflects a transitional period as the International Strategy and International Delivery Plan will come to an end in March 2026 and a new government term will commence in May 2026.”³²

41. Figure 2 shows the dates of these strategies and plans since the original Strategy’s launch in January 2020.

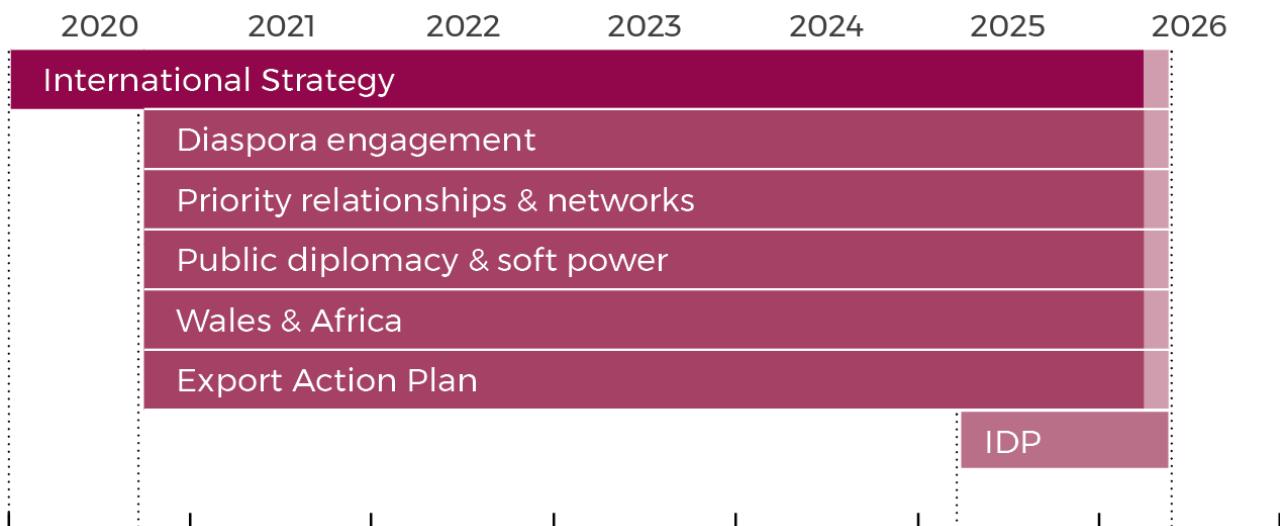
²⁹ The Committee received commitments from former First Ministers, Mark Drakeford MS and Vaughan Gething MS in relation to the Strategy’s refresh in 2023-24. The former committed to refreshing the Strategy in 2025 to cover the time until the 2026 Senedd election, and the latter confirmed that plans to review the refresh were underway.

³⁰ Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister: Record of Proceedings - 13 December 2024, paragraphs 12-15

³¹ Welsh Government: International engagement for Wales: strategy and delivery plan

³² Welsh Government: written evidence on the 2026-27 draft budget - 31 October 2025, page 3

Figure 2: Live Welsh Government international relations strategies and plans (2020-2026)



42. Figure 2 does not show:

- additional plans, such as for the Welsh Government’s promotional ‘Wales and/in’ years;
- plans relating to the delivery of international agreements; and
- other strategies with an international dimension, for example its trade policy.³³

Evidence

43. Respondents were in favour of Wales having an international strategy and agreed with the Welsh Government’s three core aims.

44. The British Council said that having “a clearly articulated international strategy is in itself important, as it signifies the value it places in international work as an outward looking and globally responsible nation”³⁴. Universities Wales agreed, saying the “very existence of a strategy is important as it outlines Wales’s ambitions and values”³⁵. Dr Elin Royles said it “provided a solid base for action,”³⁶ and Fair Trade Wales said it “set a positive tone and provided the hook on which to hang action”³⁷.

³³ Welsh Government: [The Welsh Government’s approach to trade policy](#)

³⁴ [WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response](#), page 2

³⁵ [WGIR 08: Universities Wales – Consultation response](#), page 1

³⁶ [WGIR 02: Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University – Consultation response](#), page 2

³⁷ [WGIR 05: Fair Trade Wales – Consultation response](#), page 1

45. The Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) spoke of the value of having a:

*"common shared passion for something that is beyond what's on paper or in policy."*³⁸

46. In oral evidence, Dr Elin Royles said that "the variety and range of international activity undertaken by Welsh Government is excellent"³⁹ but some called for more focus to increase impact. For example, the British Council said "there is a good argument to focus on a tighter strategy and set of priorities resourced appropriately drawing on partners for support"⁴⁰. It also believed that:

*"Wales should take more confidence and ambition on the international stage."*⁴¹

47. A lack of formal consultation and/or engagement on the IDP was evidenced by witnesses, with those who reported no engagement outnumbering those who did.⁴² For example:

- Global Health Partnerships said that it's mentioned in the Strategy but was unaware of its refresh.⁴³
- CSconnected said that "we do enjoy close engagement, but I think there are sometimes strategies—sub-strategies and plans—being developed without consulting with the industry sector"⁴⁴.
- WOAG said "nobody within WOAG has had any conversation with anyone in Welsh Government on the making of that plan, and WOAG members have all said to me that they have no defined channel of engagement. But we really would value and appreciate feeding into

³⁸ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), paragraph 99

³⁹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 8 May 2025](#), paragraph 115

⁴⁰ [WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response](#), page 8

⁴¹ [WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response](#), page 9

⁴² All oral evidence sessions relating to the inquiry can be found on the [Committee's website](#).

⁴³ [WGIR 17: Global Health Partnerships Cymru – Consultation response](#), page 3

⁴⁴ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 21 May 2025](#), paragraph 71

making sure that the deliverables of this new 12-month plan do meet the work that we're delivering"⁴⁵.

- Others were aware of the IDP through routine meetings with the Welsh Government but the IDP was not the focus.⁴⁶

48. Many were unsure of the relationship between the Strategy and the IDP and had different views on its 15 aims, with the Urdd noting a lack of focus on the Welsh language.⁴⁷ Taith asked:

"What are the strategic objectives? How are we going to do that? And I think the one bit that's missing, maybe, is who is part of that team Cymru, who are the stakeholders that are going to support the strategy [...]"

*"...the plan could do with a bit more refinement. It looks like a shopping list a little bit, and it would be better to just maybe look at what are the strategy priorities, what are the threads that should cut across all those priorities."*⁴⁸

49. There was significant uncertainty about the relationship between international relations strategies and other Welsh Government strategies.⁴⁹ There were calls for greater links with these, including for trade, economy, culture and the Welsh language.⁵⁰ WOAG also highlighted:

*"a need to address contradictions in policy, such as promoting Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary while enabling activities that may exacerbate global displacement and conflict."*⁵¹

50. While some respondents welcomed the Strategy's focus on key industries, such as cyber security, semi-conductors and the creative industries, others

⁴⁵ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), paragraph 233

⁴⁶ All oral evidence sessions relating to the inquiry can be found on the [Committee's website](#)

⁴⁷ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 8 May 2025](#), paragraph 214

⁴⁸ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 8 May 2025](#), paragraphs 211 and 228

⁴⁹ [Welsh Government: Written Statement: Nation of Sanctuary – 6 October 2025](#)

⁵⁰ For example [WGIR 12: Federation of Small Businesses – Consultation response](#) and [WGIR 14: Colleges Wales – Consultation response](#)

⁵¹ [WGIR 13: Wales Overseas Agencies Group – Consultation response](#), page 15

identified areas where greater focus is needed. Education, languages, creative industries, climate change, international development, cultural and sports diplomacy and international youth exchanges were often identified by multiple respondents.⁵² Welsh Triathlon added that:

*"I don't think that you can underestimate the impact of sport in this arena - but it is rarely mentioned."*⁵³

51. Some respondents suggested new action plans or strategies, such as a: Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural relations action plan;⁵⁴ an International Education Strategy;⁵⁵ and an International Development Strategy.⁵⁶

Our view

In our scrutiny of international relations in the Sixth Senedd, we have found a serious lack of strategic direction.

The number of live international relations strategies and plans is unhelpful and has introduced uncertainty and confusion. This makes understanding the Welsh Government's international relations priorities unacceptably challenging for the public, stakeholders, and the Senedd.

The breadth of activity, while viewed positively by some witnesses, posed further issues in holding the Welsh Government to account and we agree with calls for a narrower focus in future.

There is a clear disconnect between these strategies and what is happening on the ground in areas where Wales excels internationally. With the exception of a small group, witnesses described varied levels of involvement in their development, despite their impressive level of expertise and experience.

A future Welsh Government must step into this void.

It should have a concise, focused and clear strategy, guided by high-level ambition and a small number of overarching aims. All international

⁵² All consultation responses can be found on the [Committee's webpage](#).

⁵³ [WGIR 01: Welsh Triathlon – Consultation response](#), page 2

⁵⁴ [WGIR 15: Wales Arts International – Consultation response](#), page 3

⁵⁵ [WGIR 04: Coleg Sir Gar & Coleg Ceredigion – Consultation response](#), page 1

⁵⁶ [WGIR 13: Wales Overseas Agencies Group – Consultation response](#), page 3

arrangements and activity should be clearly set out and explained, with focused actions flowing from key objectives.

To maintain focus, additional plans and strategies should be avoided. Unforeseen opportunities should be rigorously examined to assess their contribution to the strategy's aims and objectives. Opportunities that do not contribute directly to delivery should not be pursued and resources retained for those that do.

This simple but crucial approach would eliminate many of the serious issues we identify in this report. It would provide leadership, strategic focus, and set a clear course for others to follow, regardless of the level of ambition and chosen approach.

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.

Priority relationships

52. The Strategy identifies the following priority international relationships for Wales:

- *"Priority countries: Germany, France, Ireland, US and Canada; and*
- *Priority regions: Basque Country, Brittany and Flanders."*

53. These were chosen "because of common cultural and linguistic heritage, shared values and common economic and social interests"⁵⁷.

54. The European Union is also referenced in the Strategy as Wales's "most important partner"⁵⁸. In November 2023, the Committee issued key recommendations for Wales-EU relations, including calling for a dedicated EU strategy and for the EU to be included as a priority relationship.⁵⁹ The then First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS, responded that the Strategy's European dimension

⁵⁷ Welsh Government: [International engagement for Wales: strategy and delivery plan](#)

⁵⁸ Welsh Government: [International engagement for Wales: strategy and delivery plan](#)

⁵⁹ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [International Relations Annual Report 2022-23 - November 2023](#), recommendations 4-7

could be “made more explicit” for the planned refresh in 2025.⁶⁰ In February 2024, he confirmed that he did not believe a separate EU strategy was needed at that time,⁶¹ a position with which his successor, Vaughan Gething MS, agreed in June 2024.⁶²

55. The Committee’s 2023 Wales-Ireland relations inquiry assessed the effectiveness of the Welsh Government’s approach and recommended improving the coordination, visibility and resource for this priority relationship.⁶³ The then First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS, agreed that the Committee’s findings would be reflected in future international agreements and future Wales-Ireland relations.⁶⁴

Evidence

56. There was mixed awareness amongst respondents of the Welsh Government’s priority relationships. Dr Elin Royles⁶⁵ and Wales Arts International⁶⁶ welcomed setting out priority relationships. Wales Arts International also specifically welcomed the nation/region approach.⁶⁷ Some respondents said that the Welsh Government’s priority relationships mirrored their own⁶⁸ but this wasn’t the case for all.⁶⁹ Universities Wales highlighted limited consultation on their selection.⁷⁰

57. For the future, some suggested countries and places as priority relationships. For example, the Committee has received evidence of widespread support for the EU as a priority relation since 2021 and this was strongly reiterated in evidence to this inquiry.⁷¹ Some respondents also advocated for extending the geographical

⁶⁰ Welsh Government: [Response to International Relations Annual Report 2022-23 – 16 January 2024](#)

⁶¹ First Minister: [Copy correspondence to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee – 14 February 2024](#)

⁶² [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 19 June 2024](#)

⁶³ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: Wales-Ireland relations report – October 2023](#)

⁶⁴ A summary of the findings can be found in the Senedd Research article: [Wales-Ireland relations: More than just geography](#)

⁶⁵ [WGIR 02: Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University – Consultation response](#)

⁶⁶ [WGIR 15: Wales Arts International – Consultation response](#)

⁶⁷ [WGIR 15: Wales Arts International – Consultation response](#)

⁶⁸ [WGIR 08: Universities Wales – Consultation response, WGIR 09: Size of Wales – Consultation response and WGIR 03: Taith – Consultation response](#)

⁶⁹ Including [WGIR 15: Wales Arts International – Consultation response](#), [WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response](#) and [WGIR 08: Universities Wales – Consultation response](#)

⁷⁰ [WGIR 08: Universities Wales – Consultation response](#)

⁷¹ [WGIR 03: Taith – Consultation response](#), [WGIR 08: Universities Wales – Consultation response](#), [WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response](#), [WGIR 13: Wales Overseas Agencies Group – Consultation response](#), [WGIR 18: Cardiff University – Consultation response](#), and [WGIR 14: Colleges Wales – Consultation response](#)

remit further afield. The Global South, Singapore, Canada, New Zealand and Australia were all referenced.⁷²

58. Increased working with the UK Government and UK bodies was a priority for many, including the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB),⁷³ Dr Elin Royles⁷⁴ and the British Council.⁷⁵ There was also support from individual respondents for the following to become priority relations: diaspora and business,⁷⁶ UNESCO,⁷⁷ SMEs,⁷⁸ international and European networking.⁷⁹

59. Others suggested taking a values-based approach instead. The Future Generations Commissioner advocated for using the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, while WOAG argued that Wales should align its relations with the principle of global responsibility.⁸⁰ However, the British Council, explained that, while “commendable”:

“...we would caution against this driving decisions on engagement in countries where values don’t align. This reduces the powerful impact of cultural diplomacy.

It would be preferable to engage on the areas that do align whilst retaining one’s own values, rather than disengage since there are many countries in the world whose values are not similar to our own.”⁸¹

International agreements

60. The Welsh Government can conclude non-binding international agreements in devolved areas. It has agreements with countries, regions and cities.

⁷² WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response, WGIR 14: Colleges Wales – Consultation response and WGIR 18: Cardiff University – Consultation response.

⁷³ WGIR 12: Federation of Small Businesses – Consultation response

⁷⁴ WGIR 02: Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University – Consultation response

⁷⁵ WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response

⁷⁶ WGIR 16: Global Welsh – Consultation response

⁷⁷ WGIR 02: Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University – Consultation response

⁷⁸ WGIR 12: Federation of Small Businesses – Consultation response

⁷⁹ WGIR 02: Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University – Consultation response

⁸⁰ Welsh Government: Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, WGIR 13: Wales Overseas Agencies Group – Consultation response and Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025, paragraph 172

⁸¹ WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response, page 5

The number of Welsh Government international agreements is unknown

61. Nine agreements are shown on a dedicated webpage on the Welsh Government's website which was established at the Committee's request.⁸² These are with: Ireland, Quebec, Basque Country, Oita Prefecture, Flanders, Brittany, Baden-Württemberg, Silesia, and Birmingham, Alabama. However, twelve agreements are listed in the Strategy.⁸³

62. The webpage's original title was "International bilateral agreements" but this was later changed to "Cross-cutting bilateral agreements" as this Committee exchanged correspondence with the former First Minister, Vaughan Gething MS, on agreements which appeared to be missing.⁸⁴ For example, the healthcare recruitment agreement with the Indian state of Kerala is not on the webpage.⁸⁵

63. The former First Minister explained that the webpage had been updated to include agreements:

*"that are delivered across government, coordinated by my International Relations team, rather than single policy agreements."*⁸⁶

64. The result of this revised approach is that it is unclear how many international agreements the Welsh Government has in place, and with whom. The Committee has not succeeded in obtaining a complete list of the Welsh Government's international agreements, despite multiple requests.

65. The latest position, explained by the First Minister, is that:

"...documents that could be considered international agreements are being signed regularly across the whole of government to enable the delivery of outcomes and to list every document that could be considered an international agreement would take too much time to gather, distract from delivery, and would not drive forward the delivery

⁸² Welsh Government: [Cross-cutting bilateral agreements](#)

⁸³ Welsh Government: [International strategy](#), Annexe A - Memoranda of Understanding

⁸⁴ First Minister: [Correspondence regarding the Rennes Declaration – 2 July 2024](#)

⁸⁵ Welsh Government: [Written Statement: Government of Kerala Memorandum of Understanding – 2 March 2024](#)

⁸⁶ First Minister: [Correspondence regarding the Rennes Declaration – 2 July 2024](#)

of our objectives. It is for individual policy areas to determine if they want to publish details of their international agreements.”⁸⁷

Text of international agreements

66. The Committee has queried why the Welsh Government does not publish copies of international agreements, unlike some of its international partners. For example, both the governments of Ireland⁸⁸ and Baden-Württemberg⁸⁹ have dedicated webpages celebrating their agreements with Wales with the text available in multiple languages.

67. In June 2024, the then First Minister Vaughan Gething MS, confirmed that summaries of the agreements were added to the webpage at the Committee’s request but that an oversight, identified by the Committee, had meant that a summary of the Alabama International Friendship Pact was not published. This was subsequently rectified.⁹⁰

Notification of new and renewed international agreements

68. The Committee has requested, on multiple occasions, to be notified of new international agreements concluded by the Welsh Government, including with Baden-Württemberg and Rennes.⁹¹

69. In May 2025, the First Minister accepted a recommendation from the Committee and agreed to put “mechanisms in place to notify the Committee when new cross-cutting international bilateral agreements are signed”⁹².

70. Despite this commitment, the Committee was not notified formally of the Ireland-Wales Shared Statement 2030, published on 3 July 2025. The Welsh Government’s Dublin office team provided a technical briefing on the agreement later that month.

⁸⁷ Welsh Government: [Response to International Relations Annual Report 2024-25 – 9 May 2025](#), page 5

⁸⁸ Irish Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: [Ireland-Wales Shared Statement 2030](#)

⁸⁹ [Wales and Baden Württemberg expand cooperation – 14 November 2023](#)

⁹⁰ First Minister: [Correspondence regarding the Rennes Declaration – 2 July 2024](#)

⁹¹ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [Correspondence to the First Minister - 13 June 2024](#) and [Correspondence to the First Minister and Minister for Economy - 19 December 2023](#)

⁹² Welsh Government: [Response to International Relations Annual Report 2024-25 – 9 May 2025](#)

71. The IDP includes a commitment to deepen European engagement including new or refreshed agreements with Catalonia and the Basque Country.⁹³ The First Minister previously informed the committee that this would be in “early 2026”⁹⁴.

72. The First Minister signed memoranda of understanding with the respective governments of Catalonia and the Basque Country on 7 and 8 January 2026. These were announced in a press release on 8 January.⁹⁵ The Committee was subsequently notified of the agreements on 13 January 2026.⁹⁶

73. In the notification, the First Minister reiterated her predecessor’s position, that the texts of international agreements would not be published by the Welsh Government and that summaries would instead be added to the webpage. At the time of agreeing this report, the Welsh Government’s webpage had not been updated to reflect the new agreements.

Development and delivery

74. The Welsh Government does not publish progress updates on the delivery of its international agreements.

75. In December 2025, the Committee decided to revisit its 2023 Wales-Ireland relations inquiry following the publication of the renewed agreement between the Welsh and Irish governments.⁹⁷

76. As with the 2023 inquiry, there was mixed awareness amongst witnesses of the renewal, indicating a continued need for improvements in Welsh Government communication and engagement.⁹⁸ For example, Amgueddfa Cymru, which is listed in the agreement as a key delivery partner, was not involved in its renewal until it received a request from the Welsh Government to host its launch.⁹⁹

⁹³ Welsh Government: International engagement for Wales: strategy and delivery plan

⁹⁴ First Minister: Correspondence updating on the International Delivery Plan - 5 November 2025, page 16

⁹⁵ Welsh Government: Wales must take every opportunity to work with other nations and regions following agreements with Catalonia and Basque Country - 8 January 2026

⁹⁶ Welsh Government: Letter from the First Minister providing notification of signed Memoranda of Understanding - 13 January 2026

⁹⁷ More information about the inquiry and the Committee’s follow-up work can be found on the Committee’s webpage.

⁹⁸ More information about the inquiry and the Committee’s follow-up work can be found on the Committee’s webpage.

⁹⁹ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 192

Our view

Wales has in place many important international agreements with international partners.

Some publish their international agreements in full in multiple languages, celebrating their partnership with Wales.

Conversely, we only know of Wales's agreements because the Committee called for the creation of a dedicated Welsh Government webpage and, later, to improve the information on it. It is unacceptable that the Committee had to go to such efforts to achieve minimum standards of transparency on international agreements that the Welsh Government should be proudly promoting and celebrating.

That the Welsh Government cannot provide a list of its current international agreements is baffling and a symptom of a lack of strategic oversight and implementation. We have not been notified of new or renewed agreements, despite multiple requests, although we acknowledge that a recent commitment from the First Minister resulted in notification of agreements with Catalonia and the Basque Country.

Adopting a clear strategy for international relations, underpinned by core principles, would ameliorate these rectifiable shortcomings.

Future governments should maintain a minimum standard of information on Wales's international agreements on its website. This should include a collated list of all agreements, a dedicated space on its website to celebrate key relationships and to publish agreements. The approach taken by an international partner should be mirrored by the Welsh Government as a minimum.

The Senedd should be notified of key milestones in international relations, such as international agreements concluded by the Welsh Government.

An agreement should be reached between a future responsible committee and the Welsh Government on what information will be provided, consolidating the gains made by this Committee. This would ensure that future committees do not have to start from scratch and a precedent exists with the Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement.

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.

Principle 6. Future governments should maintain a dedicated space on its website to celebrate key relationships and to publish international agreements.

Promotional years

77. Since 2021, the Welsh Government has organised promotional years focusing on a different international partner each year: Germany (2021),¹⁰⁰ Canada (2022),¹⁰¹ France (2023),¹⁰² India (2024)¹⁰³ and Japan (2025).¹⁰⁴ Promotional years are not part of the Strategy.

78. The then First Minister, Vaughan Gething MS, advised the Committee in 2024 that promotional years had been subject to evaluation (either in-house or independent) but these are not published nor shared with the Committee.¹⁰⁵

Evidence

79. Stakeholders have consistently spoken positively about promotional years during the Sixth Senedd, only referencing their length as a shortcoming. These two themes were again evident in this inquiry.

80. The years' Team Wales collaborative approach, where Welsh Government works with organisations to coordinate activity and resource, were welcomed by many, with some, including Wales Arts International,¹⁰⁶ Urdd,¹⁰⁷ and Dr Elin Royles,¹⁰⁸ again calling for them to be held over a longer period to maximise impact.

¹⁰⁰ Welsh Government: [Celebrating a year of Wales in Germany – 20 January 2022](#)

¹⁰¹ Welsh Government: [Wales in Canada: A Year to Remember – 11 April 2023](#)

¹⁰² Welsh Government: [Wales in France 2023 – 17 August 2023](#)

¹⁰³ Welsh Government: [Wales in India 2024 – 26 January 2024](#)

¹⁰⁴ Welsh Government: [Wales and Japan 2025](#)

¹⁰⁵ First Minister: [Correspondence following International relations scrutiny session – 1 August 2024](#)

¹⁰⁶ [WGIR 15: Wales Arts International – Consultation response](#)

¹⁰⁷ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 8 May 2025](#), paragraph 306

¹⁰⁸ [WGIR 02: Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University – Consultation response](#)

Our view

A Team Wales approach and the focus, drive and enthusiasm this generates is palpable. It is clear that this is the level of engagement that stakeholders crave, find beneficial and are right to expect.

That stakeholders have called for the years to be held over a longer period illustrates to us that future governments should not reserve a Team Wales approach for one type of activity alone. A Team Wales approach should be adapted and mainstreamed across its international relations activity.

Principle 7. Future governments should adapt and mainstream a Team Wales approach for joint working with stakeholders across its international relations activity.

5. Reporting and delivery

Reporting

81. The Welsh Government does not report on its international relations in one place and the Committee first outlined the challenges this presents in 2022.¹⁰⁹ In November 2023, the Committee began publishing its own annual reports on its scrutiny.¹¹⁰

82. The reporting methods used by the Welsh Government have not referenced the Strategy's 278 actions during the Sixth Senedd.

83. Both the former First Minister, Vaughan Gething MS,¹¹¹ and the current First Minister¹¹² instructed officials to move away from report writing to focus on delivery. Prior to this, former First Minister Mark Drakeford MS, could not agree to the Committee's call for dedicated Wales-Ireland reports due to "acute" resource constraints.¹¹³

84. All three First Ministers referred the Committee to the Welsh Government's annual overseas offices reports to scrutinise delivery (the name changed in 2024 to "international relations annual report").¹¹⁴ The current First Minister told the Committee that this is "just one method" used.¹¹⁵

85. In response to this Committee's request,¹¹⁶ the First Minister provided a list of all methods it uses to report on outcomes:

“Public: oral statements, written statements, press releases, press interviews, answers to Senedd questions, appearances before Senedd Committees and evidence papers.

¹⁰⁹ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: [Response to the House of Lords European Affairs Committee inquiry into the future UK-EU relationship](#).

¹¹⁰ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: [Welsh Government International Relations](#).

¹¹¹ First Minister: [Correspondence following International Relations Annual Scrutiny – 1 August 2024](#).

¹¹² Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister: [Record of Proceedings – 13 December 2024](#), paragraph 38.

¹¹³ Welsh Government: [Response to the Committee's Report on Wales-Ireland Relations – 15 November 2023](#), page 4.

¹¹⁴ Welsh Government: [International relations and development](#).

¹¹⁵ First Minister: [Correspondence – 20 December 2024](#), page 3.

¹¹⁶ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [International Relations Annual Report 2024-25 – March 2025](#), recommendation 3.

“Internal: monthly reports to ministers from across the international relations teams in Wales and overseas, providing updates on progress against the International Strategy. ‘Wales and’ years evaluation reports also provide information on outcomes.”¹¹⁷

86. In response to a separate Committee request,¹¹⁸ the current First Minister agreed to include in Welsh Government annual reports updates on progress to deliver priorities and specific actions listed in its strategies.¹¹⁹

87. In June 2025, the First Minister advised that she had given “further consideration” to points raised by the Committee and outlined her intention to provide more information to the Committee in future, such as quarterly progress updates on the IDP.¹²⁰

88. The Committee was invited by the First Minister to provide feedback on the first IDP progress update received in September 2025.¹²¹ It made a number of recommendations, including requesting that the structure should follow the IDP’s 15 aims.¹²² The second progress update, received in November 2025, follows this structure.¹²³

Evidence

89. Many respondents said there are gaps in reporting on the Strategy and there was uncertainty on whether regular monitoring activity had been maintained, such as twice annual stakeholder meetings.¹²⁴

90. Some witnesses were familiar with the Welsh Government’s overseas offices reports. Dr Elin Royles argued that, as the information is not presented under the Strategy’s three aims, it’s not clear how the activity contributes to each one.¹²⁵

¹¹⁷ Welsh Government: [Response to International Relations Annual Report 2024-25 – 9 May 2025](#), page 4

¹¹⁸ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [International Relations Annual Report 2024-25 – March 2025](#), recommendation 2

¹¹⁹ Welsh Government: [Response to International Relations Annual Report 2024-25 – 9 May 2025](#), page 3

¹²⁰ Welsh Government: [International Relations annual report 2024-25 and correspondence from the First Minister – 9 June 2025](#), page 1

¹²¹ Welsh Government: [First Update on the International Delivery Plan and correspondence from the First Minister – 21 June 2025](#)

¹²² Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [Correspondence providing feedback on International Delivery Plan updates – 6 October 2025](#)

¹²³ First Minister: [Correspondence updating on the International Delivery Plan - 5 November 2025](#)

¹²⁴ All consultation responses can be found on the Committee’s [webpage](#)

¹²⁵ WGIR 02: Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University – [Consultation response](#)

91. Respondents were strongly in favour of making more information publicly available more regularly. WOAG said that, without this, “it is difficult to gauge the Government’s efforts”¹²⁶. Colegau Cymru said it is not aware of “any updates” on the Strategy’s delivery, despite monthly meetings with officials working in international education.¹²⁷

92. Many respondents believed reporting is important to demonstrate the value of international work and to increase understanding of its benefits to Wales, particularly as domestic matters are usually prioritised. They agreed this would also increase domestic support.¹²⁸

93. The British Council illustrated this point:

“the impact of international working on the domestic agenda and how it directly affects the livelihoods, skills, ambitions and outlooks of people in Wales needs to be communicated and explained transparently if the people of Wales are to support an international strategy. In particular, working internationally, by its very nature, can be expensive, so data or costs or statistics need context and results presented alongside.”¹²⁹

94. Both Size of Wales and WOAG said a lack of communication risks leaving public goodwill “untapped” and allows room for misunderstanding or misinformation to take hold. WOAG added that enhanced transparency would both “foster public confidence” and could:

“counter potential backlash from those who may perceive international work as a diversion from domestic priorities.”¹³⁰

95. GlobalWelsh and Global Health Partnerships agreed that the Strategy has not been effectively communicated and that this has limited its impact. GlobalWelsh highlighted its research from November 2024 showing that nine per cent of 1,709 diaspora surveyed had heard of the Strategy. It said this “awareness is far too low” and, as a result, the Strategy’s “impact is severely limited.”¹³¹

¹²⁶ [WGIR 13: Wales Overseas Agencies Group – Consultation response](#), page 10

¹²⁷ [WGIR 14: Colleges Wales – Consultation response](#), page 4

¹²⁸ All consultation responses can be found on the [Committee’s webpage](#)

¹²⁹ [WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response](#), page 7

¹³⁰ [WGIR 13: Wales Overseas Agencies Group – Consultation response](#), page 8

¹³¹ [WGIR 16: GlobalWelsh - Consultation response](#), page 4

96. Other witnesses, such as Wales Arts International and the Future Generations Commissioner, referred to their own organisations' reports to determine whether the Strategy's aims had been achieved.¹³²

97. An increased reliance on social media by the Welsh Government to report its activity was noted by some. WOAG described this as "sporadic" and said that a "more comprehensive approach is required"¹³³. Welsh Triathlon advised that it uses LinkedIn to find information.¹³⁴ Wales Arts International suggested it would be "helpful" if the Welsh Government engaged partners to share information across platforms, with the possibility of partners leading on specific initiatives.¹³⁵

98. Many ideas were put forward on what would be useful to report on, such as priorities, goals, KPIs, case studies, success stories, progress reports, impact assessments, partnership profiles, statistics, evidence of impact and funding opportunities.

99. There were calls to link activity to objectives to allow stakeholders "to support or contribute to the activities in a systematic way"¹³⁶. Cardiff University added that a feedback mechanism for stakeholders would enhance transparency while fostering a sense of community.¹³⁷ It believed that "sharing successes can inspire further collaboration and investment in international activities"¹³⁸.

Delivery

100. In November 2023, the Committee called on the Welsh Government to provide a progress update against the short and medium term actions listed in the Strategy.¹³⁹

101. In June 2024, the Committee shared a list of the Strategy's 278 actions with the Welsh Government because it had not received the update. The then First

¹³² Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 21 May 2025 and Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025.

¹³³ WGIR 13: Wales Overseas Agencies Group – Consultation response, page 11

¹³⁴ WGIR 01: Welsh Triathlon – Consultation response, page 1

¹³⁵ WGIR 15: Wales Arts International – Consultation response, page 5

¹³⁶ WGIR 08: Universities Wales – Consultation response, page 10

¹³⁷ WGIR 18: Cardiff University – Consultation response

¹³⁸ WGIR 18: Cardiff University – Consultation response, page 7

¹³⁹ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: International Relations Annual Report 2022-23 – November 2023, recommendation 3

Minister, Vaughan Gething MS, said the list was “helpful” in reviewing the actions,¹⁴⁰ however, the update was not provided during his tenure.

102. In December 2024, the current First Minister reiterated the offer to provide a progress update during a Wales and the World-themed session of the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister.¹⁴¹ The First Minister explained that she viewed the role of this Committee to be “in scrutinising the delivery itself” and advised that she was “trying to breathe down the neck” of her officials to share the information.¹⁴²

103. Explaining the assessment’s red-amber-green approach, the First Minister added:

“...that is very much the formula that I’m very keen to make sure that you have sight of, where it is we’re delivering, and also where you need to hold us to account because we’re not.”¹⁴³

104. The Committee received the progress update in November 2025, two years after its first request.¹⁴⁴ It covers the International Strategy and four of the five actions plans, except the Export Action Plan.

105. A progress update on the Export Action Plan’s 47 actions was provided to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs (ETRA) Committee within two months of a request to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS in March 2025.¹⁴⁵ However, this assessment does not use a red-amber-green rating to identify whether actions have been delivered and the First Minister confirms in her November 2025 progress update that this assessment has not been updated.¹⁴⁶

106. The documents accompanying the First Minister’s progress update state that:

¹⁴⁰ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 19 June 2024, paragraph 126

¹⁴¹ Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister: Record of Proceedings - 13 December 2024

¹⁴² Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister: Record of Proceedings - 13 December 2024, paragraph 34

¹⁴³ Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister: Record of Proceedings - 13 December 2024, paragraph 196

¹⁴⁴ First Minister: Correspondence updating on the International Delivery Plan - 5 November 2025

¹⁴⁵ Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning: Letter to the Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee - 3 March 2025

¹⁴⁶ First Minister: Correspondence updating on the International Delivery Plan - 5 November 2025

“90% of the actions in the Welsh Government’s Strategy have been delivered or are in progress.”¹⁴⁷

107. It is not clear how the Welsh Government has reached this percentage. Analysis carried out by the Committee shows that 77 per cent of the actions in the Strategy and action plans combined have been delivered or are in progress. 95 per cent of actions in the Strategy alone have been delivered or are in progress. These calculations are shown on Table 2.

Table 2: Delivery of actions in the International Strategy and action plans

	Total actions	Red (“Not completed”)	Amber (“Partially completed”)	Green (“Completed in full or ongoing delivery”)
All	278	9 (3%)	11 (4%)	213 (77%)
International Strategy	62 (22%)	3 (5%)	2 (3%)	59 (95%)
Diaspora engagement	19	4 (21%)	2 (11%)	13 (68%)
Priority regional relationships	55	0	0	55 (100%)
Public diplomacy and soft power	74	1 (1%)	6 (8%)	67 (91%)
Wales and Africa	21	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	19 (91%)
Export Action Plan	47	?	?	?

108. The First Minister’s documents do not differentiate which “green” actions are completed and which are in progress as part of ongoing delivery.¹⁴⁸ This, combined with the accompanying definitions of red, amber and green, mean that a degree of uncertainty remains on what has and has not been delivered.

109. In October 2025, an independent evaluation of the Export Action Plan, initiated by the Cabinet Secretary, was published.¹⁴⁹ The Committee subsequently recommended as part of its scrutiny of the draft budget that the Strategy, its four action plans and the IDP are subject to the same external evaluation process.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ First Minister: [Correspondence updating on the International Delivery Plan - 5 November 2025](#), page 15

¹⁴⁸ First Minister: [Correspondence updating on the International Delivery Plan - 5 November 2025](#)

¹⁴⁹ Welsh Government report: [Welsh Government export support programmes: impact evaluation](#)

¹⁵⁰ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [Report on the draft budget for 2026-27](#)

Evidence

110. Respondents said it is not always clear how success is measured for the Strategy, and what the mechanisms for overseeing implementation are. Many respondents called for evaluation of the Strategy's success, in whole or in part.

111. Most witnesses were unsure of overall progress and if actions in their sectors had been delivered.¹⁵¹ WOAG gave the example of a 10-year report on Wales and Africa having not been published, making it difficult to measure success against the Strategy's goals.¹⁵²

112. Some organisations who were involved with, or responsible for, individual actions in the Strategy confirmed their delivery in evidence. For example, the Football Association of Wales (FAW) and the WRU were most certain on the delivery of actions relating to international tournaments.¹⁵³

113. Most witnesses said the Strategy lacked metrics and targets which are publicly reported or easily accessible. For example, GlobalWelsh noted that it has previously been held to Welsh Government targets and that the Welsh Government should "practice what they preach"¹⁵⁴. However, the British Council disagreed, saying that "the measures are there. I think we just might not necessarily know about them because we don't work for Welsh Government. So, I think that is something key"¹⁵⁵.

114. Wales Arts International believed that "there are some things that worked better than others", pointing to the promotional years as having "enabled us to develop that Team Wales model, and for that to succeed"¹⁵⁶.

115. We asked witnesses whether the Strategy's three aims had been achieved. Their views are summarised in the next sections.

¹⁵¹ Links to all oral evidence sessions relating to the inquiry can be found on the [Committee's webpage](#).

¹⁵² [WGIR 13: Wales Overseas Agencies Group – Consultation response](#), page 12

¹⁵³ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), paragraph 49

¹⁵⁴ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 8 May 2025](#), paragraph 10

¹⁵⁵ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 8 May 2025](#), paragraph 12

¹⁵⁶ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 21 May 2025](#), paragraph 159

On raising Wales's profile

116. The British Council said that “the results of this are evident, with over 100 diplomatic visits to Wales in the last year” but also said this is the hardest aim to measure.¹⁵⁷ Wales Arts International agreed, saying that “the last 5 years has seen the profile of Wales rise beyond belief on the international level” and emphasised the importance of a values-led approach in the collaborative Team Wales model adopted for the FIFA Men’s World Cup 2022.¹⁵⁸ Both referred to internal Welsh Government evaluations that are not published and have not been shared with the Committee.

117. Other witnesses were less certain that this aim has been achieved and attributed their views to anecdotal evidence, and/or a lack of key metrics, evaluations and reports.¹⁵⁹

On growing the economy

118. Respondents were less positive on the aim to grow the economy and advised that a lack of detail hinders their ability to draw conclusions. For example, GlobalWelsh said “it’s difficult to identify areas that have worked well especially since there is a distinct lack of metrics by which to measure success”¹⁶⁰.

119. In oral evidence, Dr Elin Royles said “where we are less clear that we are delivering our ambitions is in that economic sphere, and I think we need to do everything possible there, because that’s the impact on the daily lives of ordinary people in Wales”¹⁶¹. Dr Royles’ written evidence cited inward investment statistics showing Wales performing better only than Northern Ireland amongst UK nations and regions. She concluded that “there are questions to be asked in relation to external activity to grow the economy”¹⁶².

120. The FSB added that, despite a focus on delivery of economic growth, “there is not a single reference to SMEs” in the Strategy¹⁶³ and witnesses from the

¹⁵⁷ [WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response](#), page 3

¹⁵⁸ [WGIR 15: Wales Arts International – Consultation response](#), page 5

¹⁵⁹ Links to all oral evidence sessions relating to the inquiry can be found on the [Committee's webpage](#).

¹⁶⁰ [WGIR 16: GlobalWelsh - Consultation response](#), page 1

¹⁶¹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 8 May 2025](#), paragraph 115

¹⁶² [WGIR 02: Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University – Consultation response](#), page 2

¹⁶³ [WGIR 12: Federation of Small Businesses – Consultation response](#), page 3

technology sector spoke of a need to position Wales strategically to leverage its power in attracting inward investment.¹⁶⁴

121. GlobalWelsh said there is “huge scope for improvement” in how Wales is pitched as an investment destination and criticised the Welsh Government for “not [doing] very well” on maximising opportunities. It also said that “engaging internationally should be the most important economic policy Wales has”¹⁶⁵.

122. The British Council said, while there have been some “good results” and that investment usually follows on from profile-raising, the benefits of international working to the economy “are going to be really key, particularly to prove back to Wales what [international activity] does”¹⁶⁶.

123. The First Minister said of this aim:

“...of course, it was difficult, given Brexit and so on, but the fact is, if you look at exports, we have increased our exports to £370 million. [...] In terms of inward investments, we have seen around £4 billion of capital investment and we believe that that has created or helped to retain 20,000 jobs.”¹⁶⁷

124. She advised that the contribution of exports to the Welsh economy had seen “a modest increase over the lifetime of the Strategy”, citing GDP contributions of 33.7 per cent in 2019 and 34.1 per cent in 2023.¹⁶⁸

125. The Welsh Government later reported that its Wales Investment Summit, attended by 300 investors from 27 countries in December 2025, secured “over £16 billion of investment and thousands of jobs”.¹⁶⁹ The Committee notes that questions were later raised in response to claims made in relation to summit outcomes, such as that historic investment commitments were included in the total amount.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 21 May 2025, item 2

¹⁶⁵ WGIR 16: GlobalWelsh - Consultation response, page 4

¹⁶⁶ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 8 May 2025, paragraph 65

¹⁶⁷ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 18 June 2025, paragraph 13

¹⁶⁸ First Minister: Correspondence updating on the International Delivery Plan - 5 November 2025, page 17

¹⁶⁹ Welsh Government: Press release - 30 November 2025:

¹⁷⁰ Plenary: Record of Proceedings – 9 December 2025, Item 4

126. The Committee also later learned that Amgueddfa Cymru was prevented from attending the Summit due to its limited guest list and remit, despite Ministerial statements providing assurances that culture and sport were “at the heart” of the summit.¹⁷¹ Amgueddfa Cymru’s Chief Executive, Jane Richardson, told the Committee:

“We made the case, and not least because, as you and the committee know, there is big investment needed in the cultural offer of Wales and the cultural infrastructure in Wales. And so we did press quite hard to be able to be included, but the remit was very tight for that event, and so it was felt that, for this particular event, there wasn’t a need for us to be involved.[…]

The [Welsh Government’s] culture department, of course, supported us in making representation to the international department. But it was at that level—it was the organising department that made the decision.”¹⁷²

On Wales as a globally responsible nation

127. The most commented-on aim was Wales as a globally responsible nation. Several respondents said that they had aligned their work to contribute to this aim and referenced the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 as central.

128. Fair Trade Wales welcomed the role of the Future Generations Commissioner,¹⁷³ who, in turn, described the Act as a “real soft superpower for Wales”¹⁷⁴. The British Council said the Act “attracts significant international interest” and “should be at the heart of” efforts to promote Wales as a sustainability leader.¹⁷⁵

129. WOAG warned that there is “a significant gap in policy coherence” across the Welsh Government and the public sector and that “we have a long way to go in building a clear understanding of what global responsibility entails”.¹⁷⁶ The Future

¹⁷¹ [Plenary: Record of Proceedings – 3 December 2025](#), paragraph 27

¹⁷² [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 4 December 2025](#), paragraphs 220-225

¹⁷³ [WGIR 05: Fair Trade Wales – Consultation response](#)

¹⁷⁴ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), paragraph 171

¹⁷⁵ [WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response](#), page 3

¹⁷⁶ [WGIR 13: Wales Overseas Agencies Group – Consultation response](#), page 3

Generations Commissioner, Derek Walker, agreed. He concluded that there has been “some very good progress [...], but there’s certainly lots more to do in areas where we’re not on target to meet long-term trends”¹⁷⁷.

130. International development respondents raised concerns about how well the aim is balanced with economic ambition. Size of Wales and WOAG noted the Strategy’s emphasis on economic growth could mean that human rights, ethical employment practices and environmental harm could be overlooked.¹⁷⁸

131. In oral evidence, the First Minister disagreed with the suggestion that global responsibility had been de-emphasised, saying:

“I don’t think it has been de-emphasised. You should see the work we’re doing in relation to the well-being of future generations Act. We’re doing stuff in the United Nations... There is a huge amount of work being done everywhere. It’s not one at the expense of another. There are lots of different things in different places being done.”¹⁷⁹

Our view

We are concerned about the Welsh Government’s communications and accountability around this area of work.

Gaps in reporting and low awareness were illustrated time and again in examples shared by witnesses. The availability of information about delivery of its international relations strategies is too often inexplicably, and frustratingly, poor. This is reflected in the evidence we received.

It also corresponds to our experience as a Committee. Since 2021, our work has been dominated by establishing a basic understanding of arrangements, activity and delivery. Efforts to obtain information have been disproportionate, oftentimes requiring multiple exchanges of correspondence because our questions have not been answered. This has hindered scrutiny and expended precious resource.

¹⁷⁷ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), paragraph 190

¹⁷⁸ [WGIR 13: Wales Overseas Agencies Group – Consultation response](#), page 3

¹⁷⁹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 18 June 2025](#), paragraph 62

We have secured some improvements, but regrettably, problems have continued.

Welsh Government reports still do not cover all aspects of international relations and do not refer to their own aims. A predominantly narrative approach with no link to strategic documents often hinders rather than helps us.

We agree with witnesses on the importance of explaining international work to the public, including to foster confidence, support and to prevent misunderstanding from taking hold. We echo our conclusion from our Wales-Ireland relations inquiry, that the Welsh Government is doing itself a disservice by not capturing and communicating its work in a coherent way.

Presenting its international relations work in a clearer manner would be of universal benefit in improving understanding of the government's strategic direction. It would also better reflect the efforts of Welsh Government officials who we know work tirelessly to further Wales's international relations.

While the current First Minister has accelerated the provision of information to this Committee, we are in the final stages of our five-year term. The benefits of having received satisfactory contemporaneous updates in the course of the Sixth Senedd are obvious and numerous.

It is our view that the Committee has been denied the ability to make informed decisions and to adapt its scrutiny. So too has it been denied the opportunity to offer its support to international milestones secured by the Welsh Government and its partners, such as the Welsh language being spoken at the United Nations for the first time.¹⁸⁰

Many witnesses, and this Committee, have observed an increased use of social media by the Welsh Government to report on international relations. We agree that this amounts to an overreliance on social media. This evolving trend is no substitute for official reporting, nor commensurate with the required level of government accountability to the Senedd.

Future governments must not shy away from communicating efforts to showcase Wales on the world stage and the Senedd should be seen as an important ally in this regard.

¹⁸⁰ First Minister: Correspondence updating on the International Delivery Plan - 5 November 2025, page 13

Improved reporting must be in place at the start of a future international relations strategy. Regular reports should cover delivery of all international relations activity and should be structured against aims. Reporting on measurable targets and metrics should be designed to demonstrate achievements and facilitate scrutiny, including of value for money. Reports should be easily accessible in one place on the Welsh Government's website and shared with the Senedd.

Information in the public domain should be designed to increase understanding of the Welsh Government's international relations, celebrate successes and prevent misunderstanding from taking hold.

We agree with evidence received on the importance of regular independent evaluations and call on future governments to take a proactive approach to their initiation and participation in soft power indexes.

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.

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.

6. Resourcing

132. The Committee has raised serious concerns about the Welsh Government's budget allocations for international activity throughout the Sixth Senedd. It has repeatedly called for accuracy and improved transparency on intended outputs, outcomes, impact, and value for money, and has expressed its disappointment that all three First Ministers have declined to appear for draft budget scrutiny oral evidence, as is expected of all Cabinet Secretaries.¹⁸¹

133. Budget allocations for international relations and international development are shown on the table below. While these could be subject to change in subsequent supplementary budgets, it illustrates that over £58 million was allocated to international spend at the start of budget cycles during the Sixth Senedd.

Table 3: Budgets allocations: International relations and development

Budget year	International relations	International development	Total
2021-22	£8.554m	£2.775m	£11.329m
2022-23	£8.424m	£1.275m	£9.699m
2023-24	£8.252m	£1.359m	£9.611m
2024-25	£8.054m	£1.050m	£9.104m
2025-26	£8.193m	£1.050m	£9.243m
2026-27**	£8.182m	£1.050m	£9.232m
Total	£49.659	£8.559m	£58.218m

Note: These are Final Budget allocations. Year on year comparisons may be affected by changes to ministerial portfolio/transfers between Main Expenditure Groups (MEGs)/departments and/or budget lines. **2026-27 allocations are Draft Budget allocations, reflecting the most up to date allocations at the time of publication.

134. In lieu of the opportunity to scrutinise First Ministers in oral evidence, the Committee received written information. The written information was frequently incomplete and unclear, with irreconcilable amounts, even within the relatively small budget underpinning international activity. There was often insufficient time in the draft budget scrutiny period to exchange correspondence. When time did

¹⁸¹ Most recently in Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [Report on the draft budget for 2026-27](#)

allow, the Committee received different and competing amounts in exchanges of correspondence.¹⁸²

135. As a result, the Committee has not been in a position to scrutinise with confidence over £58 million allocated to international activity by the Welsh Government during the Sixth Senedd.

136. The Committee received the First Minister's assessment on delivery of the Strategy and action plans' 278 actions in November 2025.¹⁸³ It does not indicate when actions were delivered, preventing a retrospective review of whether allocations were sufficient.¹⁸⁴

137. While this is not a situation of the current First Minister's making, having taken office in August 2024, contemporaneous updates would have enabled the Committee to carry out in-depth draft budget scrutiny. It is unacceptable that this has not been possible during the Sixth Senedd and, as we have previously concluded, this situation cannot continue into the Seventh Senedd.

Overseas offices

138. The Welsh Government has 20 overseas offices in 11 countries to support delivery of its international ambitions.¹⁸⁵ A 2020 document sets out their remits.¹⁸⁶ This is an additional document to the strategies described above. In January 2025, the Welsh Government confirmed that 43 staff are employed across its 20 office locations in response to a series of written questions.¹⁸⁷

139. In recent years, around £4.7 million has been allocated for overseas offices' annual running costs. The First Minister provided the Committee with a breakdown by country for 2025-26 in June 2025.¹⁸⁸ An additional £750,000 activity budget has been allocated equally between North America, Europe and Middle East/North Africa.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸² All Committee Draft Budget reports can be found on the [Committee's webpage](#).

¹⁸³ First Minister: [Correspondence updating on the International Delivery Plan - 5 November 2025](#)

¹⁸⁴ The version of this report published on 28 January 2026 contained factual inaccuracies in paragraph 137. This paragraph has now been removed.

¹⁸⁵ Welsh Government: [International offices](#)

¹⁸⁶ Welsh Government: [International office remits](#)

¹⁸⁷ Welsh Government response: [Written questions tabled on 20 December 2024 for answer on 2 January 2025](#)

¹⁸⁸ Welsh Government: [International Relations annual report 2024-25 and correspondence from the First Minister - 9 June 2025](#)

¹⁸⁹ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [Report on the draft budget for 2026-27](#)

140. In November 2025, the First Minister informed the Committee of an Overseas Network Review.¹⁹⁰ We questioned the timing and rationale of this decision in our Draft Budget 2026-27 report.¹⁹¹

Overseas visits costs

141. At its request, the Committee receives from the Welsh Government monthly lists of overseas Ministerial visits and incoming diplomatic visits to Wales but costs are not included. It publishes costs at the end of the financial year on its website¹⁹² and provides specific costs in response to questions from Members of the Senedd.¹⁹³

142. We noted the different approach taken by the Scottish Government in our International Relations Annual Report 2024.¹⁹⁴ Both governments' Ministerial Codes set requirements to report overseas visits costs.¹⁹⁵

143. The Scottish Government is required to publish details of all Ministerial travel overseas three months in arrears each quarter. This can be found on its website, alongside broader information on ministerial engagements, car journeys, domestic travel and gifts. Travel data is broken down by minister and published alongside the number of officials accompanying and costs.¹⁹⁶

Evidence

144. Many respondents said that more funding is needed for international relations and described work delivered with limited resources. The loss of EU funding, replacement funding, flat/reduced domestic budgets and changes at a UK Government level were often cited and many were concerned that budgets could decrease in future.¹⁹⁷

145. Wales Arts International spoke of budget cuts in the same period as interest in Wales is increasing:

¹⁹⁰ Welsh Government: [Written evidence on International Relations for Draft Budget 2026-27 Scrutiny – 31 October 2025](#)

¹⁹¹ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [Report on the draft budget for 2026-27](#), recommendation 19.

¹⁹² Welsh Government: [Ministerial Code information publication: 6th Senedd](#)

¹⁹³ For example Welsh Government response: [Written questions tabled on 20 December 2024 for answer on 2 January 2025](#)

¹⁹⁴ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [International Relations Annual Report 2024-25 – March 2025](#)

¹⁹⁵ Welsh Government: [Ministerial Code](#) and Scottish Government: [Ministerial Code](#)

¹⁹⁶ Scottish Government: [Ministerial engagements, travel and gifts](#)

¹⁹⁷ All consultation responses can be found on the [Committee's webpage](#).

"Fragmentation is an issue, I'd say, not just across the UK but within Wales as well. Trying to achieve all that is being achieved within the international strategy is really—. It's aspirationally amazing to try and do that, but the reality is that there are a lot of different agencies with different responsibilities involved in delivering it. And with everyone facing the cuts that have been going on, especially in the arts, it makes it very challenging to be on top of all the briefs and know who's doing what, especially with the increase in interest in Wales."¹⁹⁸

And that:

"there's a whole load of issues just to maintain our place in the world, not even to grow that."¹⁹⁹

146. Size of Wales agreed, saying "Wales risks falling short of its ambition to be a globally responsible nation" without sufficient resources.²⁰⁰ WOAG said that "implementation has been hampered by funding cuts", pointing to a 23.6 per cent cut to the international development budget in recent years.²⁰¹

147. Many argued that future funding must match ambition,²⁰² echoing a key conclusion of the Committee's Wales-Ireland relations inquiry.²⁰³ There were several calls for longer-term funding,²⁰⁴ while Wales Arts International called for more focus on co-investments.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁸ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 21 May 2025](#), paragraph 190

¹⁹⁹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 21 May 2025](#), paragraph 190

²⁰⁰ [WGIR 09: Size of Wales – Consultation response](#), page 6

²⁰¹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), paragraph 179

²⁰² All consultation responses can be found on the [Committee's webpage](#)

²⁰³ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee: [Wales-Ireland relations](#)

²⁰⁴ For example [WGIR 08: Universities Wales – Consultation response](#), [WGIR 09: Size of Wales – Consultation response](#), [WGIR 05: Fair Trade Wales – Consultation response](#) and [WGIR 14: Colleges Wales – Consultation response](#)

²⁰⁵ [WGIR 15: Wales Arts International – Consultation response](#)

Demand for increased working with the Welsh Government

148. There was strong support for greater coordination from, and collaboration with, the Welsh Government,²⁰⁶ including to develop a new Strategy.²⁰⁷

149. The British Council spoke of the importance of having a dedicated international relations team within government and described its experience as “excellent”²⁰⁸. Wales Arts International said staff go “over and above”²⁰⁹, while WOAG also described relations as “fantastic”²¹⁰.

150. Some called for the creation of a Wales-specific stakeholder forum to facilitate regular engagement.²¹¹ Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, who sits on the UK Government’s newly-formed Soft Power Council, agreed, saying that:

“...in the next iteration of the strategy, that might be something worth looking at, but it’s got to be useful. It can’t just be something that’s another talking shop. It’s actually got to help deliver the Welsh Government strategy, but I’d be really interested in talking about it.”²¹²

151. The FAW said that, while it works “very closely” and has regular meetings with the Welsh Government:

“...what’s lacking at the moment is that higher level strategy that maps out all of the opportunities in the longer term and looks at how those can be built upon, rather than moving from one tournament or one fixture to the next.”²¹³

²⁰⁶ All consultation responses can be found on the [Committee’s webpage](#). Links to all oral evidence sessions relating to the inquiry can be found on the [Committee’s webpage](#).

²⁰⁷ [WGIR 18: Cardiff University – Consultation response](#)

²⁰⁸ [WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response](#), page 7

²⁰⁹ [WGIR 15: Wales Arts International – Consultation response](#), page 6

²¹⁰ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), paragraph 200

²¹¹ For example [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), item 2

²¹² [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), paragraph 90

²¹³ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), paragraph 42

Demand for increased collaboration

152. Several respondents offered to pool resources with the Welsh Government. Offers included sharing expertise and use of organisations' extensive overseas office networks.²¹⁴ The British Council suggested that:

*"All partners in the international space could come together and contribute to some core metrics for Wales International in the future iterations of the strategy to really focus our efforts to support delivery for Wales and the World."*²¹⁵

153. A common theme was that more could be done to maximise opportunities and that collaboration would best position Wales for this.²¹⁶ Cardiff University believed that funding for collaborations "would greatly enhance Wales's global standing"²¹⁷.

154. The Future Generations Commissioner, Derek Walker, said he would "be concerned about collaboration for collaboration's sake" and emphasised involving those who are best placed to deliver. This, he said "needs to be done properly" and "needs to be carefully done"²¹⁸.

155. The WRU recommended that, in future, the full picture of international activity should be considered:

*"...we're probably being a bit fragmented in how we approach it at the moment, and we could make the sum much greater if we worked in that strategic way. So, that would be my challenge: to scrutinise from that perspective."*²¹⁹

²¹⁴ For example [WGIR 09: Size of Wales – Consultation response](#), [WGIR 16: GlobalWelsh – Consultation response](#) and [WGIR 12: Federation of Small Businesses – Consultation response](#)

²¹⁵ [WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response](#), page 6

²¹⁶ For example [WGIR 08: Universities Wales – Consultation response](#), [WGIR 10: British Council – Consultation response](#), [WGIR 15: Wales Arts International – Consultation response](#) and [WGIR 09: Size of Wales – Consultation response](#)

²¹⁷ [WGIR 18: Cardiff University – Consultation response](#), page 8

²¹⁸ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), paragraphs 274-275

²¹⁹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 14 May 2025](#), paragraph 139

Overseas offices

156. Dr Elin Royles said that “there are clear examples of Welsh international activity being conducted with moderate levels of staffing and budget”. She drew comparisons with pre- and post-Brexit funding and overseas office resources:

“We have been struck by the Scottish Government office in Brussels’ greater numbers of staff and greater budget than the Wales Brussels office.”²²⁰

157. She pointed to budgets of £2.35-2.47 million for 2021-23 for the Scottish Government’s Brussels office alone and notes that comparable information for the Welsh Government’s offices was last published in 2018-19, making it “difficult to draw exact comparisons”. She also noted that differences in office remits could explain budget disparities but a lack of available data from the Welsh Government means that this context is also unavailable.²²¹

158. WOAG called for an evaluation of the resources allocated to overseas offices which “often appear aligned with economic growth priorities, potentially overshadowing Wales’s global solidarity objectives”. It suggested evaluation could ensure the offices contribute and engage meaningfully in advancing global responsibility.²²²

Our view

How the Welsh Government’s international relations activity is resourced has been a key question for us as a Committee. We have encountered several serious issues with the information provided for draft budget scrutiny.

The Welsh Government’s assessment of its 278 actions has arrived at the eleventh hour without indicating when actions were taken. This renders us unable to determine if allocations were value for money, the impact of the money spent, whether allocations were sufficient or appropriate, and whether they were protected from, or vulnerable to, budget cuts. Furthermore, the

²²⁰ [WGIR 02: Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University – Consultation response](#), page 5

²²¹ [WGIR 02: Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University – Consultation response](#), page 5

²²² [WGIR 13: Wales Overseas Agencies Group – Consultation response](#), page 12

assessment contains information that would likely have determined our approach to scrutiny – of draft budgets, of the First Minister and of stakeholders.

The result is that the Committee has been denied the ability to scrutinise over £58 million of public money allocated to international relations with confidence.

We know that resource for international activity is limited and finite. There is a clear risk that the Welsh Government's sprawling collection of strategies stretches it too thinly.

A focussed strategy would necessitate a greater focus on budget allocations, and improved information would flow from this. The approach taken by future governments should enable in-year financial scrutiny and allow for clear links to be made to measurable targets.

Serious consideration must be given to better utilising the resources available to government. A key tenet of our Wales-Ireland relations inquiry was that resource should match ambition, which was supported in evidence to this inquiry.

Stakeholders should be better utilised. We were struck by their sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the Strategy's delivery and agree with their calls to pool resources. 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.

Adopting Mission Cymru would empower stakeholders to align their own international activity and strategies to the Welsh Government's, facilitating a true Team Wales approach. There is no shortage of ideas, talent and goodwill, both inside and out of government, that can only benefit Wales on the world stage.

Provision of financial information to the Senedd and the public must improve, as must arrangements for Draft Budget scrutiny, as described above in Chapter 3.

Increasing the frequency and method of reporting overseas costs would be a step in the right direction. The Scottish Government's approach to the publication of overseas costs is preferable to the current Welsh Government's. Publishing quarterly details of travel overseas by all Ministers three months in arrears would significantly improve transparency and could be underpinned by a new requirement in future governments' Ministerial Codes.

If adopted, the Mission Cymru principles would address many of the resource issues identified in evidence. It would ensure resource is channelled towards activity that delivers tangible results. Its principles on Ministerial scrutiny, reporting and information sharing would also transform the budget scrutiny process for a future responsible Senedd committee.

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.

Principle 11. Future governments should ensure that resource for international relations is sufficient to realise their strategic ambition.

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.

Annex 1: List of oral evidence sessions

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed on the [Committee's website](#).

Date	Name and Organisation
8 May 2025	Ruth Cocks, Director in Wales, British Council Dr Elin Royles, Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University Walter May, Founder and Chief Executive, Global Welsh Susana Galván Hernández, Executive Director, Taith Mali Thomas, Director of Communications and International Affairs, Urdd Gobaith Cymru Lowri Williams, Strategic Director, Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner
14 May 2025	Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, Chair, Sport Wales Helen Antoniazzி, Football Association of Wales Abi Tierney, Welsh Rugby Union Derek Walker, Future Generations Commissioner, Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales Najma Hashi, Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales Sarah Rees, Wales Overseas Agencies Group
21 May 2025	Professor Siraj Shaikh, Professor in Systems Security, Swansea University Chris Meadows, Director, CSconnected

Date	Name and Organisation
	<p>Patricia Yates, Chief Executive Officer, Visit Britain</p> <p>Eluned Hâf, Head, Wales Arts International</p>
18 June 2025	<p>Eluned Morgan MS, First Minister, Welsh Government</p> <p>Andrew Gwatin, Director of International Relations and Trade, Welsh Government</p> <p>David Warren, Head of International Relations, Welsh Government</p>

Annex 2: List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All Consultation responses and additional written information can be viewed on the [Committee's website](#).

Reference	Organisation
WGIR 01	Welsh Triathlon
WGIR 02	Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University
WGIR 03	Taith
WGIR 04	Coleg Sir Gar and Coleg Ceredigion
WGIR 05	Fair Trade Wales
WGIR 06	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
WGIR 07	International Links Global
WGIR 08	Universities Wales
WGIR 09	Size of Wales
WGIR 10	British Council
WGIR 11	International Links (Global)
WGIR 12	Federation of Small Businesses
WGIR 13	Wales Overseas Agencies Group
WGIR 14	Colleges Wales
WGIR 15	Wales Arts International
WGIR 16	Global Welsh
WGIR 17	Global Health Partnerships Cymru
WGIR 18	Cardiff University
WGIR 19	Individual 01

Additional Information

Title	Date
Written response: Welsh Government International Relations Annual Report 2024-25	9 May 2025
Written evidence: Visit Wales	21 May 2025
Correspondence: Welsh Government International Relations annual report 2024-25 and correspondence from the First Minister	9 June 2025
Correspondence: Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, Scottish Government	16 June 2025
Correspondence: Welsh Government's First Update on the International Delivery Plan and correspondence from the First Minister	21 June 2025
Written evidence: Welsh Government International Relations for Draft Budget 2026-27 Scrutiny	31 October 2025
Correspondence: First Minister providing an update on progress against the International Strategy and International Delivery Plan	5 November 2025