



Response to the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee's Annual Report on International Relations 2024

09 May 2025

The Welsh Government thanks the members of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee (CCWLSIR) for their annual report on international relations.

The Welsh Government response to the eight recommendations is outlined below. The Welsh Government notes the conclusions of the report.

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Responses to the Committee's Recommendations

Recommendation 1

We call on the Welsh Government to provide a progress update on the actions listed in the International Strategy and its actions plans, as per the commitment made by the First Minister during evidence to the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister in December 2024.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Government has faced significant geopolitical shifts, a global pandemic, and a war in Europe since the launch of the International Strategy in 2020. These events have necessitated a flexible and adaptive approach from both the Government and the Strategy itself. Consequently, some of the actions outlined in the 2020 document are no longer relevant or feasible and we have progressed in areas that were not identified five years ago such as sports diplomacy and gender equality in sub-Saharan Africa.

The First Minister has directed officials to focus on delivering tangible outcomes rather than reviewing or rewriting existing strategies. Officials will continue to report on the strategy's three core objectives and associated Action Plans, as they have done to date through our Annual Report. However, the 2025-26 Annual Report will include an update against the 15 aims set out in the Delivery Plan, which was published on 3 April 2025.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 2

Beyond the International Strategy Delivery Plan, it is important that the Welsh Government develops mechanisms to monitor delivery of its priorities on an ongoing basis. We call on the Welsh Government to include in annual reports provided to this and future Committees, updates on progress to deliver priorities and specific actions listed in its strategies.

Response: Accept

Officials were pleased to provide the Committee with a detailed technical briefing on the International Strategy Delivery Plan on 2 April.

The Welsh Government will look to build into its annual reports an update on progress against key priorities. An update on progress against the International Strategy Delivery Plan will be included in our 2025-26 Annual Report.

This recommendation will be considered further in the development of any new potential International Strategy in the future.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 3

We call on the Welsh Government to provide a list of methods it uses to report on outcomes, in light of the First Minister's statement, that its annual reports are "just one of the methods" used.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government uses a range of methods to report on outcomes. In addition to annual reports, the government also uses other opportunities to report including oral statements, written statements, press releases, press interviews, answers to Senedd questions, appearances before Senedd Committees and evidence papers.

Internal methods of reporting outcomes include 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.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 4

We call on the Welsh Government to explain the rationale for changing the name of its annual overseas network reports to 'international relations annual report' and what implications, if any, this has for what is included in the reports.

Response: Accept

Delivering international success relies on excellent teamwork. Our work overseas does not happen in isolation; it is supported by teams in Wales, working with the offices overseas to jointly deliver the aims of the International Strategy and its associated action plans. The same is true for Wales-based international engagement - this is supported by our teams on the ground around the world, with international success relying on collaboration. The 2023-24 annual report was changed to more accurately reflect the breadth of our international activity, and the reality that the overseas offices and the international relations team in Wales are one team, delivering together.

The change offers the Committee a fuller, and more rounded picture, of the international engagement and activity across the year, at home and overseas. It also provides an opportunity for the Committee to learn more about the work of the Wales and Africa programme, which is an integral part of our international delivery that was previously excluded from the annual report because it was delivered from Wales, rather than by a team based in market.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 5

We call on the Welsh Government to list all international bilateral agreements on its dedicated webpage.

Response: Accept in part

The Welsh Government already publishes on its webpage, all of the active agreements signed at ministerial level, that cover multiple policy areas. This website was created on the back of a recommendation by the Committee. However, 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 of our objectives. It is for individual policy areas to determine if they want to publish details of their international agreements.

The agreements listed in the Committee's annual report were not cross-cutting agreements, they were sector-specific relating to the compound semiconductor industry. Taking into consideration the parameters set out above, the webpage is up to date.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 6

We call on the Welsh Government to proactively notify this Committee when new international bilateral agreements are signed.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government will put mechanisms in place to notify the Committee when new cross-cutting international bilateral agreements are signed.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 7

We call on the Welsh Government to provide an update in relation to the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, including its priorities for Welsh traditions to be recognised and protected, and on intergovernmental discussions.

Response: Accept

The UK, as the signatory of the UNESCO Convention, is the 'state party' and therefore holds the reins on the two broad obligations of the Convention: to create inventories of living heritage and ensure the safeguarding of living heritage in their territory.

The UK approach to these obligations has been developed and agreed with full transparency and through close collaboration with Welsh Government and other devolved nations. The approach has also been heavily influenced by the models and lessons learnt by other countries.

DCMS launched a public consultation at the beginning of 2024 to inform how the first stage of implementation - the creation of the UK inventory - will work. Wales will have its own inventory within an overarching UK inventory. Subject to agreement, I expect the first call for inventory content will take place in summer 2025 and that the inventories could be published by early 2026.

The consultation report, detailing the way forward, is due to be published in April 2025.

An important point of clarity is that the UNESCO Convention relates to any living heritage being practised within a territory – living heritage in Wales will not necessarily need to be intrinsically Welsh to appear on a Wales inventory. When the call for items for inclusion is launched, it will refer to living heritage practised in Wales. The call-out for content will also focus on ensuring that items for listing on the inventories are generated and supported by practising communities, and not by Government.

Our draft Priorities for Culture include the ambition: 'Our intangible cultural heritage is an intrinsic part of our national story – it is recorded, supported to thrive and shared with others for the benefit of future generations.' The inclusion of this strategic ambition means that Welsh Government and all sector stakeholders will work together to record and support our living heritage in Wales.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 8

We call on the Welsh Government to confirm whether it has revisited the matter of St David's Day becoming a Bank Holiday in Wales with the new UK Government, and its response.

Response: Accept

St David's Day is widely celebrated across Wales and all over the world. Bank holidays are decided by the UK Government. We have previously asked the UK Government for the Senedd to have the powers to make St David's Day a bank holiday. Discussions are ongoing with the UK Government.

In terms of international relations activity, we will continue to use the global opportunity that St David's Day brings to raise the profile of Wales around the world through ministerial activities and other events. This year, the UK Government also undertook a programme of activity, utilising materials that we provided to support engagement across the world and in London.

Financial Implications: None