

Committee update

Summer 2024 – Autumn 2024

Welcome to our eighth committee update

This is the eighth bulletin for the Senedd's Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee. It provides an overview of the Committee's recent activities and planned work to help you stay up to date and engage with the Committee's work.

It has been produced by the Clerking team which supports the Committee. If you have any feedback, please let us know using the contact details below.

Contact details

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Current Work

Future of Welsh Steel

The Committee's work on this fast-moving issue continues, with a [statement](#) from the Chair on 25 April 2024 following the announcement from Tata Steel UK that discussions with the unions had ended, and it intended to proceed with closing both blast furnaces.

On 29 April the Minister for Industry and Economic Security [replied](#) to the Committee's [letter](#) about securing the scrap steel supply for the proposed new electric arc furnace at the Port Talbot site. Tata also [responded](#) to the Committee's [letter](#) following the announcement on 18 March of early closure of its coke ovens.

The former First Minister for Wales, Carwyn Jones, also [responded](#) to the Committee [seeking views](#) on how he had engaged with Tata Steel during his time as First Minister during the 2016 steel crisis, to see if there were any lessons to learn from the UK and Welsh Governments approach to joint working at that time. The Committee also welcomed views from the CEO of Celsa Steel on the future of the industry in Wales.

On 18 July 2024, the Committee [sent](#) an open letter to the UK and Welsh Governments with ten recommendations based on its findings.

Green Economy

The Committee undertook an inquiry into the [Green Economy](#) throughout the spring and summer terms.

Nine panel sessions concluded on [26 June](#) with oral evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Welsh Language.

The Committee will report in the Autumn term.

Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS)

At the Royal Welsh Show on Monday 22 July the Committee [launched](#) the report of its one-day inquiry with stakeholders held on 9 May. The session provided an opportunity to seek views on the process of engagement and co-design, and was followed by an evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs on [13 June](#).

The Committee questioned the Cabinet Secretary on next steps following his 14 May [decision](#) to delay introducing the scheme until 2026, with a 'preparatory phase' in 2025. Luke Fletcher and Sam Kurtz also joined the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee (CCEI) for a SFS stakeholder event on 13 March.

The CCEI Committee has also published a [report](#) on the Scheme, and details of the scrutiny work undertaken by both Committees can be found on the [Senedd website](#).

The government's response to this Committee's report is expected by 3 September.

Royal Welsh Show 2024



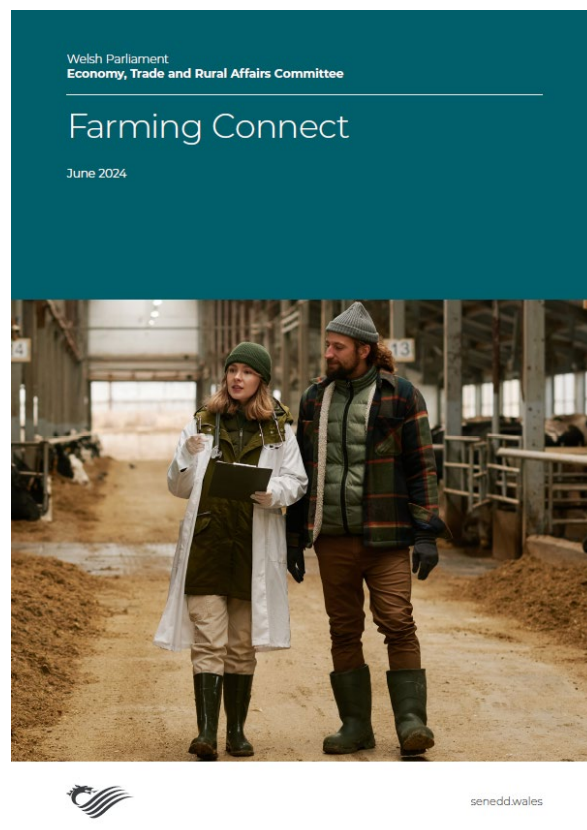
Committee Members visited the Royal Welsh Show in Builth Wells on 22 July 2024. A series of informal meetings on the showground allowed Members to engage with stakeholders on strategic priorities for the rural affairs portfolio for the remainder of this Senedd term – September 2024 to March 2026, including views on the latest position with the SFS proposals.

Organisations that Members met during their visit included:

National Farmers' Union Cymru; Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW); National Trust; ITV Wales Cymru; and members of Wales Environment

Link including Wildlife Trusts Wales, WWF Cymru, the Chartered Institute of Environmental and Ecological Management, Woodland Trust, RSPB Cymru and Soil Association Cymru.

Farming Connect



The Committee published its [report](#) on Farming Connect, and the future of support to farmers transitioning to the new SFS scheme, on 27 June 2024, with a government response due on 8 August.

Development Bank of Wales

The Committee concluded its inquiry into the [Development Bank of Wales](#) with oral evidence from the Bank and the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and the Welsh

Language on 24 April. The Committee's report was published on Friday 12 July. The 13 recommendations include calling on Welsh Government to undertake a full tailored review of the Bank's operations, and consider issues including its due diligence and complaints processes, and the streamlining of business support functions in Wales. The Welsh Government's response is due on 23 August.

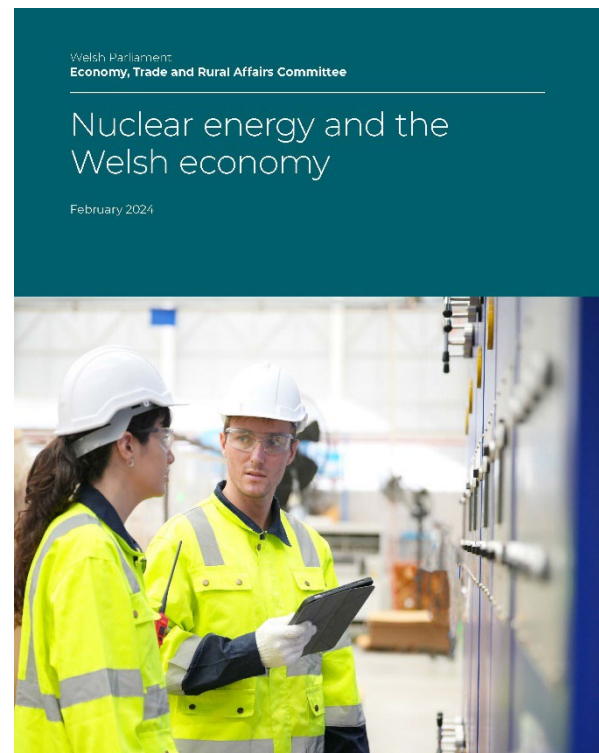
Recent Activities

Research and Development



The Committee published its report on 9 May 2024, and the Welsh Government responded on 26 June 2024.

Nuclear Energy and the Welsh Economy



The Committee received a response to its report from the Welsh Government and, as nuclear energy is a reserved matter, from the former UK Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. A debate was held in Plenary on Wednesday 17 April 2024.

General Ministerial Scrutiny

The Committee held their first general scrutiny sessions with the newly appointed Cabinet Secretaries:

Huw Irranca Davies MS – Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs on Thursday 13 June 2024, and Jeremy Miles MS –

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Welsh Language on [Wednesday 26 June 2024](#).

Forward Work Programme

The Committee has agreed its [work programme](#) into Autumn 2024. The published work programme indicates the current intentions of the Committee at the time of publishing; however, it may change at any time to respond to external events.

The Committee's work is expected to include ongoing consideration of the future of Welsh Steel, a new inquiry into the Foundational Economy, annual scrutiny of the Development Bank of Wales, general scrutiny with Welsh

Government Cabinet Secretaries and a one-day inquiry on 'AI and the Welsh Economy'.

The Committee also plans to undertake a Committee visit in October.

The First Minister's plenary statement on the Welsh Government's Legislative Programme, on 9 July, included plans to introduce a visitor accommodation (regulation) Bill, although exactly when this will be introduced, and whether it will be referred to this Committee, is yet to be confirmed by the Welsh Government and the Business Committee respectively.

Remit

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021, with a remit encompassing (but not restricted to): economic development, regeneration, skills, trade, research, and development (including technology and science), and rural affairs.

Committee Members



Committee Chair:
Paul Davies MS
Welsh Conservatives



Hefin David MS
Welsh Labour



Luke Fletcher MS
Plaid Cymru



Samuel Kurtz MS
Welsh Conservatives



Vikki Howells MS
Welsh Labour



Jenny Rathbone MS
Welsh Labour