

# Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee Monitoring Report

January 2025

## Key points

The UK Government's UK-EU reset continues with Prime Minister, Keir Starmer MP, meeting with EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, to discuss strengthening the relationship. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves MP and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, David Lammy MP, also attended meetings with their EU counterparts.

The Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister met in December, where First Minister, Eluned Morgan MS, was questioned on the Welsh Government's priorities in the ongoing UK-EU relationship reset.

However, the EU Commission has referred the UK to the European Court of Justice over the rights of EU citizens living in the UK and bilateral treaties with EU member states.

The constitutive meeting of the European Parliament's Delegation to the EU-UK PPA took place on 3 October, where Sandro Gozi MEP was elected as chair.

Evidence has been published as part of the Senedd's four-committee inquiry into the Trade and Cooperation Agreement implementation review.

The Welsh Government has published the draft Conduct Order and explanatory memorandum which outline the procedures for conducting the 2026 Senedd election. The consultation on the draft Order ends on 17 February 2025.



The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru has published revised proposals for constituencies for the 2026 Senedd election. The Commission is consulting on these proposals until 13 January 2025.

In December 2024, the UK Government announced that it will launch a statutory review of the UK Internal Market Act in January 2025. It will aim to complete the review by summer 2025.

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# 1. Introduction

The Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee has a broad remit covering a wide range of areas. This monitoring report is intended to provide Members of the Committee with an update on key policy developments related to the Committee's remit. The report covers the period to **8 January 2025**.

The Committee will consider these issues and any actions that it wishes to take in response. This report is being published to inform stakeholders of some of the issues currently under consideration by the Committee.

A glossary of key terms is included as an Annex.

## 2. UK-EU relations

### 2.1. Welsh Government's UK-EU priorities

The Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister met on 13 December, where the focus was on Wales and the world. First Minister, Eluned Morgan MS, said she had met with Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations, Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, and spoken to him about the Welsh Government's priorities for the UK-EU reset. She listed:

- the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) veterinary agreement;
- mutual recognition of professional qualifications;
- improved mobility of workers to provide services; and
- rejoining EU programmes, such as Erasmus.

These four priorities echo those given by the former Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles MS, and former Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice, Lesley Griffiths MS, in a letter to the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee in June 2024.

She acknowledged that resetting the relationship would not “be easy to turn around” but that the “strong relationship” that the Welsh Government has with the Irish Government is helpful “in giving us a sense of how the European Union is feeling”. The First Minister said she has been clear with the UK Government that they want “as close a relationship as we can get”. She also mentioned that Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories, Stephen Doughty MP, was another helpful point of contact in the UK Government.

### 2.2. New UK post to lead on EU relations

**In November, the UK Government advertised for a Second Permanent Secretary post in the Cabinet Office who will be “leading the Government's relationship with the European Union”.**

Among the responsibilities of the role are:

- To be principal adviser to the Prime Minister and the Minister for European Union relations on matters relating to relations with the EU and delivering the “EU reset” and on international economic issues;

- Act as the EU ‘sherpa’, representing the Prime Minister and the Minister in engagements and negotiations with the EU on resetting the relationship;
- Oversee the economic and global issues team, which includes ‘sherpa’ functions for G7 and G20, and ensure alignment between EU engagement and international economic issues;
- Oversee and lead policy development on key questions of UK-EU trade, collaboration and engagement, in particular the Windsor Framework, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the Entry and Exit Scheme; and
- Prepare and lead negotiations with the EU on key UK interests, including the proposed security cooperation agreement.

The advertisement also states that the post holder will be “working closely with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, EU counterparts, and the devolved administrations”.

### **2.3. UK-EU relationship reset**

#### **The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the UK Prime Minister, Keir Starmer MP, met on 2 October to discuss strengthening the relationship between the UK and the EU.**

They agreed to progress the “agenda of strengthened cooperation at pace over the coming months”, and will meet again in the autumn. They also agreed:

*on the importance of holding regular EU-UK Summits at leader-level to oversee the development of the relationship. They agreed that a first Summit should take place ideally in early 2025.*

#### **In October, three EU Parliament Committee delegations visited London to meet with their UK counterparts.**

The delegations were from the Foreign Affairs Committee, International Trade Committee and the Subcommittee on Security and Defence. The latter delegation held talks on “EU-UK defence ties following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine”. The Trade Committee delegation, alongside the Chair of the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, Sandro Gozi, met with the Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations, Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, and

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Hilary Benn MP. They discussed EU-UK trade relations and economic cooperation.

**In October, the BBC reported that Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, David Lammy MP, had attended a regular meeting of EU foreign ministers.**

The meeting discussed the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East. The BBC report also stated that his attendance would form part of:

*more regular engagement, with plans for closer working on international affairs.*

Mr Lammy described the meeting as a “historic moment that marks our EU reset”.

**A meeting of the European Political Community was held on 7 November in Budapest.**

The Guardian reported that European leaders discussed the implications of President-elect Trump’s re-election on European security and defence. UK Prime Minister, Keir Starmer MP, also met with Polish Prime Minister and former President of the European Council, Donald Tusk. They discussed:

*their desire to deepen their existing partnership across defence and security, particularly in the face of Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine.*

Donald Tusk said Warsaw will:

*very intensively coordinate cooperation with countries that have a very similar view on the geopolitical and transatlantic situation and situation in Ukraine.*

**UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves MP, addressed a meeting of EU finance ministers in Brussels on 9 December.**

She reiterated calls for a reset in UK-EU relations as a means of “breaking down barriers to trade”. The BBC reported on responses from some of her EU counterparts, with the Spanish Finance Minister, Carlos Cuerpo saying:

*There's a win-win situation of going further in this relationship between both parties, and we need to engage.*

Dutch Finance Minister, Eelco Heinen, said he was “not going to renegotiate Brexit”, but described the UK as an important trade partner.

## **2.4. Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA)**

### **The constitutive meeting of the European Parliament's Delegation to the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly (PPA) took place on 3 October.**

During the meeting, the Delegation elected Sandro Gozi as Chair, and Klára Dobrev as first Vice-Chair and Mika Aaltola as second Vice-Chair. In November, the Guardian published a joint article from Mr Gozi and Stella Creasy MP, who is chair of the Labour Movement for Europe. The article addresses the rise in support for far-right parties and mentions the PPA, saying:

*yet at present no UK members have been appointed, meaning it can't begin its work. This must urgently be addressed so that from the grassroots to our capitals there is accountability and transparency hardwired into our ways of working.*

The Delegation also held a meeting on 28 November, where it heard views on the state of play of EU-UK trade relations from Luisa Santos, Deputy Director-General at Business Europe, and Aslak Berg, Research Fellow at the Centre for European Reform. The Delegation met again on 12 December, where the main agenda item was an exchange of views with Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner on Trade and Economic Security, Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency. This meeting was held in private.

### **The Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs (ETRA) Committee published its report on the Border Target Operating Model in October.**

The report summarises the work of the ETRA Committee on this issue, including evidence sessions with Welsh and UK Ministers, and examining Welsh Government spend through annual budget scrutiny.

### **In October, the EU requested the establishment of an arbitration tribunal under the dispute settlement mechanism of the TCA.**

This was in regards to the UK's decision to prohibit the fishing of sandeel. In April, the EU [requested consultations with the UK](#) to find a mutually agreeable solution but no such solution was reached. The EU explained that:

*the establishment of an arbitration tribunal constitutes the next step of the dispute settlement procedure.*

### **[The UK Government and the EU concluded technical negotiations on the UK-EU Competition Cooperation Agreement in October.](#)**

The Agreement aims to improve cooperation between the UK's and EU's competition authorities and allow for "greater dialogue" between the Competition and Markets Authority, the European Commission and the competition authorities of EU member states. The Agreement has been negotiated with a view to signature in the coming year.

### **[The minutes for the Specialised Committee on Fisheries established by the TCA were published in October. The meeting took place in May.](#)**

Among the items discussed, the EU noted "the importance of stable and predictable arrangements" around access to waters after the end of the adjustment period on 30 June 2026. They called for discussions to begin as soon as possible. However, the former UK Government said the issue would be considered by the incoming government. Welsh Government officials were in attendance at the meeting. More information can be found in Senedd Research's [TCA fisheries guide](#).

### **[The Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations \(CCWSLIR\) Committee published its report entitled 'Culture Shock: Culture and the new relationship with the European Union' in November.](#)**

Recommendation 11 supported the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee's call for the establishment of a new Welsh Government advisory group on UK-EU relations from its [UK-EU Governance report](#). The CCWSLIR Committee said this should include representative bodies from the culture sector.

Former CCWSLIR Committee member, Carolyn Thomas MS, [also questioned the First Minister](#), Eluned Morgan MS, on issues facing touring artists and rejoining Creative Europe. The First Minister responded that the UK Government is the lead on issues such as rejoining EU programmes but the Welsh Government is "making it clear to them that we want in if we're going there". She also discussed the Taith programme, saying:

*And where we can, like the Taith programme, we've just gone ahead [...]When they're [UK Government] umming and aching about whether they want to get involved in Erasmus, we're just cracking on and doing our own thing. But, obviously, in an ideal world, I think we'd like to be participants in a bigger programme.*

**The minutes for Specialised Committee on VAT Administrative Cooperation and Recovery of Taxes under the TCA were published in November. The meeting took place in September.**

Among the issues discussed, the meeting noted that administrative cooperation provisions had been used effectively, with both parties committed to resolving any discrepancies. The Welsh Government was not in attendance at the meeting.

## **2.5. Withdrawal Agreement**

**The Specialised Committee on Citizens' Rights held its 15<sup>th</sup> meeting in November.**

During the meeting, the EU requested updates on:

*the implementation of the UK High Court's ruling on the upgrade to settled status and on the legal clarity for EU citizens as to whether their rights are guaranteed by the Withdrawal Agreement or by domestic law.*

The UK raised difficulties for UK nationals and their families to acquire permanent residence rights in member states. Both the UK and the EU “underlined the importance of administrative preparedness and proper communication”. The committee will meet again in spring 2025.

On 6 November, the Senedd debated the Equality and Social Justice (ESJ) Committee’s annual report on the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). The EUSS was launched in October 2019 for EU citizens who lived in the UK before Brexit to apply to stay. The application deadline was 30 June 2021 but it remains open for late applications. The debate outlined current concerns with the EUSS, with ESJ Committee chair, Jenny Rathbone MS, saying:

*The whole scheme is becoming disproportionately complicated.*

Senedd Research published an article, which highlighted how these issues were prompting concerns that the EUSS could lead to a “second Windrush”.

**In December, the European Commission referred the UK to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) over the rights of EU citizens living in the UK, including those of extended family members.**

A UK Government spokesperson said it remains “focused on working to reset our relationship with the EU and to make Brexit work for the British people”. The EU Commission is also referring the UK to the ECJ over “its failure to end bilateral investment deals with six member states”.

**On 10 December, the Northern Ireland Assembly voted in favour of a democratic consent resolution, required by the Northern Ireland Protocol for its continued application.**

The motion read:

*That Articles 5 to 10 of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland to the EU withdrawal agreement should continue to apply during the new continuation period (within the meaning of Schedule 6A to the Northern Ireland Act 1998).*

The resolution was passed by 48 votes, to 36.

## **2.6. Wales-Ireland relations**

**The fourth annual Ireland - Wales Forum took place in Cork on 18 October, attended by the First Minister, Eluned Morgan MS, and the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, Micheál Martin.**

Its focus was on “fostering academic and research links”. They also discussed “shared ambitions” for the Wales-Ireland relationship, which included proposals for the Ireland - Wales Shared Statement post-2025. The next Ireland - Wales Forum will take place in Wales in 2025.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS, attended the British-Irish Council Planning and Places Ministerial meeting in Derry/Londonderry on 8 November.**

Hosted by the Northern Ireland Executive, the Council agreed its forward work programme should focus on:

- the climate change and the biodiversity emergency; and
- skills and capacity for the public sector planning profession.

Rebecca Evans MS also held bilateral meetings with:

- Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government;
- Ivan McKee MSP, Scottish Government Minister for Public Finance; and
- John O'Dowd MLA, Northern Ireland Executive Minister for Infrastructure.

### **The British-Irish Council Summit was held on 6 December in Edinburgh.**

The meeting focused on the theme of 'financing a just transition', and administrations discussed initiatives being used to "ensure that communities are supported in the journey towards decarbonisation and net zero". The meeting was referenced by the First Minister, Eluned Morgan MS, during Plenary on 10 December, where she said she:

*took the opportunity [...]in the British-Irish Council, to share my reflections in particular on the situation in Palestine, with the Prime Minister and other leaders, especially in relation to Palestine, and also the Trump presidency.*

## **2.7. UK-EU divergence**

### **The UK in a Changing Europe published its latest UK-EU Divergence Tracker, which covers April - October 2024.**

The UK in a Changing Europe noted that this was the first tracker published since the new UK Government took office. They said there are "already signs of a markedly changed approach to managing divergence".

The tracker shows that active divergence cases, where the UK moves away from the EU, have "all but dried up", with only one case reported. The tracker states the UK Government has revived a ban on the sale of disposable vapes from June 2025 and adds:

*the Welsh government has already announced that it will introduce a ban on the same date, with the Scottish and Northern Irish executives expected to follow suit.*

The tracker notes that the alignment agenda is focused on the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill, which would allow the UK Government to “mirror a wide range of EU regulations”. The tracker notes that the Bill also “arguably amounts to a power-grab by Westminster over devolved competencies” but:

*is unlikely to prove controversial as the governments of Scotland and Wales have already made clear they want to maintain alignment with EU rules.*

The tracker also found 12 cases of passive divergence, where the EU changes its rules and the UK does not mirror this change.

## 3. Intergovernmental and interparliamentary relations

### 3.1. Intergovernmental relations

**On 24 September 2024, the First Minister, Eluned Morgan MS, delivered an oral statement on intergovernmental relations.**

During her statement, the First Minister said that the “formation of the new UK Government has provided a major opportunity to reset relations and begin a new era of partnership between the Welsh and UK Governments”.

**On 11 October 2024, the First Minister attended the inaugural meeting of the Council of the Nations and Regions.**

The Council, which was a UK Labour manifesto promise, brought together the heads of the UK and devolved governments, along with representatives from English regions.

Discussions included how to support people into work, fostering innovation and investment, and improving economic infrastructure and skills.

The First Minister also attended the Prime Minister and Heads of Devolved Governments Council (i.e., without English regional representation), and held a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister on the same day.

**The Senedd Finance Committee published its report into Fiscal Intergovernmental relations in October 2024.**

In the report, the Committee notes that evidence suggests that HM Treasury “continues to undermine IGR by treating the Welsh Government as another UK Government department”. It calls for IGR structures to be “supplemented by a culture of mutual respect and collaboration between all participants” moving forward.

The report was debated in Plenary on 11 December 2024.

**The House of Lords Constitution Committee published its report on the Governance of the Union: Consultation, Co-operation and Legislative Consent, within which it suggests that “an effective Union for the common good should be priority for new Government”.**

Conclusions reached include that the UK Government should review intergovernmental relations and the operation of the Sewel Convention over the coming year, and that a new principle of ‘positive engagement’ should be included among [the principles for intergovernmental relations](#).

In its response, the [UK Government said that](#) “positive engagement is embedded across the approach and in the new Government’s most recent intergovernmental actions”.

### **[The House of Lords Constitution Committee is undertaking an inquiry into executive oversight and responsibility for the UK Constitution.](#)**

The Committee has held evidence sessions with the [Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations](#), Pat McFadden MP, as well as the [Former Secretary of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities](#), Michael Gove.

## **3.2. Interparliamentary Relations**

### **[The Interparliamentary Forum held its sixth meeting in November 2024. The meeting was held at the Northern Ireland Assembly. Alun Davies MS and Llyr Gruffydd MS attended from the Senedd.](#)**

Discussion points included:

- The “new mandate for the [UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly](#)”, following elections to both the UK and EU parliaments this year;
- The UK Government’s [use of delegated powers](#) to legislate in devolved areas and the use of framework legislation;
- The adequacy of existing arrangements to provide budgets for the devolved governments; and
- The operation and structures of [intergovernmental relations](#).

See Senedd Research’s In Brief for [further information](#) on the meeting.

## 4. Legislation

### 4.1. Senedd

**There are currently five Bills progressing through the Senedd.**

The following Bills are at Stage 1:

- The Visitor Accommodation (Register and Levy) Etc. (Wales) Bill;
- The Legislation (Procedure, Publication and Repeals) (Wales) Bill;
- The Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill; and
- The Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Bill.

The Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill is currently at Stage 2.

The Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee is leading the scrutiny of the Legislation (Procedure, Publication and Repeals) (Wales) Bill. The Committee has held evidence sessions with the Counsel General and Minister for Delivery, Julie James MS, the National Archives, and Dr Ruth Fox and Dr Adam Tucker.

### 4.2. UK

**Since the UK General Election in July, the UK Government has introduced 28 Bills. Of the 28 introduced, 26 apply to Wales.**

Some of the Bills are constitutional in nature, such as the House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill, which seeks to “remove the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords”.

## 5. Legislative Consent

**Since the new UK Government came to power, 13 LCMs and SLCMs have been laid relating to 9 Bills, bringing the total to 128 LCMs and SLCMs relating to 56 Bills in the Sixth Senedd.**

The Welsh Government has recommended that the Senedd give its consent for the following Bills:

- [Passenger Railway Services \(Public Ownership\) Act](#) - the Committee [published its report](#) on the LCM on 23 October 2024
- [Water \(Special Measures\) Bill](#) - the Welsh Government published three supplementary LCMs on the Bill ([LCM No. 2](#), [No. 3](#), and [No. 4](#)). The Committee's current deadline for reporting on the LCM is 17 January 2025;
- [Renters' Rights Bill](#) - the Committee's reporting deadline is 31 January 2025;
- [Tobacco and Vapes Bill](#) - the Committee's reporting deadline is 21 February 2025;
- [Mental Health Bill](#) - the Committee's reporting deadline is 21 February 2025; and
- [Employment Rights Bill](#) - the Welsh Government [published a supplementary LCM](#) on 19 December 2024. The Committee's reporting deadline is 7 March 2025.

In addition to this, the Welsh Government has advised that it requires further engagement with the UK Government on the following Bills:

- [Great British Energy Bill](#) - the Committee [published its report](#) on the LCM on 2 December 2024;
- [Product Regulation and Metrology Bill](#) - the Committee [published its report](#) on the LCM on 29 November 2024; and
- [Data Use and Access Bill](#) - the Committee's reporting deadline is 7 March 2025.

## 6. Constitution

### **The Welsh Government has appointed Dr Anwen Elias as chair of the new Innovating Democracy Advisory Group.**

The Group was created following the recommendation of the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales that an expert panel should be created to advise Welsh Government and partners on expanding the use of democratic innovation and enhance civic engagement in public life.

### **The Democratic Health Task and Finish Group published its report on the democratic health of community and town councils.**

Findings included that most members of the public do not know what community councils do, or who their councillors are, and that only 22% of councillors stand in contested seats.

### **The Senedd's Local Government and Housing Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the role, governance and accountability of the community and town council sector.**

Terms of reference for the inquiry include whether the sector is fit for purpose in an evolving local government landscape, and how new powers and responsibilities for this tier of government are utilised to support communities.

### **The Senedd's Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the Cabinet Manual and the Ministerial Code.**

In October 2024, the Committee held an evidence session with Welsh Government officials - Permanent Secretary, Dr Andrew Goodall, and David Richards, Director of Propriety and Ethics.

### **The House of Commons has appointed the membership of the Welsh Affairs Committee. Ruth Jones MP was elected as Chair.**

The Committee has six Labour members, three from Plaid Cymru, one Liberal Democrat and one Conservative. A full list of Members can be found here.

### **During oral questions on 26 November 2024, Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent suggested that there would be no Lords Minister for the Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland Offices.**

She said that the “Prime Minister has faith in me to deliver for this Government in this House”.

## 7. Senedd reform and elections

**The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru published revised proposals for constituencies for the 2026 Senedd election. The Commission is consulting on these proposals until 13 January 2025.**

Changes in the revised proposals include the pairing of Cardiff North with Cardiff West, and Cardiff East with Cardiff South and Penarth.

It is also proposed that 12 of the 16 constituencies will have monolingual Welsh language names, while the remaining 4 will be bilingual.

**The Welsh Government has published a draft conduct order and explanatory memorandum, which outline the procedures for conducting the 2026 Senedd election.**

According to the Welsh Government, the main changes being taken forward in the draft order are:

- policy proposals outlined in the October 2022 White Paper on Electoral Reform and through the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024, which received Royal Assent on 9 September 2024;
- the implementation of substantial legislative changes required by the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024, reflecting that there will only be constituency elections going forward, with only parties and individual candidates standing in those constituencies; and
- changes to ensure that the language throughout the draft Order is gender neutral.

The Welsh Government's consultation on the draft Order closes on 17 February 2025.

**The Welsh Government has published draft regulations setting out how it intends to establish a pilot scheme for electoral registration without application (often referred to as automatic voter registration).**

The regulations allow Newport, Powys and Gwynedd local authorities to undertake the pilots. The pilots must take place between 17 January 2025 and 30 September 2025.

The Senedd will debate the regulations on 14 January 2025.

**Bethan Williams Price and Karen Jones have been appointed as members to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru.**

From April 2025, the Commission will have responsibility for determining the remuneration framework for members of the principal councils, town and community councillors, fire and rescue authorities, national park authorities and corporate joint committees across Wales, as well as for co-ordinating Welsh elections, through the Electoral Management Board.

The Welsh Government has also published information on the role and functions of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru.

**In November 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government, Jayne Bryant MS, delivered an oral statement on electoral administration and electoral reform.**

The Cabinet Secretary's statement focussed on the functioning of the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024 and the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024 through making secondary legislation.

**The Future Senedd Committee was established on 16 October 2024.**

It has a remit to report by 9 May 2025 on three matters: the organisation of business in the Seventh Senedd, solutions to barriers (real and perceived) which may, or have the potential to, impede the Senedd's ability to represent people of all backgrounds, life experiences, preferences and beliefs, and the thresholds currently set in Standing Orders for the number of Members required for various purposes.

**The House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the 2024 general election.**

The Committee will consider the issue of the administration, process and conduct of the 2024 general election and how these could be improved for future elections. The call for evidence is open until 27 January 2025.

## 8. UK Internal Market Act

**In December 2024, the UK Government announced that it will launch a statutory review of the UK Internal Market Act 2020, as required by the Act, in January 2025. It will aim to complete the review by summer 2025.**

The Review will be broadened in scope from the requirements in the Act to include the practical operation of parts 1, 2 and 3, including inviting views on the process for considering exclusions from the Act, and the role and functions carried by the Office for the Internal Market (OIM).

The Statement confirms that the UK Government will engage directly with the devolved governments in conducting the review.

**In September 2024, the LJC Committee held an evidence session with representatives from the Office for the Internal Market (OIM).**

Tim Render, panel member of the Office, noted that “there had not been a substantial change in the operation of the internal market over the past year”, and that very few business are reporting challenges doing business due to regulatory differences.

The OIM subsequently wrote to the LJC Committee to outline its assessment of the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill and the OIM’s role as it relates to UK-EU matters, including the implementation of the Windsor Framework.

**In November 2024, the Welsh Government published a written statement on its approach to the development of a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for Wales.**

Within the statement, the Welsh Government said that would no longer be working on a joint scheme with the rest of the UK because “in the time available it has not been possible to address the issues to the operation of devolution caused by the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020, inherited by the UK Government from the previous administration”.

It added that the Welsh Government will “continue our active engagement to develop a scheme that supports the transition to reuse for all drinks containers including those made from glass”.

**The Welsh Government has introduced legislation on the registration of visitor accommodation and a visitor levy. The OIM identified this as an area of potential regulatory difference within the scope of the UK Internal Market Act.**

In its annual report on the operation of the UK internal market, the OIM highlighted tourism measures, including the licencing of short-term lets and visitor levies, as future areas of regulatory development in the services sector that could be within the scope of the UK Internal Market Act.

## 9. Justice

### 9.1. Wales

#### **In October 2024, the LJC Committee held an evidence session with the President of the Welsh Tribunals.**

During the session, the President, Sir Gary Hickinbottom, told the Committee he was engaging with the Welsh Government about budgeting and expenditure, and stressed the importance of ensuring that the Tribunals are properly accountable to the Welsh people.

For more information on the session and the President's latest annual report, see [our article](#).

#### **The Counsel General and Minister for Delivery, Julie James MS, delivered a keynote address to the Legal Wales Conference in October 2024.**

During the speech, the Counsel General spoke of the importance of access to justice and outlined her intention to “continue working with other governments and agencies to explore the power of AI to help people engage with and understand the law so they can find the right answers to real life situations”.

#### **Members of the LJC Committee visited HMP Parc on 2 December 2024. Members discussed a range of important issues relevant to the operation of the prison with staff and spoke to some prisoners.**

At the end of the visit, the Committee was offered an opportunity to return in six months to consider the impact of an ongoing programme of improvements.

#### **Dr Robert Jones of Cardiff University published the latest fact file on Prisons and Sentencing in Wales. It found that assaults and self-harm incidents in Welsh prisons increased significantly in 2023.**

The fact file notes that HMP Parc saw the steepest rises, and that 12 of the 13 deaths reported across the Welsh prison estate in the first six months of 2024 occurred at Parc.

#### **The Welsh Government has published proposals for the Welsh Government's component of funding for Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales for 2025-26.**

It suggests setting the Welsh Government's contribution to police funding for 2025-26 at £113.47 million.

## 9.2. UK

### **In October 2024, the Ministry of Justice launched a review into sentencing to be led by former Lord Chancellor David Gauke.**

The review is tasked with undertaking a comprehensive re-evaluation of the sentencing framework in England and Wales. In developing its recommendations, it has been asked to look at national data and international comparisons. Mr Gauke is being supported by an independent panel and the review must submit its findings by Spring 2025.

### **The sentencing powers for Magistrates Courts in England and Wales have been increased to allow them to hand-down prison sentences of up to a year for a single offence instead of six months.**

The Ministry of Justice says that this change will help to tackle the record remand population in jails and address the Crown Court backlog. It suggests that it will save approximately 2,000 days in the Crown Court.

### **In December 2024, the Ministry of Justice published a 10-year Prison Capacity Strategy with plans to open up 14,000 places in prisons by 2031.**

The strategy includes plans to build four new prisons in England and to increase the capacity on existing sites. The plans include an additional 350 prison places in Wales.

The Ministry of Justice intends to 'streamline' the planning route for new prisons in England and says that, as planning is a devolved matter, it will engage with the Welsh Government to see if there are any opportunities to streamline the process for criminal justice infrastructure in Wales.

### **The Ministry of Justice has announced funding for criminal legal aid and civil legal aid services.**

There will be £24m made available for criminal legal aid, including investments in Youth Court legal aid and additional support for solicitors who work or commute to work in areas with fewer than 2 legal aid providers.

Alongside this, there will be an additional £20m invested into the civil legal aid sector, subject to a consultation, which will launch in January 2025.

### **In September 2024, the UK Government announced plans to reduce the number of women in custody by using early intervention and tackling the root causes of offending.**

Plans include the establishment of a Women's Justice Board, which will bring together senior leaders in the criminal justice system, charities and government departments. It will publish a strategy in the spring.

**The House of Commons Justice Committee is undertaking an inquiry into rehabilitation and resettlement: ending the cycle of reoffending.**

The Committee's call for evidence is open until 17 January 2025.

The Committee is also undertaking an inquiry into tackling drugs in prisons. The call for evidence is open until 31 January 2025.

**The House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee is undertaking an inquiry into prison culture: governance, leadership and staffing.**

The Committee's call for evidence was open until 10 January 2025.

**The Lord Chancellor has extended Baroness Helen Newlove's term as Victims Commissioner for England and Wales until 31 December 2025.**

The extension will allow the Lord Chancellor to readvertise the role later with revised criteria that reflect the UK Government's vision for a strengthened role for the Commissioner.

**The Ministry of Justice has published ad-hoc statistics on Welsh speaking offenders in England and Wales.**

The statistics show that in 2023 there were 399 Welsh-speaking prisoners in Welsh prisons and 116 in prisons in England. The largest number are in HMP Berwyn in Wrexham.

### **9.3. Scotland**

**In October 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs, Angela Constance MSP, updated the Scottish Parliament on amendments to the Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform Bill.**














Following discussions, the Scottish Government will no longer proceed with a "plan to enable a time-limited pilot of single-judge trials for rape and attempted rape cases". Proposed amendments also include enabling "more detailed research into jury deliberations, including how rape myths may affect verdicts".

**On 26 November 2024, the Scottish Parliament passed the Prisoners (Early Release) (Scotland) Bill.**

The legislation will “change the release point for offenders serving sentences of less than four years from 50% of their sentence to 40%”. This will not apply to the release point for prisoners serving sentences for domestic abuse or sexual offences.

## 10. Annex: Glossary

### Post-Brexit framework: key terms

International obligations		International duties and commitments of the UK
Trade agreements		Establish new trading arrangements between the UK and other countries
International agreements		Agreements between the UK and other countries or organisations
UK-EU Trade & Cooperation Agreement		Establishes the new UK-EU relationship
UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement		Sets the terms of the UK's exit from the EU
Protocol on Ireland-Northern Ireland		Part of the Withdrawal Agreement to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland
EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018		Converted EU law to domestic law, stops new EU laws having automatic effect in the UK and gives Ministers powers to correct the statute book after leaving the EU
EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020		Implements the Withdrawal Agreement
EU (Future Relationship) Act 2020		Implements the Trade & Cooperation Agreement
Internal Market Act 2020		Establishes rules for the regulation of goods, services and qualifications across the UK
Common Frameworks		Set up UK-wide frameworks for some areas previously governed by the EU
Implementing regulations		Regulations passed in the Senedd or UK Parliament to implement the new arrangements
Correcting regulations		Regulations passed in the Senedd or UK Parliament to make EU laws retained after leaving the EU workable in a domestic context

