



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

---

Paper 000/00

27/11/2020

NIAR 261-20

# The Executive's International Relations and comparisons with Scotland & Wales

**Stephen Orme**

## Key Points

This briefing provides information on the Northern Ireland Executive's international relations strategy and places this in a comparative context, in which the approaches of the Scottish and Welsh governments are also detailed.

The following key points specify areas which may be of particular interest to the Committee for the Executive Office.

- The Executive's most recent international relations strategy was published in 2014. Since then there have been significant changes in the global environment and Northern Ireland's position in it, including Brexit and its consequences. Northern Ireland will have a unique and ongoing close relationship with the EU, due in part to the requirements of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol.
- The Scottish and Welsh parliaments have launched and/or completed inquiries into their countries' international relations in recent years. The Scottish and Welsh governments have also taken recent steps to update and refresh their approach to international relations.
- There is substantial variation in the functions of the international offices of the devolved administrations. NI Executive and Scottish Government offices pursue a broad range of diplomatic, economic, cultural, educational and specific policy priorities, with substantial variation between offices. Welsh Government offices, meanwhile, appear primarily focused on trade missions. It is therefore difficult to compare the international offices of the three administrations on a "like for like" basis.
- The 2014 international relations strategy establishes OFMDFM (now the Executive Office) as the central coordinator of all international work, including that of Invest NI. The Committee may wish to consider if and how the Executive Office could better oversee and support the international work of Invest NI, particularly in light of how the Scottish and Welsh governments approach this issue.
- In 2016 the Executive moved to an outcomes-based Programme for Government, and the New Decade New Approach deal retains a commitment to this approach. The creation of a new international relations strategy within an outcomes-based framework may provide the opportunity to ensure that international activity is clearly planned and structured, and provides clarity in performance management and accountability.

International relations activity could be developed and monitored within the 'performance accountability' level of the OBA framework, whereby each Bureau's work would be assessed against the following three questions:

- How much did we do? (*Quantity of work*)
- How well did we do it? (*Quality of work*)
- Is anyone better off? (*Impact of work*)

# 1 Summary

This briefing note has been prepared for the Committee for the Executive Office and may help to inform its consideration of the Executive's approach to international relations.

The briefing considers five topics, with a focus on considering the current situation in Northern Ireland and the comparative perspective offered by Scotland and Wales. Each section is very briefly summarised below.

- **NI Executive International Relations: background & comparison.**

The Executive's most recent international relations strategy was published in 2014. Despite being published within the 2011-2015 PfG framework, it remains the current strategy for the Executive's international work. The Executive Office has bureaux in Beijing, Brussels and Washington DC. The 2014 strategy promised specific strategies for each Bureau – however these are either expired (Beijing) or not publicly available, if in existence (Brussels & Washington DC).

The Scottish Government has an overall 'International Framework', above a number of country-specific engagement strategies and a network of international offices. The Welsh Government launched a five-year international strategy earlier in 2020, with three overall ambitions and actions under each of these.

Since the UK voted to leave the EU, the Scottish and Welsh parliaments have taken a significant interest in their future approaches to international relations. In the Welsh Parliament this has resulted in four reports on Wales' future external relations, UK international agreements post-Brexit and the 2020 international strategy. In the Scottish Parliament, an inquiry on future external affairs is ongoing.

- **International offices: function & location.**

Northern Ireland currently has international offices covering Europe, North America and China: arguably the largest and most influential political and economic blocs in the world.

There is substantial variation in the functions of the international offices of the three devolved administrations. NI Executive and Scottish Government offices pursue a broad range of diplomatic, economic, cultural, educational and specific policy priorities, with substantial variation between offices. Welsh Government offices, meanwhile, appear primarily focused on trade missions. It is therefore difficult to compare the offices of each administration on a "like for like" basis.

- **Functions of TEO Bureaux and Invest NI International Offices.**

The 2014 international relations strategy established the OFMDFM (now Executive Office) International Relations Team as the coordinator of all international work, including that of Invest NI. Invest NI has a much broader global office presence than the three Executive Office bureaux.

The Scottish and Welsh Governments both appear to have much more integration in the work of their international offices and their Invest NI equivalents. Scotland has recently developed Innovation & Investment Hubs which combine the premises and networks of the Scottish Government and Scottish Development International. In Wales, meanwhile, the Government's core international offices and Trade Invest Wales offices are one and the same.

- **Brexit and Northern Ireland's future relations with the European Union.**

The UK's Exit from the EU has and will continue to significantly change Northern Ireland's relationship with the EU, but a close relationship will be inevitable and necessary in the context of the requirements of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol. Scotland and Wales are both retaining their Brussels presence post-Exit, and potentially expanding their presence in Europe.

The changes to Northern Ireland's status and obligations in relation to the EU warrant significant consideration as to how best to approach future relations with the Union.

- **Measuring performance and impact of offices.**

Northern Ireland's international relations strategy is substantially out of date. The lack of measurable actions and targets, as well as the absence of current and public plans for each bureau, prevents effective scrutiny and analysis of their performance.

Scotland's international approach lacks clear links between its overall outcomes and any measurable actions and indicators. Wales' recently launched International Strategy is severely lacking in measurable indicators and delivery plans. The Welsh Government does, however, provide quarterly reports to its Parliament on the activity of its international offices. This may be an example for the Committee to consider.

Given the Executive's move to an outcomes-based Programme for Government, it may be possible to place the performance management and assessment of international relations within the OBA framework.

By utilising the 'performance accountability' level of the OBA system, a new international relations strategy could be developed with a clear set of overall outcomes. Each bureau could then return an OBA scorecard on a (for instance) quarterly basis, answering the three OBA "performance accountability questions" to demonstrate progress towards these outcomes.

## 2 NI Executive International Relations: Background & Comparison

This section provides some background to the Executive's current approach to international relations. Similar information is then provided on the current approach of the Scottish and Welsh governments, to allow for comparison.

### Executive's International Relations Strategy

The Executive's most recent international relations strategy was published in 2014. The strategic aim was to 'Enhance our international credibility and develop mutually beneficial relationships with targeted countries, regions and organisations to secure investment, trade, tourism, students and to exchange knowledge and expertise.'<sup>1</sup>

This aim was supported by a set of long-term objectives including: strengthening our international economic position; developing and maintaining effective relationships with target countries and regions; and working with the British and Irish governments, United States and EU to promote the objectives.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the Strategy lists eight 'international priorities':

- Establishing government to government relations
- Trade and Investment
- Maximising support from the European Union
- Tourism
- University and education links
- Research and Technology development
- Provision of Conflict Resolution expertise
- Promoting sport and cultural opportunities.

The role of OFMDFM was to facilitate co-ordination of all international work, establish government-to-government relations and create international partnerships.<sup>3</sup> This would be delivered by a new international relations unit within OFMDFM<sup>4</sup>, and was emphasised by departmental officials when briefing the committee on the strategy:

From our experience, one of the things that we needed to do to get a strategy together was to coordinate and join up government a lot more, not only how we cooperate on international activities coming in but how we build on the connections and relationships made through those international visits . . . We want the strategy to develop a joined-up approach to achieve our mutual international objectives and complement the strategies of the other organisations.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Northern Ireland Executive, *Executive's International Relations Strategy* (2014) p2

<sup>2</sup> As cited immediately above, p3

<sup>3</sup> As cited in footnote 1

<sup>4</sup> As cited in footnote 1, p12-13; see also <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/international-relations-team>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020, for details of the work of the TEO International Relations Team

<sup>5</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, *International Relations Strategy: OFMDFM Officials* (2014) p2

In addition to the Brussels and Washington bureaux open at that time, the strategy contained a commitment to the opening of a bureau in China<sup>6</sup> (subsequently opened in September 2014) and the development of specific strategies for both the USA and Canada.<sup>7</sup>

It is unclear whether specific USA and Canada strategies exist; when briefing the committee on the strategy, officials instead made reference to a single North America Strategy for the Washington bureau.<sup>8</sup> The most recent strategy for China is the Two Year Strategy 2016-2018, available on the NI Bureau in China website and discussed further in section 6 of this paper.

The 2014 international relations strategy was naturally and explicitly situated within the framework and objectives of the 2011-2015 Programme for Government. However in the absence of any further development, this strategy remains the driver for the Executive's international relations activities. For example the 2019 Outcomes Delivery Plan, which is the most current expression of the Executive's work programme, states that this strategy will inform its work under Outcome 10: 'We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest.'<sup>9</sup>

### **Scotland's international approach**

Scotland's current 'International Framework' was published in 2017, with an overall twofold agenda:

- To create an environment within Scotland that supports a better understanding of international opportunities and a greater appetite and ability to seize them; and
- To influence the world around us on the issues that matter most in helping Scotland flourish.<sup>10</sup>

The Framework specifies twelve 'Outcomes/Ambitions', which essentially are long-term aspirations in three areas: 'our people', 'our businesses & institutions' and 'our Scotland'.<sup>11</sup>

Below this, the framework specifies sixteen strategic objectives across four areas: 'relationships & partnerships', 'reputation & attractiveness', 'global outlook and European Union'. These detail, at a very high and broad level, what the Scottish government intends to do to progress towards the top level outcomes.<sup>12</sup>

The framework informs specific 'Engagement Strategies' which Scotland currently has for the United States, Canada, Pakistan, India and China.<sup>13</sup> Each of these strategies has objectives which align with the overall framework. For instance, under

---

<sup>6</sup> Northern Ireland Executive, *Executive's International Relations Strategy* (2014) p9

<sup>7</sup> As cited in footnote 7, p6-8

<sup>8</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, *International Relations Strategy: OFMDFM Officials* (2014) p3

<sup>9</sup> The Executive Office, *Outcomes Delivery Plan 2019* (2019) p75

<sup>10</sup> Scottish Government, *Scotland's International Framework* (2017) p3

<sup>11</sup> As cited immediately above, p4-7

<sup>12</sup> As cited in footnote 10, p8-13

<sup>13</sup> Each Strategy can be accessed via <https://www.gov.scot/policies/international-relations/>, retrieved 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

'relationships & partnerships', the India strategy cites ongoing collaboration on renewable energy technology.<sup>14</sup> However overall, there is no explicit or measurable link between the outcomes of the framework and the strategic objectives – either at framework level, or at the level of individual engagement strategies.

Separate to its international framework, the Scottish Government has strategic objectives for its network of international offices, as well as specific objectives for each office for 2019/20.<sup>15</sup> These detail particular actions to be undertaken, but there no specific or uniform targets or indicators. These objectives therefore offer, at best, limited scope for scrutiny or performance assessment.

The Scottish government has finally also introduced 'Innovation and Investment Hubs' which aim to provide a platform for collaborative activity between the international offices, Scottish Development International<sup>16</sup> and business and university partners.<sup>17</sup> There are currently five such hubs – all within Europe – in Berlin, Brussels, Dublin, London, and Paris.

#### Scottish Parliament External Affairs Inquiry

The Scottish Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe & External Affairs Committee launched an external affairs inquiry in 2019. In a call for evidence to stakeholders which received 25 responses<sup>18</sup>, the committee stated that the Inquiry will have two distinct strands: engagement with the EU, and engagement with the rest of the world.<sup>19</sup>

Questions posed in the call for evidence included: what principles should inform the Scottish Government's EU and rest-of-world external affairs policy; examples of best practice in how non-Member State nations engage with the EU; and how best international activity could be evaluated.

The Committee's inquiry has been postponed due to workload pressures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is now anticipated to resume at some point after the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections. More detail of the Inquiry's call for evidence is provided at Appendix 1.

---

<sup>14</sup> Scottish Government, *Scotland's International Framework: India Engagement Strategy* (2016) p13

<sup>15</sup> Scottish Government, *International offices: strategic objectives* (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/international-offices-strategic-objectives/pages/introduction/>), retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020 – the 8 pages which flow from this link detail the 2019/20 objectives for each office

<sup>16</sup> This is broadly the Scottish equivalent of Invest NI

<sup>17</sup> Scottish Government, *Europe: Innovation and Investment Hubs* (<https://www.gov.scot/policies/europe/innovation-and-investment-hubs/>), retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/111568.aspx>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

<sup>19</sup> Scottish Parliament Culture, Tourism, Europe & External Affairs Committee, *Call for evidence: External Affairs* (2019) p2

## Welsh Government's International Strategy

The Welsh government launched its current international strategy earlier this year. It has three ambitions for the next five years:

- Raise Wales' profile internationally
- Grow the Welsh economy
- Establish Wales as a globally responsible nation<sup>20</sup>

The strategy details lists of actions the government will take towards these three ambitions (for example under 'Grow the Welsh economy', the government will promote "magnet" projects to attract investment to specific parts of Wales<sup>21</sup>). The Government has a dedicated International Relations Minister to deliver the strategy, as well as a pledge to hold biannual meetings incorporating local government and civic society to ensure coordination of delivery.<sup>22</sup>

The strategy also showcases three sectors in particular, as a result of their global recognition as areas of excellence, resilience following Brexit and substantial growth potential (amongst other factors).<sup>23</sup> These are cyber security, compound-semiconductors and the creative industries.

In a debate on the strategy, some Assembly Members criticised the lack of measurable targets – there are only three measurable targets in the strategy – and the implications this has for effective scrutiny, as well as the absence of specific delivery plans underneath the strategy.<sup>24</sup>

### Welsh Parliament inquiries into future international relations

The Welsh Parliament's External Affairs & Additional Legislation Committee has completed four inquiries into Wales' international relations across 2018 and 2019:

- A two-part report on Wales' future relationship with Europe and the world
- A report on a role for the Senedd in the UK's international agreements after Brexit; and
- A report on the Welsh Government's Draft International Strategy.

Material from the Inquiries is discussed as relevant in the following sections. In addition, more detailed summaries of areas covered by each of these Inquiries are provided at Appendix 1.

---

<sup>20</sup> Welsh Government, *International Strategy* (2020) p4

<sup>21</sup> Welsh Government, *International Strategy* (2020) p7

<sup>22</sup> As cited in footnote 21, p8

<sup>23</sup> As cited in footnote 21, p19

<sup>24</sup> Welsh Assembly, *Record of Proceedings: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020* (2020), <https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/6261?lang=en-GB>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020



### 3 International offices: function and location

In this section, the functions and locations of each administration's international offices are considered and compared.

The international offices of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales carry out varying functions. These encompass a very broad range of diplomatic, economic/trade, cultural, research/educational and specific policy goals.

There is, however, substantial variation in what functions each country attributes to individual international offices, meaning that the offices of each country cannot be compared on a "like for like" basis. (Readers should also note that various titles given by each country to its international presences – such as 'Bureau', 'Office' or 'Hub' – do not automatically confer specific or distinct functions.)

#### **Northern Ireland**

The Executive's three bureaux in Brussels, Beijing and Washington DC currently represent Northern Ireland to the European Union, China and North America (primarily the USA and Canada). These three regions can reasonably be described as currently the largest and most influential economic and political blocs in the world.

#### Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels

The Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels (ONIEB) combines diplomatic, policy and representative functions. The bureau website indicates there are currently twelve members of staff<sup>25</sup>, and the Executive Office states that the key priorities for the Office are:

- To assist the Executive to further the aims of its Programme for Government through supporting Northern Ireland's European engagement
- To assist Departments to contribute to EU policy development and implementation in relation to their core business areas and to increase Departmental engagement with elective European funding programmes
- To raise the positive profile of Northern Ireland in Europe and among its institutions<sup>26</sup>

#### Northern Ireland Bureau: United States & Canada

The bureau in Washington DC has the following objectives:

- work to cultivate and strengthen links between various political, economic, educational, and cultural interests in Northern Ireland and North America; and
- serve as a resource for individuals and organisations looking to learn and understand more about Northern Ireland, and about its relationship with the United States and Canada<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> See <https://brusselsni.com/>, retrieved on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020

<sup>26</sup> See <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/office-northern-ireland-executive-brussels>, retrieved on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020

<sup>27</sup> See <https://www.nibureau.com/>, retrieved on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020

### Northern Ireland Bureau: China

The bureau in China was established to develop relations with China that would provide mutual benefits. The bureau has both a diplomatic and a representative office in Beijing. The 'Two Year Strategy 2016-2018' remains available on the bureau's website<sup>28</sup> and is discussed further in section 6 – however the site itself states that the fundamental function of the China Bureau is:

...to try and influence the Chinese government and decision makers to look positively at Northern Ireland and to encourage their organisations to do business with us, to study with our institutions, share best practice, enjoy each other's culture and to visit us.<sup>29</sup>

### **Scotland**

As detailed above, the Scottish government has a set of objectives for its entire network of eight international offices.

In addition to this, each international office has its own set of priorities and strategic objectives for 2019/20. Below, these are each very briefly summarised – first for the three locations in which Northern Ireland has a bureau, and then for the five where Northern Ireland has no comparable presence<sup>30</sup>:

- **European Union (Brussels).** Promote Scotland as a place to work, live, visit, study and do business; deliver cultural events and visits; provide Ministers with effective intelligence enabling the influencing of Brexit negotiations; maintain and develop Scottish engagement in European networks and projects; and support Scottish Development International, particularly in relation to post-Brexit trade.
- **United States (Washington DC).** Promote Scottish culture and engaging with the diaspora; protect Scottish interests in the context of future US/UK trade negotiations; promote collaboration in research and investment; and promote Scottish interests through (for instance) partnerships and government-to-government exchange on priority policies including at the state level, increasing awareness of Scotland's position on Brexit and enhancing links with international institutions and NGOs.
- **China (Beijing).** Promote Scotland by developing regional engagement between Scottish and Chinese cities and regions; expand Scotland's human rights and equalities influence; explore Scotland's priorities for future trade deals with China; and promote opportunities in China for Scottish universities and other institutions.

---

<sup>28</sup> See <http://northernireland-china.com/executive-mission.php>, retrieved on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020

<sup>29</sup> See <http://northernireland-china.com/>, retrieved on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020

<sup>30</sup> Scottish Government, *International offices: strategic objectives* (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/international-offices-strategic-objectives/pages/introduction/>), retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020 – the pages which flow from this link detail the 2019/20 objectives for each office

- **England.** Engage with the international diplomatic community present in London to promote cultural and economic priorities; attract inward investment and external trade; engage with relevant Whitehall networks; and strengthen relationships with key partners including the City of London Corporation.
- **Ireland.** Promote Scottish-Irish trade and investment; continue a strong cultural cooperation programme; and ensure that Scottish policy and positions on Brexit are well understood in Ireland. (The Governments of Ireland and Scotland are currently undertaking a joint review of their relations, ‘aimed at consolidating existing ties in a new international environment and unlocking the relationship’s further potential’<sup>31</sup> – at the time of writing, completion of this review has been delayed by pressures relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.)
- **France.** Demonstrate Scotland’s ongoing commitment to Europe; work with Scottish Development International to showcase business and investment opportunities; promote Scottish culture and engaging with the diaspora; and promote collaboration in research and innovation.
- **Germany.** Promote Scotland in areas of trade & investment, higher education and research & innovation; engage with the diaspora; and promote Scottish culture.
- **Canada.** Promote Scotland’s culture, education, tourism, trade & investment; engage with the diaspora; engage in policy and reputational priorities for Scotland in Canada, including the Arctic framework<sup>32</sup>, climate change and social enterprise.

The Scottish Government and NI Executive’s international offices each provide some combination of promotion of diplomatic, economic/trade, cultural, research/educational and specific policy goals in the country in question. However, there is substantial variation in the specific functions of each office.

## Wales

The Welsh Government does not have a detailed public rationale for each of its international offices. Overall, its offices are responsible for ‘trade and investment, government relations, tourism, culture and education. The primary focus of the Brussels office is on EU matters.’<sup>33</sup>

Very little detail is provided beyond this, for which the government has been criticised.<sup>34</sup> The offices are situated entirely within Trade & Invest Wales, ‘the official Foreign Direct Investment marketing initiative for Wales’ – broadly comparable to Invest NI.<sup>35</sup>

It appears that in practice, the Welsh offices are primarily focused on trade missions, but also retain some flexibility to respond to international events by, for instance,

<sup>31</sup> Scottish Government & Government of Ireland, *Concept note: Strategic review of Irish-Scottish relations* (2019) p1

<sup>32</sup> Scottish Government, *Arctic Connections: Scotland’s Arctic Policy Framework* (2019)

<sup>33</sup> See <https://gov.wales/international-offices>, retrieved on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020

<sup>34</sup> See <https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2019/02/expanding-wales-international-footprint/>, retrieved on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020; see also <https://record.assembly.wales/Committee/5467#A51571>, retrieved on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020

<sup>35</sup> See <https://tradeandinvest.wales/about>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

supporting repatriation of Welsh citizens abroad and linking PPE suppliers with central government in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>36</sup>

Overall there are 21 Welsh offices across twelve countries, which are ‘mostly housed in existing Foreign & Commonwealth Offices.’<sup>37</sup> Given the lack of detail on the specific functions of each office, and the fact that they operate within the Trade & Invest Wales network – unlike the Northern Irish and Scottish administrations, which have “core” international offices in addition to Invest NI and Scottish Development International presences – the Welsh offices are not entirely comparable to those of Scotland and Wales.

The below table compares the international offices of Northern Ireland with those of Scotland and Wales.

**Table 1: International offices of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales**

<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>
China: Beijing EU: Brussels North America: Washington DC	Canada: Ottawa China: Beijing England: London EU: Brussels France: Paris Germany: Berlin Ireland: Dublin US: Washington DC  <i>[Note: in addition to these offices, Scotland has Engagement Strategies for its relations with India and Pakistan, without a specific International Office in those countries.]</i>	Canada: Montréal China: Beijing, Chongqing & Shanghai England: London EU: Brussels France: Paris Germany: Berlin & Dusseldorf India: Bangalore, Delhi & Mumbai Ireland: Dublin Japan: Tokyo Qatar: Doha UAE: Dubai US: Atlanta, Chicago, New York, San Francisco & Washington DC  <i>[Note: All of these are offices of Trade &amp; Invest Wales.]</i>

<sup>36</sup> See <https://gov.wales/overseas-offices-playing-key-role-in-coronavirus-effort>, retrieved on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020

<sup>37</sup> See <https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2019/02/expanding-wales-international-footprint/>, retrieved on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020

## 4 Functions of the three Bureaux & Invest NI Offices

This section considers how the three Northern Irish bureaux interact with Invest NI, before considering how the same issue is managed in Scotland and Wales.

As detailed in section 2, the Executive's 2014 international relations strategy has the overall strategic aim to 'Enhance our international credibility and develop mutually beneficial relationships with targeted countries, regions and organisations to secure investment, trade, tourism, students and to exchange knowledge and expertise'<sup>38</sup>, supported by a set of long-term objectives and international priorities.

Under the strategy, TEO now has an international relations team<sup>39</sup> to coordinate all international work, which should include (particularly as investment and trade are so prominent in the strategic aim) that of Invest NI.

### Invest NI

Invest NI is the business development agency for Northern Ireland<sup>40</sup>, and a non-departmental public body of the Department for Economy. It has 22 offices in sixteen countries across the world. Its 'International Strategy 2017-2021' has the following overall vision:

We will remodel our international activity to confidently showcase the best of Northern Ireland. We will support our companies and sectors to realise their potential in export markets and attract the next generation of investments to Northern Ireland.<sup>41</sup>

This vision is supported by a set of strategic aims, consisting of increases in total sales and new exports by NI businesses. There are also specific targets on (for instance) numbers of newly exporting NI companies, and inward investment and employment from externally owned companies.<sup>42</sup>

The strategy emphasises how 'Europe will continue to be an important region for the future export growth of local businesses and we will continue to support them to enter and develop new market opportunities', and 'the USA and Canada remain an important focus for Invest NI's trade development activity.' The strategy also refers to supporting exporters in 'more challenging markets' including China, India and other global regions.<sup>43</sup>

In the most recent annual report on its overall 'Business Strategy' – reflecting progress up to the COVID-19 pandemic, but not yet reflecting its impact – Invest NI was surpassing its four year target for total sales, external sales (including exports to GB) and exports to markets outside the UK.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Northern Ireland Executive, *Executive's International Relations Strategy* (2014) p2

<sup>39</sup> See <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/international-relations-team>, retrieved on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020

<sup>40</sup> See <https://www.investni.com/about-us>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

<sup>41</sup> Invest NI, *International Strategy 2017-2021* (2017) p3

<sup>42</sup> As cited immediately above, p5

<sup>43</sup> As cited in footnote 41, p6

<sup>44</sup> See <https://www.investni.com/media-centre/features/latest-results-show-good-progress-towards-2017-21-business-strategy-targets>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

## Scotland

Scottish Development International (SDI) is Scotland's trade and Foreign Direct Investment agency. It has 34 international offices across 22 countries. As detailed in section 1, Scotland's five Innovation and Investment Hubs provide 'a platform for collaborative activity between Scottish Government and Scottish Development International that promotes trade and inward investment'.<sup>45</sup> This enables the Scottish Government and SDI to coordinate efforts, pool resources and 'act as a 'home' or 'magnet' for the range of Scottish public and private sector organisations whose activity in the location would otherwise lack coordination'.<sup>46</sup>

## Wales

As discussed in section 3, there is a very high degree of overlap between the Welsh government's international offices and the offices of Trade & Invest Wales. The Welsh government's international offices literally and simply are the offices of Trade & Invest Wales.

The below table details the locations of the each administration's international offices, and the economic development agencies of each country. Where the two share offices, this is noted.

**Table 2: International offices & economic development agency offices of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales**

<b>Northern Ireland Bureaux</b> (Invest NI)	<b>Scotland offices</b> (Scottish Development International)	<b>Wales offices</b> (Trade & Invest Wales)
China: Beijing.* (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou.)	China: Beijing. (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou).	Canada: Montréal China: Beijing, Chongqing & Shanghai
EU: Brussels.* (Brussels, Dusseldorf, Dublin, Madrid.)	England: London.* (London).	England: London EU: Brussels
North America: Washington DC (Boston (Regional Invest NI HQ), Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Toronto.)	EU: Brussels*, Berlin*, Dublin*, Paris.* (Barcelona, Bern, Brussels, Berlin, Copenhagen, Dublin, Dusseldorf, Madrid, Milan, Paris, Stavanger.)	France: Paris Germany: Berlin & Dusseldorf
South America: Santiago.	North America: Washington DC, Ottawa. (Boston, Chicago, Houston, San Jose, Toronto, Calgary).	India: Bangalore, Delhi & Mumbai
Asia Pacific: Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo, Sydney.	Asia Pacific: Melbourne, Hong Kong, Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Tokyo, Singapore, Seoul, Taiwan.	Ireland: Dublin
Africa: Johannesburg.	Africa: Accra.	Japan: Tokyo
Middle East: Doha, Dubai, Jeddah.	Middle East: Al Khobar, Abu Dhabi, Dubai.	Qatar: Doha
GB: London, Manchester.		UAE: Dubai
*Invest NI shares Bureaux offices in Brussels and Beijing.	*These are the 5 Innovation & Investment Hubs shared by the Scottish Government and SDI.	US: Atlanta, Chicago, New York, San Francisco & Washington DC
		*All Welsh International Offices are Trade & Invest Wales offices.

<sup>45</sup> Scottish Government, *Innovation and Investment Hubs (response to FOI 17/02892)* (2017) p2

<sup>46</sup> As cited immediately above

## 5 Brexit and Northern Ireland's future relations with the European Union

This section considers the potential implications of Brexit on Northern Ireland's future relations with the EU. The post-Brexit approaches of the Scottish and Welsh governments and parliaments to the EU are also considered, to allow comparison.

The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union will have significant effects on the nature of Northern Ireland's relationship with the EU. It will also impact the optimal structure and priorities of any future approach to this relationship.

Firstly, while the UK was in the EU, the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels (ONIEB) worked within the authority of the UK Representation to the European Union (UKREP). However since the UK exited the EU on 31<sup>st</sup> January, UKREP has been replaced by the UK Mission to the European Union, headed by Ambassador Sir Tim Barrow. ONIEB now works within this diplomatic mission.

Secondly, under the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol and subject to ongoing negotiations between the UK and EU, it is agreed that Northern Ireland will remain subject to a very broad range of EU law. This includes (but is not limited to) customs & excise, trade, food, animal & plant health, intellectual property, electricity markets and state aid.<sup>47</sup> Union officials will retain powers relating to the ongoing implementation of these in Northern Ireland.<sup>48</sup>

Finally and vitally, 'where this Protocol makes reference to a Union act, that reference shall be read as referring to that Union act as amended or replaced.'<sup>49</sup> This means that Protocol obligations will require the Executive to continually monitor the development of relevant EU policy and law.

This new post-Brexit context warrants consideration of how best the Executive can adapt its EU relations to a unique and novel environment, where Northern Ireland has a close and ongoing relationship with the Union. In this light, it is worth noting that whilst Scotland and Wales may come to have looser ties with the EU than Northern Ireland, both the Scottish and Welsh governments are retaining and modifying their European presences – both in Brussels, and in particular EU Member States – after Brexit.

---

<sup>47</sup> UK Government and European Union, *Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland* (2019), p4-8

<sup>48</sup> As cited immediately above, p9-10

<sup>49</sup> As cited in footnote 47, p11

## Scotland

Scotland House in Brussels was refurbished and formally reopened by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon in May 2018<sup>50</sup>, as one of Scotland's Innovation and Investment Hubs. The government's aim is to 'keep Scotland at the heart of Europe whatever the UK's future relationship with the EU turns out to be.'<sup>51</sup>

The Scottish Parliament is also considering the issue of its future relationship with the EU. As detailed above one committee launched an inquiry in 2019 considering Scotland's engagement with the EU and the rest of the world.<sup>52</sup> Respondents to the inquiry's call for evidence emphasised the benefits of ongoing cultural, education, trade and political relationships with the EU. One respondent particularly emphasised the 'multiplier effect' of Scotland House in Brussels in communicating information between Scotland and Brussels across the public, private and third sectors, and the ability of smaller states and nations to 'influence opinion and decision-making' in the EU.<sup>53</sup>

The inquiry also commissioned research from the Scottish Centre on European Relations. This utilised case studies of the European relations of small nations and regions – both inside and outside the EU – to make recommendations for Scotland's future approach.

In its principal conclusions, the report acknowledges the reduction in power that comes with no longer being part of an EU Member State. However, it also emphasises the value of a presence in Brussels and presences in targeted Member States; a clearly defined and expressed international profile; and 'a contemporary and comprehensive EU strategy [with] core principles for European integration, major priorities for EU policies and headline objectives for EU engagement.'<sup>54</sup>

## Wales

The Welsh Parliament and Government has also recently focussed on its post-Brexit relationship with Europe and the world. As part of an early 2019 inquiry on this topic, the Assembly Committee for External Affairs and Additional Legislation met delegations from Norway, Switzerland, Quebec and the Basque country. 'Each representative highlighted the fact that they have an office presence in Brussels'<sup>55</sup>, and 'a key message from the discussions was the importance of a strategic approach to international relations and engagement.'<sup>56</sup>

When giving evidence to the Committee's subsequent Inquiry on her draft International Relations Strategy, International Relations Minister Eluned Morgan emphasised the value of Wales' Brussels office:

---

<sup>50</sup> See Scottish Parliament Question S5W-17120, available at <https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-17120&ResultsPerPage=10>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

<sup>51</sup> See <https://www.gov.scot/publications/international-offices-strategic-objectives/pages/belgium/>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

<sup>52</sup> See <https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/111568.aspx>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

<sup>53</sup> John Edward, *Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee: External Affairs Inquiry Submission* (2019)

<sup>54</sup> Anthony Salamone, *Scotland's Engagement in the European Union: Insights from Third Countries and Regions* (2019) p42

<sup>55</sup> National Assembly for Wales: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, *Wales' future relationship with Europe and the world: Summary of rapporteur visit to London* (2019) p6

<sup>56</sup> As cited immediately above, p4



So, we're obviously very committed to keeping the office. If anything, we are reinforcing the importance of that office [ . . . ]

Brussels is an international hub like very few others. So, if you think about the number of lobbyists, it has the second highest number of lobbyists in the world, and there's a reason for that. It's because it's an influential place. So, the Brussels office is not just about keeping tabs on the institutions and trying to influence those. It's a much broader role where actually, we get access to major companies that are based in Brussels, where it's easier to access those people.<sup>57</sup>

In its report, the committee recommended that 'the final strategy should provide clarity on the future role and activity of the Welsh Government's Brussels office in light of final shape of Brexit'<sup>58</sup>. The final strategy does this, as well as committing to increasing Wales' European presence beyond Brussels:

The majority of our trade is with Europe. Our human, social and environmental rights have developed in tandem with the European Union. Our commitment to Europe and our European partners remains strong and unchanged, despite the UK leaving the European Union. [ . . . ]

Over the next five years, to raise our profile internationally, we will:

- **Increase our presence in EU member states and work to ensure that the European Union remains our strongest partner** with whom we share many values and policy ambitions, and with whom we wish to continue to trade as efficiently as possible in the future [ . . . ]

A central point of our strategy will be to maintain, and increase, our strong links with Europe and the European Union – this will be key to the success of this strategy. **We are committed to maintaining and developing the strong Welsh Government office in Brussels, as part of a wider Wales House with other partners, building on the long-established and effective presence we have had for decades. Our role there will evolve as our relationship with the EU institutions and Member States changes.** We will continue to work with them and other partners, including other European regional offices and networks in Brussels. We will work to understand the impact that the EU will continue to have on Wales, to influence it wherever possible, and to explain how Wales remains committed to the values and policies that are at the heart of the EU.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> See paragraphs 60-63 of <https://record.assembly.wales/Committee/5467#A51571>, retrieved on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020

<sup>58</sup> National Assembly for Wales: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, *Report on the Welsh Government's Draft International Strategy* (2019) p15

<sup>59</sup> Welsh Government, *International Strategy* (2020) p4-8

## 6 Measuring performance and impact of offices

This section details the current performance management structures for the Northern Irish bureaux, as well as those of the Scottish and Welsh government offices. In the context of an outcomes-based Programme for Government, the potential of managing and scrutinising the bureaux using Outcomes Based Accountability is then considered.

### Northern Ireland's current performance management structure

The current structure for Northern Ireland's international relations is by default the 2014 strategy, as detailed in section 2. There are, however, no measurable targets or detailed action plans within the Strategy.

#### Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels

The work of the Brussels bureau is supported by the Executive Office European Policy and Co-ordination Unit, which coordinates 'the administration's strategic approach to ongoing EU business through the EU Exit transition and beyond.'<sup>60</sup> There is, however, no current or publicly available EU or Brussels bureau strategy from the Executive.

#### Northern Ireland Bureau: United States & Canada

The status of any strategies for the bureau in North America is unclear. The development of specific strategies for the USA and Canada respectively was pledged in the 2014<sup>61</sup>. However, OFMDFM officials subsequently referred to production of a single North America strategy.<sup>62</sup> In any case, none of these strategy documents are currently publicly available.

#### Northern Ireland Bureau: China

The most recent 'Two Year Strategy 2016-2018' for the bureau in China is available on the bureau's website.<sup>63</sup> The strategy states that it 'takes forward the objectives of the International Relations Strategy', and lists six areas of Northern Irish activity in China:

- To Promote and Generate Interest in Northern Ireland;
- Economic;
- Education, Science and Technology;
- Cultural;
- Best Practice on Global Priorities; and
- Develop Partnerships with Regions in China.<sup>64</sup>

Each area has subordinate actions and impacts. Some of these impacts are specific and measurable, such as 'increase trade from 91 to 96.4 million in year 1'.<sup>65</sup> However many are much vaguer: for instance, 'Capacity and capability improvement in the NI sector.'<sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/european-policy-and-co-ordination>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

<sup>61</sup> Northern Ireland Executive, *Executive's International Relations Strategy* (2014) p6-8

<sup>62</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, *International Relations Strategy: OFMDFM Officials* (2014) p3

<sup>63</sup> See <http://northernireland-china.com/executive-mission.php>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

<sup>64</sup> Northern Ireland Bureau in China, *Two Year Strategy 2016-2018* (2016) p11-20

<sup>65</sup> As cited immediately above, p14

<sup>66</sup> As cited in footnote 64, p16

### Performance management structure of NI Executive bureaux

Within the 2019 Outcomes Delivery Plan – based closely on the 2016 Draft Programme for Government – international relations work sits under Outcome 10: ‘We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest.’<sup>67</sup>

The action plan for the outcome includes: executing the 2014 international relations strategy; securing more ‘government-to-government’ business agreements; and participation in international programmes.<sup>68</sup> The population-level indicators used to measure progress are Northern Ireland’s score on the Nation Brands Index<sup>69</sup> and the total money spent in Northern Ireland by external visitors.<sup>70</sup>

According to the Mid-Year Report of the previous 2018/19 Outcome Delivery Plan, ‘Data on impact of work of NI Bureau is under development’.<sup>71</sup> This indicated that work was underway to capture and report relevant performance data for the bureaux. However, there is no subsequent mention of this in either the End-Year Report for 2018/19, or the subsequent 2019 Outcomes Delivery Plan.

### **Scotland**

As detailed further in Section 2, Scotland’s approach to international relations is captured by its international framework and separately, by its network of eight international offices. The international framework has twelve outcomes: three under ‘our people’, four under ‘businesses & institutions’ and five under ‘our Scotland’.

These are all clear and aspirational population-level outcomes, within the OBA<sup>72</sup> framework. Underneath the outcomes, there are sixteen strategic objectives which detail (at a very high and broad level) what will be done. Each of Scotland’s country-specific engagement strategies draws its objectives from this central “bank” of strategic objectives.

Seemingly separate to the international framework, Scotland’s network of eight international offices has its own set of five overall strategic objectives, which are intended to contribute to two of Scotland’s ‘National Outcomes’:

- We have a globally competitive entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy
- We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally<sup>73</sup>

Each international office then also has its own strategic objectives for 2019/20; these are specific to each country, and not evidently linked to the overall framework.

---

<sup>67</sup> The Executive Office, *Outcomes Delivery Plan* (2019) p73

<sup>68</sup> As cited immediately above, p75

<sup>69</sup> The Nation Brands Index is an annual global survey which evaluates the international image and reputation of subscribing countries, and is delivered by the research firm Ipsos and Simon Anholt. Northern Ireland has subscribed to the survey since 2016.

<sup>70</sup> As cited in footnote 67, p74

<sup>71</sup> The Executive Office, *Outcomes Delivery Plan 2018-19 Mid-Year Report* (2019) p79

<sup>72</sup> Outcomes Based Accountability, the performance management framework which informed the Draft PfG 2016-2021 and the current Outcomes Delivery Plan.

<sup>73</sup> See <https://www.gov.scot/publications/international-offices-strategic-objectives/pages/introduction/>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

The twelve top-level outcomes in Scotland's international framework provide a clear overall expression of what Scotland aspires to in its international policy. However, there are several shortcomings in its overall performance management framework:

- There is no clear link between the twelve outcomes and the sixteen strategic objectives below them; nor is there any specification of exactly how each strategic objective is intended to deliver progress towards each outcome.
- There is no set of performance indicators for the international framework – or for any country-specific engagement strategy underneath this – which could demonstrate performance and achievement, and allow for greater scrutiny.
- Scotland's network of international offices has a set of strategic objectives separate to its international framework (both across the network, and for each specific office). It is unclear how they link to the overall Framework. Additionally, the absence of performance indicators for these offices prevents any effective analysis or scrutiny of performance.

## Wales

The Welsh Parliament External Affairs Committee has recently considered the performance management of the Welsh Government's international activity.

In their 2019 reports on 'Wales' future relationship with Europe and the world' and the Government's draft international strategy, the committee recommended that the strategy should include detailed action plans and targets/performance indicators, to be updated annually and to permit effective scrutiny.<sup>74</sup> The Committee also called for more detail on the performance measures for international offices, including how they align with the overall International Strategy.

The Welsh government has stated that future measures for the offices will be 'revised to deliver against the international strategy.'<sup>75</sup> However, when publishing the strategy, the government stated it would not be providing detailed action plans or specific key performance indicators<sup>76</sup> – despite previously accepting this committee recommendation<sup>77</sup> - stating that 'Much of the activity set out in the strategy is dependent on the benefits of soft power and, therefore is not measurable.'<sup>78</sup>

In the Parliament's debate on the strategy, several members expressed their dissatisfaction at this lack of detail around delivery and scrutiny:

### **David Rees, Chair of External Affairs & Additional Legislation Committee**

In our view, where the strategy falls down is in terms of delivery. Frustratingly, the strategy contains only three measurable targets [ . . . ]

<sup>74</sup> National Assembly for Wales: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, *Wales' future relationship with Europe and the world* (2019) and *Report on the Welsh Government's Draft International Strategy* (2020)

<sup>75</sup> National Assembly for Wales: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, *Report on the Welsh Government's Draft International Strategy* (2020) p13

<sup>76</sup> Welsh Government, *Response to Recommendations from the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee Report: Draft International Strategy* (2020) p3

<sup>77</sup> Welsh Assembly, *Record of Proceedings: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020* (2020), <https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/6261?lang=en-GB>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

<sup>78</sup> As cited in footnote 76

Now, these targets, in and of themselves, are reasonable and are within the context of the strategy. However, we have broader concerns about the limited number of targets, and the implications that this may have on delivery of the strategy. Whilst we understand the argument that the strategy document may not be the most appropriate place for the inclusion of a suite of targets, we are clear that the strategy should be supported by a delivery plan that we, as a committee, are able to scrutinise. It is very disappointing, therefore, that our calls appear to be falling by the wayside for this.

[. . .]

### **Huw Irranca-Davies AM**

Beyond the three areas that the Chair has referred to, in the wider area of developing Wales's impact internationally, how do we measure success? Otherwise, the Minister will stand in front of us in the next Labour-led Government in four years' time or five years' time and say to us, 'Well, I've done all those things', and we'll say, 'Hold on, you didn't tell us what we were measuring.' So that's what we need. That would be the real prime criticism: whilst welcoming your acceptance of everything that we said in this report, our big cry was that we need more detail.<sup>79</sup>

Following a specific request by the committee, the Welsh government now provides quarterly reports to the committee its international activity. These detail progress against top-level numeric 'output targets' for its network of offices, and detail of the work of each office in that quarter.<sup>80</sup> However, the outputs used in these reports do not yet align with the international strategy. The Government's intention was to revise and update these for the first quarter of 2020/21.<sup>81</sup>

This regular reporting to committee may be an example for the Committee for the Executive Office to consider, in the Northern Irish context.

---

<sup>79</sup> Welsh Assembly, *Record of Proceedings: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020* (2020), <https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/6261?lang=en-GB>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

<sup>80</sup> Eluned Morgan, Minister for International Relations, *9 September Letter to David Rees AM, Chair of External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee* (2019). These quarterly reports have been provided to the Committee since October 2019.

<sup>81</sup> As cited immediately above, p4

## Performance management using Outcomes Based Accountability

The current performance management framework for Northern Ireland's international activity has several substantial gaps. Quite apart from being out of date, the 2014 international relations strategy has no measurable targets or detailed action plans. The available China strategy is two years out of date, and no strategies appear to exist for North America or the European Union. There is therefore no clarity on how the three bureaux can currently be robustly monitored or scrutinised.

In 2016, the OECD completed its report on governance in Northern Ireland, with a leading recommendation being 'a multi-year strategic, outcomes-based Programme for Government (PfG) framed by a vision for Northern Ireland's people and its economy.'<sup>82</sup> This recommendation was accepted by the Executive at the time, and the Outcomes Based Accountability™ (OBA) approach was used in the development of the next Programme for Government.<sup>83</sup>

Without fully detailing OBA, or engaging in a full analysis of its strengths and limitations, for the purposes of this briefing it is sufficient to note that it works on two essential levels:

1. **Population accountability.** This focuses on achieving agreed outcomes for an entire population and requires significant and sustained collaboration between public agencies, the private sector and community stakeholders.
2. **Performance accountability.** This focuses on the outcomes or impact achieved by individual organisations or programmes (such as an individual bureau), and is based around developing and monitoring specific performance data to answer three questions:
  - How much did we do? (*Quantity of work*)
  - How well did we do it? (*Quality of work*)
  - Is anyone better off? (*Impact of work*)<sup>84</sup>

In the absence of Ministers, the OBA approach of the draft Programme for Government was maintained by the Civil Service Outcomes Delivery Plan.<sup>85</sup> In the 'New Decade New Approach' deal, the parties committed to retaining the existing approach and outcomes of the draft PfG.<sup>86</sup>

In the draft Programme for Government, the Executive acknowledged the length of time it would take to achieve the outcomes agreed at the population accountability level, and therefore emphasised the importance of evaluating at the performance accountability level:

---

<sup>82</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Northern Ireland (United Kingdom): Implementing Joined-up Governance for a Common Purpose* (2016) p20

<sup>83</sup> Northern Ireland Executive, *Programme for Government Consultation Document* (2016)

<sup>84</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service, *Outcomes-based government* (2016)

<sup>85</sup> See <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/making-government-work/programme-government>, retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

<sup>86</sup> Northern Ireland Office, *New Decade New Approach* (2020) p14

In adopting an outcomes-based approach to the development of the Programme for Government, the Executive has set itself a series of challenges, aiming to make positive progress on a range of the most important economic and social issues facing our society.

Progress on these issues at a population level cannot be expected to happen quickly. So while we will track progress at a population level, we also need to know whether the action we are taking is making a difference, and is putting us on the track to long-term success.

To do this we will use performance level evaluation focused on the impact of policies and programmes directly on the people they engage [. . .] In this way, we can understand the effect and contribution each of the programmes and projects we deliver are making towards achieving our population level outcomes.

Performance level evaluation systems will be designed alongside the development of policies and programmes to ensure that intended impacts are effectively captured, and that stakeholders can be appropriately involved.<sup>87</sup>

As detailed, the Mid-Year Report on the 2018/19 Outcomes Delivery Plan states that ‘Data on impact of work of NI Bureau is under development’<sup>88</sup>. This suggests that development of performance accountability systems for the bureaux may already be underway.

The experience of the Scottish and Welsh administrations demonstrates that attempting to capture the impact of international relations can be complex. Achievements can often be very long-term and/or in the realms of “soft power”, and thus less tangible or more difficult to measure in immediate numeric terms.

However, it seems feasible that the Executive’s three bureaux could attempt to employ the OBA performance accountability model. Each bureau has a small number of staff, and a clearly defined (and exclusive) geographical remit. Bureaux could therefore operate within a refreshed international strategy which requires each bureau to develop its own action plan and associated scorecard, made up of data answering the three performance accountability questions, and reported on (for instance) quarterly:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Is anyone better off?

Employing this framework would be consistent with the overall approach of any newly agreed or revised PfG. It could also allow each bureau some flexibility to specify measures most relevant to its own operations, whilst gathering core common data for all three bureaux and allowing for comparison and aggregation of the Executive’s international work.

---

<sup>87</sup> Northern Ireland Executive, *Programme for Government Consultation Document* (2016) p14-15

<sup>88</sup> The Executive Office, *Outcomes Delivery Plan 2018-19 Mid Year Report* (2019) p79

## Appendix 1: Scottish Parliament and Welsh Parliament Inquiries

### 1: Scottish Parliament External Affairs Inquiry

Below is a substantial extract from the Committee for Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs' call for evidence on their inquiry. This is the most clear and current expression of what will be covered by this Inquiry, once it resumes.

#### **Call for evidence: External Affairs<sup>89</sup>**

The Committee is seeking written submissions on the Scottish Government's external affairs policy in the context of Brexit. Given the currently fluid nature of the Brexit process, the Committee's inquiry will examine how the Scottish Government's external affairs policy should evolve, where resources should be allocated to meet strategic priorities and what lessons might be drawn from other countries [ . . . ]

#### **Call for views**

The Committee's external affairs inquiry will have two distinct strands. Firstly, engaging with the European Union and secondly, Scotland's engagement with the rest of the world. The Committee would welcome views on the following issues that fall within these overarching themes and any other contribution you feel is relevant to the inquiry.

#### *Engaging with the European Union*

- What principles should inform the focus of the Scottish Government's external affairs policy with regard to the European Union?
- Are there examples of best practice for ways in which nations / regions from non-EU Member States engage with and influence the EU?
- What should be the focus of the business plans for the Scottish Government Innovation and Investment Hub offices in Berlin, Brussels, Dublin, London and Paris be?
- How can the Scottish Government Innovation and Investment Hub offices best support the Scottish Government's external affairs policy?
- How can the Scottish Government's Innovation and Investment Hub offices be evaluated effectively?
- How should the Innovation & Investment Hub offices most effectively engage with other Scottish organisations such as Scottish Development International and Visit Scotland?

#### *Engagement with the rest of the world*

- What principles should inform the Scottish Government's international engagement? For example, should economic priorities be the key priority or cultural / 'soft power' priorities?
- How should the Scottish Government prioritise its international engagement – for example, should the locations prioritised be based on a geography or policy focus?
- What should be the key aims of the Scottish Government's international offices in Beijing, Ottawa, Toronto and Washington DC?
- Currently, the Scottish Government has international engagement strategies with Canada, China, India, Pakistan and the USA. Do these strategies and their geographic focus remain appropriate post-Brexit?
- How can the Scottish Government's international engagement be evaluated effectively?
- How should the Scottish Government's international offices most effectively engage with other Scottish organisations such as Scottish Development International and Visit Scotland?

<sup>89</sup> Scottish Parliament Culture, Tourism, Europe & External Affairs Committee, *Call for evidence: External Affairs* (2019)



Unlike the ongoing Scottish inquiry detailed above, each of the Welsh inquiries detailed below have completed and issued reports.

Therefore, the recommendations from each inquiry report are detailed as indications of what each inquiry considered.

2a: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, 'Wales' future relationship with Europe, Part 1: a view from Wales'<sup>90</sup> (March 2018)

**Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1.** We recommend that the Welsh Government negotiates with the UK Government to ensure that preferential market access, free from both tariff and non-tariff barriers, is prioritised in the forthcoming negotiations on the UK's future relationship with the European Union.

**Recommendation 2.** We recommend that the Welsh Government in its engagement with the UK Government calls on them to ensure that the interests of the farming, fishing and food industries are safeguarded during the withdrawal process.

**Recommendation 3.** To that end, we call on the Welsh Government to collate evidence on the reliance of these sectors on the EU market and to present these findings to the UK Government in order to strengthen the calls that it makes.

**Recommendation 4.** We recommend that the Welsh Government urges the UK Government to bring forward credible proposals with regards to the UK's future customs arrangements with EU at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Recommendation 5.** In undertaking work to prepare for a "no deal" scenario, we recommend that the Welsh Government considers the impact alternative customs arrangements may have on Wales and what action it may need to take to prepare for these.

**Recommendation 6.** We recommend that the Welsh Government seeks clarity from the UK Government on the timescales for moving to a future immigration system at the earliest opportunity in order to provide businesses and public sector bodies with much needed certainty on the recruitment issues that they may face in the future.

**Recommendation 7.** We recommend that the Welsh Government publishes a list of European agencies that it has identified as important to Wales in terms of continued involvement after Brexit.

**Recommendation 8.** We recommend that the Welsh Government works with NHS bodies, public health stakeholders and health organisations in Wales to identify current links with these agencies to suggest potential options for how collaboration could continue after Brexit.

**Recommendation 9.** We recommend that the Welsh Government calls on the UK Government to ensure the UK's continued participation in the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, and the European Medicines Agency after Brexit.

**Recommendation 10.** If no agreement on Horizon 2020 and any successor programmes is reached between the UK Government and the EU, we recommend that the Welsh Government explores ways in which it could provide

<sup>90</sup> National Assembly for Wales: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, *Wales' future relationship with Europe: Part one – a view from Wales* (2019)

continued support for Welsh institutions to collaborate with European counterparts after Brexit.

**Recommendation 11.** We recommend that the Welsh Government explores the potential for a new international student mobility programme after Brexit, and reports back to the Committee within six months.

**Recommendation 12.** We recommend that the Welsh Government maps all existing EU networks, across all sectors, in which Welsh organisations play a role. The results of this mapping exercise should be published by June 2018.

**Recommendation 13.** Following publication of the results of this mapping exercise, the Welsh Government should consult with stakeholders on the importance of these different networks, their benefits to Wales and which networks should be prioritised for access after Brexit. The consultation should be concluded by autumn 2018.

**Recommendation 14.** We recommend that, based on the results of the consultation, the Welsh Government should set out plans for investing in Welsh participation in these networks, and consider the funding opportunities and implications for Welsh civil society to continue to collaborate with partners in key networks.

**Recommendation 15.** We recommend that the Welsh Government, in its response to this report, sets out its anticipated end state for Wales' future relationship with, and participation in European Territorial Cooperation programmes (particularly those involving Ireland), after Brexit.

**Recommendation 16.** We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response to this report, what discussions it has had on Wales' future relationship with the Committee of the Regions after Brexit and how those discussions are progressing.

**Recommendation 17.** We recommend that the Welsh Government explores the opportunities for both governmental and non-governmental organisations in Wales to effectively engage with the EU and its institutions after Brexit.

**Recommendation 18.** The Welsh Government must call upon the UK Government to protect the human rights and equalities standards that Welsh citizens have benefited from as being citizens of the EU.

## 2b: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, 'Wales' future relationship with Europe and the world' (Part 2)<sup>91</sup> (February 2019)

### **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1.** We recommend that the new international engagement strategy for Wales sets out the scale of the Welsh Government's ambition in terms of international engagement after Brexit and that, in response to this report, the Welsh Government sets out the anticipated timescales for publication of this work.

**Recommendation 2.** We recommend that the Welsh Government establishes a formal mechanism – for example through the creation of a Cabinet subcommittee – to ensure effective coordination between the remit of the Minister for International Relations and the remits of other Ministers that may have an international dimension to their work.

**Recommendation 3.** We recommend that the new international strategy has an accompanying suite of key performance indicators. These should be made

<sup>91</sup> National Assembly for Wales: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, *Wales' future relationship with Europe and the world* (2019)

available publicly so that progress can be measured against the objectives of the new strategy on an annual basis.

**Recommendation 4.** We recommend that the Welsh Government outlines in its response to this report, details of the work it is undertaking to support civil society through the transition to a post-Brexit future. This response should include an assessment of any additional funding required by priority sectors to achieve this.

**Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the Welsh Government explores with the EU the possibility of Wales' continued participation in European programmes that are undertaken in devolved areas. This work should be progressed urgently, with an update provided to the Assembly by autumn 2019.

**Recommendation 6.** We recommend that the Welsh Government reviews the bilateral relationships it currently has in order to assess which of these relationships can be strengthened and deepened in the future, in line with Wales' strategic priorities.

**Recommendation 7.** We recommend that the Welsh Government draws up an action plan for engaging with the Welsh diaspora. This action plan should include details of which countries will be prioritised and how the Government will seek to achieve this.

**Recommendation 8.** We recommend that the Welsh Government commissions an independent baseline analysis, for example by the Wales Audit Office, of the operation of the Government's overseas offices. Subsequently, these baselines should be used to measure progress made by the offices, in line with the forthcoming international strategy.

**Recommendation 9.** We recommend that the Welsh Government, sets out in its response to this report:

- the steps that it is taking to strengthen its presence and influence in London;
- an assessment of the sufficiency of resources in place to improve awareness and access to Whitehall departments to maximise its influence.

**Recommendation 10.** We recommend that the Welsh Government urges the UK Government to publish the review of inter-governmental mechanisms commissioned by the Joint Ministerial Committee (Plenary) in March 2018, as soon as possible.

**Recommendation 11.** We recommend that the new international engagement strategy identifies areas of soft power where Wales can demonstrate international leadership.

## 2c: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, 'UK international agreements after Brexit: A role for the Assembly' (December 2019)<sup>92</sup>

### **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1.** To enable this scrutiny to take place, we recommend that the Welsh Government lays a UK Outline Approach<sup>24</sup> at the same time as the Outline Approach is laid before the UK Parliament. The Outline Approach should be accompanied by an additional memorandum that explains the Welsh Government's position and the effect of implementing the eventual agreement on the Assembly's legislative competence and/or the Welsh Ministers' functions.

<sup>92</sup> National Assembly for Wales: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, *UK international agreements after Brexit: A role for the Assembly* (2019)

**Recommendation 2.** We recommend that, in circumstances where the Welsh Government is seeking to reach an agreement that would constrain the future legislative competence of the Assembly once implemented, then the Welsh Government should seek the Assembly's consent before making such representations to the UK Government.

**Recommendation 3.** We recommend that the Welsh Government continues to engage with the UK Government to ensure that negotiation documents laid in Parliament can be laid in the Assembly at the same time. Additionally, where the UK Parliament is offered enhanced access to negotiation documents, we recommend that the Welsh Government ensures equivalent access is granted for Assembly Members insofar as the documents relate to devolved areas and areas that might affect devolved competence.

**Recommendation 4.** In these circumstances, we recommend that any proposals for a revised process of UK Parliamentary scrutiny incorporates the need to consider the views of the Assembly before the ratification of an agreement. We hope that both the UK and Welsh Governments will undertake to support this.

**Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the Welsh Government pursues differential implementation of international agreements as a means of ensuring devolved interests are observed without causing impediment to the progress of a UK agreement.

**Recommendation 6.** We recommend that the Welsh Government seeks a commitment from the UK Government to notify Welsh Ministers and the Assembly if it intends to give provisional effect to an international agreement (in part or in full).

## 2d: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, 'Report on the Welsh Government's Draft International Strategy'<sup>93</sup> (December 2019)

### **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1.** We recommend that the Welsh Government's vision statement provides a clear picture of the Government's anticipated 'final destination' at the end of the lifetime of the strategy. It should set out clearly the specific outcomes the Welsh Government hopes to deliver through the strategy.

**Recommendation 2.** We recommend that the Welsh Government outlines in its response to this report how it intends to ensure that other sectors of the economy, in which Wales can show global leadership, are adequately represented by the Welsh Government in its international activities.

**Recommendation 3.** We recommend that the Welsh Government outlines how it intends to ensure that its international relations activities are better coordinated both within the Welsh Government, and with those of the UK Government and UK agencies and whether a formalised mechanism in pursuit of this aim is required.

**Recommendation 4.** We recommend that the final strategy sets out in greater detail how the Welsh Government will work with civil society organisations wishing to support delivery of the strategy.

**Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the Welsh Government publish a detailed suite of measurable targets and action points to sit underneath the finalised strategy. These could be year on year in order to provide the Welsh Government with enough flexibility to adapt to policy changes at a UK

<sup>93</sup> National Assembly for Wales: External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, *Report on the Welsh Government's Draft International Strategy* (2019)

Government level.

**Recommendation 6.** We call on the Welsh Government to set out in its response to the Committee the timeline for the publication of the delivery plans.

**Recommendation 7.** We recommend that the Welsh Government outlines in its response to this report what consideration it has given to establishing a permanent presence in the Basque Country, and if not, to outline what alternative steps it intends to take to ensure that the relationship can be strengthened in the absence of a permanent presence.

**Recommendation 8.** We recommend that the Welsh Government, in its response to this report, outlines how it intends to take forward our previous recommendation 8, when the International Strategy is finalised.

**Recommendation 9.** We recommend that the Welsh Government update us on the exploratory work that it has undertaken with the European Union and others to ensure Wales' continued participation in European programmes, in devolved areas, after Brexit.

**Recommendation 10.** We recommend that the final strategy should provide clarity on the future role and activity of the Welsh Government's Brussels office in light of final shape of Brexit.