Impact

The Law Society was mentioned:

- As the Welsh Government published submissions to the Commission on Justice in Wales
- In the minutes of a meeting of the Welsh Government’s Tax Advisory Group for Wales

Legislation

**Legislation Bill**

AMs unanimously passed a motion to agree the [General Principles of the Legislation (Wales) Bill](#) which aims to make Welsh legislation clearer and more accessible. Counsel General Jeremy Miles told AMs he was confident that the Bill was within the powers of the National Assembly and he rejected suggestions to the contrary from the Wales Office. Mr Miles also confirmed the Counsel General will report annually on the programmes to make the law more accessible.

Mick Antoniw, the chair of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee, said measures such as ensuring the availability of legal commentary and educating the public about Welsh law must also form a central role in improving accessibility. He also called for the Welsh Government to address uncertainty regarding codification.

Plaid Cymru’s Llyr Gruffydd raised concerns that only £5,000 had been accounted for to provide guidance to professionals on the impact of the Bill, calling for further information on how the Welsh Government intends to publicise the Bill if enacted.

[Notice of Amendments](#) for Stage 2 of the Bill have now been published. The Assembly’s Research Service has also published a guide.

**Letting Fees**

The Welsh Government [announced](#) that the Renting Homes (Fees etc) (Wales) Bill will come into force on September 1, once it receives royal assent.

In a [letter](#) to Elin Jones, Jeremy Miles argued that none of the provisions in Bill are outside the legislative competence of the National Assembly.

Legal Sector

**Government Legal Spend**

The Welsh Conservatives queried how much money the Welsh Government spent on external lawyers at this month’s [Counsel General Questions](#). An FoI [release](#) on the same subject was also published.

Justice System
**Commission on Justice**

The Welsh Government [published](#) its supplementary evidence to the Commission on Justice in Wales which considers creation of a ‘distinct’ Welsh legal jurisdiction, a transitional period and full devolution of justice and policing.

The paper said: “In all cases, the type of function for which a body is responsible would be an important factor in determining whether or not a separate Wales body ought to be created. For example, the [Law Society](#) is an independent professional body which represents, supports and promotes solicitors. It is certainly possible for the interests of solicitors in England and Wales to be represented by a single body, much as the British Medical Association continues to represent doctors in Wales. And it is of course the case that it would be for the professions themselves to determine how best their interests might be represented in Wales, were justice to be devolved.”

A further [submission](#) by the [Law Society](#) was also published by the government as was evidence from:

- [Winston Roddick](#) ([Law Society](#) mentioned)
- [Pact Group](#)
- [Riverside Advice](#)
- [Vaughan Gething](#)
- [Hafal, CAIS and Morgan Academy](#)
- [Professor Christopher Hodges](#)

The [agenda](#) and [meeting actions](#) for the ninth meeting of the Commission on Justice were also published.

**Youth Justice**

Deputy Minister Jane Hutt [wrote](#) to AMs confirming she has requested a meeting with UK Ministers following a report about the failings of the Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service.

**Probation Service**

The Welsh Liberal Democrats [responded](#) to a report on staff shortages in the probation service.

**Finance and Taxation**

**Taxation Advisory Group**

Minutes of the group’s meeting in November were published. Kay Powell, the interim head of the [Law Society](#) in Wales attended on behalf of the professional association.

**Income Tax**

Rebecca Evans [highlighted](#) that Welsh rates of income tax come into force on April 6. A Finance Committee [debate](#) on the implementation of fiscal devolution the week before raised concerns about the Welsh Revenue Authority’s robustness and the nature of the devolution settlement around taxation. The Assembly’s Research Service published a [guide](#) to the new taxes.

**Economic Contract**

Ken Skates [issued](#) an update on the Welsh Government’s new operating model for direct business support which includes the economic contract, calls to action and Economy Futures Fund.
Rates
Business rates relief schemes were introduced in the childcare, hydropower and retail sectors.

Banking
The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee launched a consultation on access to banking. The deadline for submissions is May 17.

Planning and Housing

Section 106
The Assembly’s Research Service has updated its guides to the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 Agreements.

Council Tax
Rebecca Evans announced a standard application procedure for council tax support, which is available to people with severe mental impairment.

Listed Buildings
The Welsh Government launched a consultation on improving access to listed buildings. The consultation closes on July 19.

Affordable Housing
The Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee launched a consultation on the use of empty properties to tackle the issue of affordable housing supply. The consultation will run until May 31.

Fire Safety
Julie James announced that the Welsh Government will promote the retro-fitting of sprinklers in highrise buildings following a report from the building safety expert group. AMs debated the issue following an oral statement from Ms James in which she confirmed a full safety ‘roadmap’ would be published in May.

Leaseholder Enfranchisement
Conservative AM Andrew RT Davies asked a series of written questions on:

- Leasehold enfranchisement
- Enfranchisement claims
- Valuation system for residential leaseholders
- Forms for enfranchisement
- Simplifying enfranchisement
- Legal costs in the enfranchisement process
- Enfranchisement ‘claim notice’
- Simplifying claim notices
- Co-operative company model for managing a leaseholder collective enfranchisement process

The answers confirm that the Welsh Government is considering recommendations from both the Law Commission’s review and the task and finish group on residential leasehold reform.

Help to Buy
The Welsh Government published lists of accredited conveyancers and the RICS valuer panel.
Brexit

Report
The Welsh Government published its response to the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee’s report on Wales’ future relationship with Europe and the world.

Independence
Plaid Cymru called for a referendum on Welsh independence if Brexit goes ahead without a People’s Vote on leaving the EU.

Assembly News

First Minister
The Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister scrutinised Mark Drakeford on topical matters and his priorities for the remainder of the Fifth Assembly.

Carl Sargeant
Mark Drakeford responded to the High Court’s judgement on the QC-led investigation into Carwyn Jones’ handling of Carl Sargeant’s sacking. Jonathan Jones QC, Treasury Solicitor and head of the UK Government Legal Department, will revisit questions over the operational protocol of the investigation. The First Minister confirmed that the leak inquiry report will be published after the inquest.

Gareth Bennett
AMs voted to endorse the recommendations of the Standards of Conduct Committee report on Gareth Bennett. The UKIP group leader was suspended from the Assembly for seven days.

Party News

European Elections
Political parties announced their candidates for the forthcoming European Parliamentary elections. The lead candidates in Wales are Jackie Jones (Labour), Kris Hicks (UKIP), Dan Boucher (Conservatives) and sitting MEP Jill Evans (Plaid Cymru). Nathan Gill (Brexit Party), Sam Bennett (Welsh Lib Dems), Anthony Slaughter (Green Party), and Jon Owen Jones (Change UK) are also standing.

Poll
The April Welsh Political Barometer suggested a decline in support for Labour and the Conservatives, in the first Welsh poll to include Change UK and the Brexit Party. The poll projected that Labour would secure 23 seats in the next Assembly election, with Plaid Cymru replacing the Tories as the opposition with 16 seats. Change UK and the Brexit Party were projected to win 9% and 4% of the Welsh vote respectively in a general election, with support for Labour and the Conservatives falling by 2% and 3%.