Impact

Legislation Bill
The Law Society gave evidence to the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee’s inquiry into the Legislation (Wales) Bill on Monday, January 8. The transcript can be found here and the video here.

Accessibility
Trevor Coxon, a member of the Law Society’s Wales Committee, said the Law Society broadly welcomed the Legislation (Wales) Bill. He told AMs that the divergence of Welsh and English legislation can make it difficult to ascertain which law is in force and how to find that law, “so accessibility is very important to all of us as it is to the public at large”. Mr Coxon, who has been a monitoring officer for a north Wales council for 15 years, said the difference between the laws in England and Wales was once marginal, but it has increasingly diverged as Wales seeks to impose its identity. Mr Coxon, a constitutional and administrative law specialist, argued that the time is ripe for greater accessibility. He said the Law Society resorts to commercial resources, which can often be lacking detail on Welsh law, adding that the Assembly could provide more guidance and primary information.

Professor Richard Owen said the Swansea Law Clinic was established in 2017 and the demand for services has been great, with people coming from as far afield as Cornwall, Plymouth and Ceredigion. Prof Owen, himself a member of the Law Society’s Wales Committee, raised concerns about the affordability of legal services, particularly because the legal aid means test has been frozen since 2010. He told AMs that the Bill will help because people will not require the same research skills to locate legislation.

Areas of Difficulty
Mr Coxon cited the example of local government legislation, warning that it can often be difficult to ascertain whether a given piece of legislation is enforceable through the executive of an authority or the council itself. He said finding the sources of legislation adds to that difficulty. Mr Coxon argued that efforts to consolidate and codify the law can only be to the good of the profession and the broader public.

Awareness
Asked about awareness of the growing divergence of law, Mr Coxon said the profession is perhaps more aware than an average member of public. He said the pace of change has increased markedly and he stressed that the longer such work is left, the more difficult it becomes to address.

Computational Law
Prof Owen said a computer scientist will see legislation as data rather than text. He called for different ways of searching databases to find out the law that is in force today.

Definitions
Praising the Law Society’s “excellent” written evidence, Dai Lloyd asked about the professional body’s understanding of the terms “consolidation and codification”. Mr Coxon said the Law Society agrees with the Counsel General’s definitions. He explained that the proposed taxonomy is fine, but “we have yet to see an example of what a code might look like”.

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Advice Agencies
Mick Antoniw asked whether the Assembly is doing enough to promote issues around accessibility of the law. Mr Coxon said the Assembly does good work in the area, but more could be done.

Engagement
Osian Roberts, also a member of the Wales Committee of the Law Society, said stakeholders should be able to express a view on an online draft code. Kay Powell, Interim Head of Wales at the Law Society, called for stakeholders to be able to engage early in the process. Stressing the importance of bringing together the judiciary, Law Commission and practitioners, she raised the recommendations of a 2016 report which said a justice stakeholder group should meet once or twice a year for a collective review. Ms Powell told AMs that the Welsh Government did not take the recommendation forward.

Code
Former First Minister Carwyn Jones asked if the Law Society favours a code along classic civil law lines or more of a cataloguing approach. Mr Coxon said he would favour a code with everything in place, but it would be more difficult and resource-intensive. Mr Roberts argued that the most important thing is not necessarily the system, but it is ensuring that it makes it easier for the public and practitioners to access the law. Asked about the challenge of placing legislation such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act into a code, Mr Coxon cautioned that including legislation in multiple codes could become confusing. He said he would favour allocating legislation to a code then cross-referencing it in other codes.

Public Understanding
Mr Jones raised concerns about “huge” cuts to legal aid leading to more people representing themselves in the courts. Mr Roberts warned of a deficiency in terms of glossaries of law and academic material which interprets legislation, providing guidance to lawyers and the public.

Interpretation
Asked whether Part 2 of the Bill is necessary, Mr Coxon argued that it is required because of the divergence of Welsh law. He said it would not be right to rely on the Interpretation Act 1978, “which is getting a little long in the tooth now”, and the Law Society is broadly supportive of the proposals. Mr Coxon also raised the importance of having Wales-specific interpretation legislation given that it is a bilingual country. On whether having two Acts would be a “recipe for confusion”, Mr Coxon accepted that it would be easier if everything was in one piece of legislation. However, he said that so long as it is clear where the demarcation point is, the profession can live with any difficulties that might occur. Prof Owen said Part 2 is helpful because of its potential to reduce the length of statutes. He raised concerns that the 1978 Act pre-dates devolution. He acknowledged the scope for confusion between two pieces of legislation, but he argued that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

Rules
Mr Roberts raised concerns about Section 12 of the Bill, which contains rules about the presentation of documentation. He explained that it is inconsistent with civil law because it contains a presumption that a party is willing to receive a document by fax or email. Mr Roberts also called for Section 12 to be tightened up to avoid ambiguity and ensure consistency with the Civil Procedure Rules. Prof Owen also highlighted concerns within the profession about Section 12 of the Bill.
Common Law
Mr Roberts agreed with the Counsel General’s suggestion that common law should not be included.

Approach
Carwyn Jones questioned whether it would be better to include definitions on the face of a Bill. Mr Coxon said having a definition on the face of the Bill is preferable because it provides “ultimate” ease of access, especially for the public. He also raised the possibility of referring to interpretation in the code. Asked if the Law Society has concerns about any of the definitions in Schedule 1, Mr Coxon said he did not. However, he told the committee that a definition of a community council should be included. Mr Roberts pointed out that Wales also has unique tribunals for education, agriculture and the Welsh language.

Timescales
Mr Coxon acknowledged that the full impact will be generational, arguing that it should be prioritised despite the competing demands of Brexit. He said the duty on succeeding administrations is crucial. However, he questioned whether the phrase “proposed activities” within the duty is strong enough, arguing that the word “proposed” should be removed. Prof Owen said consolidation and codification is by its nature a long-term task, but he would like to see a target end date. He said access to law is a societal problem and laws can be incorporated into the codes as they are repatriated.

Monitoring
Mr Coxon said there is a role for the National Assembly in scrutinising and ensuring that the aims of the legislation are delivered. He called for annual or two-yearly reviews.

Welsh Language
Dr Lloyd asked about the challenges and opportunities of interpretation of bilingual law. Mr Roberts said the Bill will be a major step forward. He said one of the challenges will be co-drafting legislation, as happens in other nations such as Canada, rather than just translating the English version. Callum Higgins, of Citizens’ Advice Cymru, agreed, arguing that legislation that is drafted bilingually makes for better legislation. Prof Owen raised concerns about the Solicitors Qualifying Examination, which is due to come in in 2021, saying he would like to see it accessible in the Welsh language as well.

For a summary of evidence from the Law Commission, academics and Jeremy Miles, turn to page five.

Justice Commission
The Law Society and The Law Society Gazette were referenced as the Welsh Government published the agenda and a list of actions arising from a Commission on Justice meeting on Friday, November 16. Commissioners agreed to contact the Law Society to see if there is an in-house counsel group and discuss with editor of The Law Society Gazette what would interest its readers. Details of meetings held on August 13-14 were also published in January.

The Law Society’s role in raising awareness of laws applicable in Wales was highlighted in a submission to the justice commission from members of the judiciary. The Bar Council’s submission was also published, as was evidence from Dr Sophie Chambers – a lecturer in criminology and criminal justice.
Legal Sector

Rapid Review
Jeremy Miles announced details of a rapid review into the Welsh Government’s support for the legal sector, which will be undertaken by Tony Williams of Jomati Consultants LLP. The first phase of work is due to completed by March and the second by April. The Counsel General for Wales said the review will cover:

1. the actions Welsh Government is currently undertaking to support the legal sector in Wales;
2. what actions are proving to be effective (or have proven to be effective in the past) and what actions are less effective;
3. what support the legal sector would like to have from the Government;
4. whether a different approach to public procurement of legal services could facilitate the development of a different type of relationship between the Welsh Government / other public bodies and the legal sector in Wales. For instance, a strategic partnership approach to underpin the evolution of a distinct or separate jurisdiction as opposed to a conventional/limited customer – supplier relationship. Would the sector welcome such a relationship? Also how could this approach or other changes to public procurement policy best serve the aims of the Economic Action Plan;
5. what constraints (real or perceived) are preventing legal service providers in Wales from winning more public sector work both in Wales and outside;
6. how can public procurement policy be better used to indirectly facilitate the attainment of social and access to justice objectives through the provision of opportunities that would contribute to more sustainable operating environments for small and rural firms;
7. whether further collaboration within the legal sector and with other sectors (including the education and training sectors) could support its development; and
8. what support is likely to be effective, to help meet the challenges and opportunities including those associated with changing business models (including those arising from changed regulations for qualification and practice), EU transition, advancements in technology, and the potential for future developments in the legal jurisdiction.

Regeneration Investment Fund for Wales
The Public Accounts Committee published a letter from the Welsh Government which confirms that a judge and timetable have been set for the Lambert Smith Hampton and Amber Fund Management case.

Legislation

Legislation Bill
Law Commission
The Law Commission gave evidence about the Legislation (Wales) Bill on Monday, January 14, with chairman Sir Nicholas Green telling AMs that the bill “presents and reflects far-sighted and enlightened legislative practice”. Sir Nicholas said a good codification exercise can reap real administrative savings. He cited codification in relation to sentencing which is estimated to be capable of saving up to £250m over 10 years. Sir Nicholas said the Law Commission does not see a particularly difficult problem with the lack of a definition of accessibility in the Bill. On the Law Commission’s written evidence that consolidation also
offers an opportunity to clarify meaning, omit obsolete provisions and streamline procedures, Sir Nicholas said the bill is about the wider principle of accessibility rather than simply codification and consolidation. He told the committee that Wales is among the first countries in the world to embark on such a project.

**Academics**

AMs also took evidence from two academics. Catrin Fflur Huws called for more clarity on the meaning of accessibility. Thomas Watkin said moving towards a consolidated or codified version will undoubtedly make it easier for citizens who turn to legislation because it will be simpler to navigate. He also raised the importance of secondary sources making the law understandable even after it has been consolidated or codified. Dr Huws said advice websites such as gov.uk should make it clearer when the law in England and Wales diverges. Prof Watkin warned that the Research Excellence Framework has been an obstacle to the development of academic commentary. He raised fears within the academic community about the way in which research related to Wales is rated. Prof Watkin called for the Assembly to have some competence to legislate regarding the work of the research councils to create a duty of due regard to the needs of Wales.

**Financial Impact**

Counsel General Jeremy Miles gave evidence to the Finance Committee on the financial implications of the Bill on Thursday, January 17. Mr Miles said efficiency is one of the main drivers behind the Bill. Llyr Gruffydd asked about the draft Regulatory Impact Assessment and whether the Counsel General is satisfied about the lack of consultation responses about the financial impact of the Bill. Mr Miles argued that the proposed legislation is different to other Bills which make more direct changes to the everyday lives of citizens and that is perhaps the reason for the level of responses. On the Law Commission’s impact assessment, which was published alongside its report on Welsh law, the Counsel General said it provided a starting point for the Welsh Government. He told AMs that the figures provided by the Law Commission do not include the interpretation sections and do not fully consider the costs of translation. Mr Miles said the Law Commission estimated that the Bill will save about £24m in terms of time.

**Autism Bill**

The Autism (Wales) Bill fell after the National Assembly voted against its general principles following a debate on Wednesday, January 16. Twenty-four AMs voted for, 28 against and there were no abstentions.

**Older People’s Rights Bill**

The Welsh Government also voted down Darren Millar’s Older People’s Rights Bill following a debate in the Siambr on Wednesday, January 23.

**Childcare Bill**

Manon Antoniazzi, chief executive and clerk of the National Assembly, announced that the Childcare Funding (Wales) Act 2018 received Royal Assent on Wednesday, January 30.

**Public Services Ombudsman Bill**

The Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee considered amendments to the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Bill as stage two proceedings began on Thursday, January 31.

**Smacking ban**

During First Minister’s Questions on Tuesday, January 29, Mark Drakeford said that legislation to remove the defence of reasonable punishment will be published this year and said the Welsh Government is determined that it will reach the statute book during this Assembly term.
**Welsh Language Bill**

Eluned Morgan abandoned plans to bring forward a Welsh Language Bill. The Welsh Government had proposed replacing the Welsh Language Commissioner with a commission. Baroness Morgan said she will start introducing standards regulations for new bodies as soon as the legislative timetable is clearer.

**Justice System**

**Criminal Justice**

Former Plaid Cymru leader Leanne Wood led a debate which called for the full devolution of criminal justice to Wales. Raising a Wales Governance Centre report on sentencing and custody, Ms Wood said the finding that Wales has the highest highest imprisonment rate in western Europe should be a “source of shame for us all”. Alun Davies praised the Wales Governance Centre's work on the prison and probation service. The former minister said the England and Wales jurisdiction is “a relic of history” and warned that the system is failing people in Wales. Jane Hutt, who took over responsibility for justice policy from Mr Davies, said the report will help the government establish a clearer picture of the criminal justice system.

AMs quizzed Mark Drakeford on the Wales Governance Centre’s report on sentencing and custody during FMQs on Tuesday, January 22. Prof Drakeford said Jane Hutt met the report’s author to discuss its findings, adding that the Welsh Government will work with the Ministry of Justice to explore the report. Leanne Wood called for the devolution of the criminal justice system and the reunification of the probation service. Prof Drakeford said it is unacceptable that crime rates have fallen consistently while the number of people imprisoned and the length of custodial sentences have increased. He noted that the report found a quarter of women in Wales who are imprisoned serve sentences of less than a month, saying this does not serve society. He made the case for first devolving the youth justice system and probation service and seeking new powers over female offenders, before moving onto other areas of the system.

**Justice Commission**

During the Business Statement on Tuesday, January 22, Mark Reckless called for a statement on the Commission on Justice in Wales. The chair of the Cross-party Group on Law highlighted a meeting on Wednesday with Prof Rick Rawlings, a member of the Commission on Justice. He asked whether the Welsh Government is working sufficiently closely with the UK Government’s Justice in Wales working group. The South Wales East AM praised the Ministry of Justice for sharing research data for the “excellent” Wales Governance Centre report. Finance Minister Rebecca Evans confirmed that the Welsh Government remains committed to the Commission on Justice following the change in First Minister. She told AMs that the First Minister met the chair in the previous week to discuss the work programme.

**Finance and Taxation**

**Welsh Rates of Income Tax**

On Tuesday, January 15, Rebecca Evans led a debate on Welsh rates of income tax, which will be introduced April. She explained that HMRC will continue to administer income tax in Wales. The Finance Minister told AMs the Welsh Government does not intend to raise income tax levels in 2019-20. Ms Evans said about £2bn of the Welsh budget will be funded from income tax receipts. Llyr Gruffydd, chair of the Finance Committee, raised concerns about forecasting problems in Scotland. He urged the government to ensure accurate taxpayer identification. AMs agreed the rates resolution.
Opposition Debate
During a Welsh Conservative debate on Wednesday, January 23, Nick Ramsay argued that low-tax economies are more favourable to business start-ups, attract job creators and increase revenue through greater economic activity. The Public Accounts Committee chairman stressed the importance of growing the tax base, saying Wales has two thirds of the proportion of higher rate taxpayers compared with England and a quarter of the proportion of additional ratepayers. He questioned the government’s commitment to keeping the Welsh income tax rates static until 2021, raising concerns that a higher rate in Wales would cause an increase in people moving across the border and reduce the tax take for the Welsh Treasury.

Suzy Davies said the Welsh Conservatives’ warnings about a “supertax” on high-end commercial property sales went unheeded and the number of sales has since fallen. Mark Reckless highlighted a CoStar survey which found that in the first quarter of Land Transaction Tax (LTT), the amount of transactions slumped to £40m compared with a quarterly average of £180m. He said the quarter three figure was £54m, meaning that more than £12m of lost revenue thanks to a 1% tax increase on commercial property above £1m. He said there was £390m of transactions in the quarter before change from Stamp Duty Land Tax to LTT.

Rebecca Evans stressed that the Welsh Government recognises the importance of considering the impact of taxation on the overall competitiveness of the Welsh economy. She reiterated that the Welsh Government has no plans to change income tax during this Assembly. However, she said it would be naïve to say the government would never raise taxes.

Fiscal Devolution
In January, the Finance Committee began an inquiry into the devolution of fiscal powers to Wales.

Wales Audit Office
Asked about the transition to devolved taxes in 2017 and the lessons that could be learned, Adrian Crompton told the committee that the project was “extremely well managed and delivered”. Highlighting a Wales Audit Office report on fiscal devolution, he said the work has come in within budget and he praised a culture of openness and willingness to engage. The Auditor General for Wales said it has been a pleasure to take part in work in real time, helping to shape the project, “rather than just dropping into the trenches and bayoneting the wounded – so positives all round”. Turning to the lessons learned, Mr Crompton raised the cloud-based IT system and the use of agile project management methodology. Richard Harries, director of financial audit, raised the role of independent gateway reviews.

HMRC
Llyr Gruffydd asked about work on switching off Stamp Duty and Landfill Tax in Wales. Jim Harra, second permanent secretary at HMRC, said the work to transition to Landfill Disposals Tax (LDT) is complete. He added that the work to transfer to Land Transaction Tax (LTT) is almost complete, with the transfer of data from the WRA to the Valuation Office Agency set to be finished next month. Mr Harra explained that HMRC’s estimate of the costs is £1.7m–£2m. He told AMs that the transition went smoothly. Asked whether HMRC could further narrow its estimate of the costs of transitioning to Welsh rates of income tax, which are projected to be between £7.5m and £9.5m, Mr Harra said HMRC has been unable to further refine the costs. He said the work will not be completed until the end of 2020.

Welsh Government
Rebecca Evans argued that the transition to Land Transaction Tax (LTT) and Landfill Disposals Tax (LDT) in April 2018 has been smooth when she appeared before the committee on Wednesday, January 9. The Finance Minister said the approach to LTT has meant more people have been taken out of the scope of the
tax. Ms Evans highlighted a higher rate for unauthorised waste disposals under LDT”. She pointed to positive feedback from stakeholders and she praised the work of the tax advisory group. Ms Evans told the committee that the Welsh Government’s annual tax plans have been important in terms of setting a direction. She said she intends to publish this year’s plan in February, with a view to updating it in October.

**Welsh Revenue Authority**

Kathryn Bishop said the WRA is proud to be the first non-ministerial government department. The WRA chair told committee members that the WRA has responded to the recommendations of a Wales Audit Office report on fiscal devolution. She argued that the WRA did an “enormous” amount of work in terms of stakeholder engagement. Ms Bishop said the WRA is developing a purpose statement which will form one of the key pillars of the corporate plan, which will be published this year.

**Private Schools and Hospitals**

At Finance Questions on Wednesday, January 30, John Griffiths called on the Welsh Government to end the charitable status of private schools, arguing that ending their tax advantages would further equality of opportunity and outcome in Wales. Rebecca Evans confirmed plans to hold a consultation in the next year on placing independent schools and private hospitals on an equal footing with public sector counterparts.

**Planning and Housing**

**Right to Buy**

Under the Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Act 2018, the right to buy was abolished on Saturday, January 26.

**Tan 1**

Julie James, the newly appointed Minister for Housing and Local Government, answered a written question on the disapplication of paragraph 6.2 of TAN 1. She said the purpose of the dis-application of paragraph 6.2 is to alleviate some of the immediate pressures on planning authorities when dealing with speculative applications for housing on sites not currently identified in an adopted development plan.

**Self-build Wales**

The Welsh Government announced up to £210m for a scheme to help people build their own homes.

**Statistics**

On Wednesday, January 30, Julie James announced the publication of estimates of housing need at a national and regional level, saying the statistics will be central to future housing and planning policy.

**M4 Relief Road**

The Welsh Government still has to take a decision on the £1.4bn relief road. Just before standing down from office, then-First Minister Carwyn Jones issued an update on the project. Mr Jones outlined the necessary steps before the Welsh Government can make one of its biggest-ever investment decisions. He said Welsh Ministers must first decide whether to grant development consent based on: the evidence submitted to the public inquiry; the inspectors’ report which was received in September; and the legislative framework, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Environment (Wales) Act.
The second step would involve deciding whether to enter into a contract for construction. The project would also face a further hurdle in the shape of a promised binding vote in the National Assembly.

Following the change in First Minister, most seasoned observers believe that Mark Drakeford will bow to pressure from within his own party – and outside it – to cancel plans for an M4 relief road. Prof Drakeford’s decision to appoint Lee Waters, a vocal critic of the project, as Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport will have done little to allay those fears – even if the Llanelli AM insists he will not take part in the decision.
Speaking at First Minister’s Questions, South Wales East AM Mark Reckless highlighted Welsh Labour’s manifesto commitment to “deliver a relief road for the M4”. Prof Drakeford said the relief road proposal has been subject to an independent public inquiry, “the most comprehensive of its sort into any road scheme”. He told AMs that senior legal counsel from outside of the Welsh Government has been sought to ensure that advice has been thoroughly tested and deals with all dimensions of the scheme. The First Minister pledged to consider that advice “carefully and dispassionately” once it is available. The Welsh Government appears to be playing everything by the book in anticipation of a legal challenge to its decision.

Labour backbencher Mike Hedges, an early supporter of Professor Drakeford’s leadership bid, said the Welsh Government should consider solutions, such as directing traffic from the north and midlands travelling south to use the A465 Heads of the Valleys road. He suggested making the outside lane of the M4 between junctions 24 and 28 for through traffic only or closing motorway junctions near Newport. Professor Drakeford agreed that any relief road would be years down the line, so it is important to consider courses of action which are immediately available to the Welsh Government.

On Thursday, January 31, Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns told the BBC that he understands that the public inquiry backs the M4 relief road. Mr Cairns joined more than 90 businesses – including senior bosses at Aston Martin, Tata and Admiral – in calling for the government to press ahead with the proposals.

Brexit

Second Referendum
On Wednesday, January 30, AMs passed a joint Welsh Government-Plaid Cymru motion, which called for preparations for a second Brexit referendum to begin immediately, with 37 for and 14 against. Jeremy Miles reiterated the Welsh Government’s position that leaving the EU without an agreement would be disastrous. The Brexit Minister said the First Minister has urged the PM to rule out a no-deal scenario. Mr Miles called for the UK Government to introduce the necessary subordinate legislation to abolish the reference to March 29. He argued that the longer the UK waits to ask for an extension, the weaker its negotiating position will be. Mr Miles said the Welsh Government has urged the PM to move away from her Lancaster House redlines by embracing a customs union and participation in the single market.

EU Transition
In an update on EU transition on Tuesday, January 8, the First Minister criticised the UK Government, arguing that it has not tried to build a cross-party consensus for its strategy or agree an approach to the negotiations with the devolved administrations. Mark Drakeford said the prospect of leaving without a deal is hardening, stressing that this would be “catastrophic” for Wales. Prof Drakeford said the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru white paper, ‘Securing Wales’ Future’, details a basis for a sensible approach to EU withdrawal. He was clear that he would not agree with any outcome which results in tariffs or other barriers which will make it harder for Welsh businesses to export. He said the Welsh Government is working with the National Assembly to facilitate the passage of legislation necessary to prepare for Brexit. He said the Welsh Government is reprioritising other government business to put the legislation needed in place before the end of March.
Withdrawal Agreement
The Welsh Government responded to the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee’s report ‘The Withdrawal Agreement: Implications for Wales’. No-deal Brexit
AMs passed a Plaid Cymru proposal that the National Assembly rejects an exit from the EU without a deal under any circumstances on Wednesday, January 16. The motion also called on the First Minister to ask for the emergency reconvening of the UK Joint Ministerial Committee to seek agreement on ruling out a no-deal Brexit. There were 37 AMs for the motion, no abstentions and 16 against.

Devolution Update

Institutional Relations
The Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee published an inter-institutional relations agreement between the National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Government.

Welfare
During First Minister’s Questions on Tuesday, January 15, Mark Drakeford said the Welsh Government will explore the devolution of the administration of benefits. Under the previous First Minister, the Welsh Government opposed the idea, raising concerns that Westminster would provide no funding for the costs.

Polling
Plaid Cymru’s Westminster group leader, Liz Saville Roberts, highlighted a Sky Data poll showing that 76% of voters want the National Assembly to have more powers or to keep all the powers it has.

Assembly News

Steffan Lewis
Tributes were paid to Steffan Lewis, who died aged 34 at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr in Ystrad Mynach on Friday, January 11. Mr Lewis was diagnosed with bowel cancer in December 2017. He is survived by his wife Shona and their three-year-old son, Celyn. Delyth Jewell, who was second on the regional list, was returned as the Plaid AM for South Wales East.

Counsel General
AMs endorsed Jeremy Miles’ reappointment as Counsel General for Wales during a vote in the Senedd, with 31 in favour, 14 abstentions and six against. David Melding, for the Conservatives, and Plaid Cymru’s Rhun ap Iorwerth raised concerns about Mr Miles’ new role as the lead on Brexit because the Government of Wales Act 2006 states that the government’s chief legal adviser cannot also hold ministerial office. Mark Drakeford insisted that the Counsel General will not exercise any executive powers and argued that the appointment is consistent with the Act.

The National Assembly has also approved changes to standing orders to enable the Counsel General to face oral questions every two weeks instead of four. It will give AMs chance to question Jeremy Miles separately on his roles as law officer and Brexit minister. A report by the Business Committee can be found here.
Committee Changes
AMs approved changes to the make-up of Assembly policy committees following December’s reshuffle:

- **Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee** – Carwyn Jones replaced Lee Waters
- **Children, Young People and Education Committee** – Jack Sargeant replaced Julie Morgan
- **Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee** – Jenny Rathbone replaced Jayne Bryant
- **Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee** – Vikki Howells replaced Jane Hutt, Jayne Bryant replaced Jenny Rathbone
- **Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee** – Carwyn Jones replaced Jayne Bryant, Huw Irranca-Davies replaced Jack Sargeant, Mohammad Asghar replaced Sian Gwenllian
- **Health, Social Care and Sport Committee** – Jayne Bryant replaced Julie Morgan, David Rees replaced Rhianon Passmore
- **Finance Committee** – Rhianon Passmore replaced David Rees, Alun Davies replaced Jane Hutt
- **Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee** – Mark Reckless replaced Mohammad Asghar, Jack Sargeant replaced Lee Waters