Impact

The Law Society was referenced:

- In a letter from the Counsel General to the Justice Commission about the legal sector rapid review
- As a Labour backbencher raised concerns about legal aid during questions to the Brexit Minister
- In the task and finish group on residential leasehold reform’s report

Legislation

Legislative Programme

Mark Drakeford set out his government’s legislative priorities for the coming year. He acknowledged significant constraints on legislative time created by the uncertainty over Brexit and cautioned AMs that all proposals would be subject to demands created by Brexit. The First Minister said his ambition was to create a more equal Wales. In addition to the social partnership bill, the First Minister proposed five bills:

- A public transport bill to reform the planning and delivery of local bus services;
- A local government and elections bill to give the vote to 16- and 17-year olds in local government elections and strengthen local authority collaboration and joint working;
- A GP indemnity bill to ensure all clinical negligence claims, whenever they are reported or incurred are covered;
- A curriculum and assessment bill to set in statute the principles, freedoms and structures for Wales’ new curriculum; and
- A tertiary education and training bill, which will set up the Tertiary Education and Research Commission to replace the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

Legislation Bill

AMs approved the Legislation (Wales) Bill following a stage four debate in the Senedd. Jeremy Miles stressed the importance of the technical Bill, which aims to make Welsh law more accessible by creating legislation that is clear, consistent and co-ordinated. The Counsel General told AMs that the Bill would create a body of law that is Welsh in language and context. He explained that Part 1 will codify and consolidate legislation, while Part 2 creates an interpretation regime that will apply to all legislation made in Wales. Suzy Davies, for the Conservatives, welcomed the Bill, adding that post-legislative scrutiny should focus on its effectiveness, value for money and resourcing. AMs voted by 49-0 in favour of passing the Bill. The Bill now moves to the post-stage four process – a four-week period in which the Attorney General can refer the question of whether it is in the National Assembly’s competence to the Supreme Court. The Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns, could also make an order during this period, preventing the Bill from being sent for Royal Assent.

The Law Society helped shape the Bill by providing written and oral evidence throughout its passage.

Health Service Management

Plaid Cymru’s Helen Mary Jones introduced a member’s legislative proposal to: establish a professional body for NHS managers in Wales; ensure the independence of Healthcare Inspectorate Wales; establish a duty of candour to apply to all health professionals including managers; and establish a “genuine, robust and transparent” complaints system. Despite support from opposition parties, the Welsh Government argued that its Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Bill will adequately address the
concerns raised in the debate. AMs passed the motion, with 25 in favour, one abstention and 21 against. The Plaid Cymru AM for Mid and West Wales will now take forward the proposal in the autumn.

Assembly Reforms
The National Assembly agreed the general principles of the Senedd and Election (Wales) Bill, which would rename the Assembly ‘Senedd’ and lower the voting age for its elections to 16. Forty-two AMs voted in favour and nine against. Elin Jones explained that AMs would be known as “Members of the Senedd – Aelodau o’r Senedd”. She emphasised the need for citizenship education to encourage young people to vote in 2021. She explained that Section 27 seeks to make the Electoral Commission in Wales accountable to a committee chaired by the presiding officer. Mick Antoniw focused on the recommendations of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee’s stage 1 report and Llyr Gruffydd raised the Finance Committee’s report on the Bill’s financial implications. For the Welsh Government, Counsel General Jeremy Miles said the Minister for Education will issue a written statement to outline the delivery of citizenship and political education across Wales from the summer of 2020. Brexit Party AMs opposed the Bill, with Mark Reckless saying the party does not support renaming the National Assembly. Darren Millar, for the Welsh Conservatives, called for a consistent age of responsibility.

Smacking Ban
The Children, Young People and Education Committee published its stage one report on the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Bill. The National Assembly also published reports from the Finance and Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committees.

Wild Animals and Circuses Bill
Lesley Griffiths outlined the provisions of the Wild Animal and Circuses Bill which will ban the use of wild animals in travelling circuses in Wales. All contributions from AMs were supportive of the Bill. Asked about the provision for subordinate legislation and proposed animal exhibit licenses for domesticated animals, Ms Griffiths said she wanted to ensure the Bill was adaptable to changing and specific circumstances. Responding to calls for the Bill to be implemented sooner than December 2020, Ms Griffiths said there is a possibility but that this is dependent on the UK Government. Ms Griffiths explained that the proposed legislation did not prohibit the possession of wild animals by travelling circuses as this would incur a loss of ownership. She added that other legislation is in place to respond to the maltreatment of an animal.

Piercings
AMs approved the Prescribed Objects for Intimate Piercing (Wales) Regulations 2019 which are intended to protect children and young people from the safety issues relating to intimate piercings.

Legal Sector

Rapid Review
Jeremy Miles issued a written statement on the rapid review of the Welsh Government’s support for the legal sector in Wales. The Counsel General said the report was being finalised for publication, stressing the need to consider its findings together with the recommendations of the Commission on Justice in Wales.
Justice System

Justice Commission
The Welsh Government published the following submissions to the Commission on Justice:

- Follow-up letter from Jeremy Miles and statement on rapid review of the legal sector (Law Society mentioned throughout the letter)
- Follow-up letter from the First Minister
- Letter from Children’s Commissioner for Wales
- Cardiff University submission
- Oral evidence on victims

Finance and Taxation

Social Care
Vaughan Gething updated AMs on the inter-ministerial group on paying for social care, which is exploring the feasibility of introducing a social care levy. The Welsh Government also published research on public understanding of social care and paying for care.

Landfill Disposals Tax
During a debate on Tuesday, July 16, AMs approved the Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Act 2017 (Reliefs) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019. Rebecca Evans explained that the regulations make changes to the definition of “restoration work” and the operation of the refilling relief for open-cast mines and quarries. The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd said the changes will mean that all landfill sites could become eligible to claim site restoration relief. Ms Evans told AMs that the regulations will likely have a negligible effect on tax revenue.

Council Tax
Rebecca Evans published the 2018-19 council tax reduction scheme annual report. The Finance Minister highlighted that some of Wales’ most vulnerable households are missing out on discounts.

Planning and Housing

Leasehold Reform
The Welsh Government highlighted the publication of reports from the task and finish group for leasehold reform and the unadopted roads taskforce. (Law Society mentioned in report on leasehold reform)

Affordable Housing
The Welsh Government responded to the recommendations of the independent review of affordable housing. Minister for Housing and Local Government Julie James accepted all but one of the review’s recommendations and called on councils to make more affordable housing available. During a statement in the Senedd on Tuesday, July 9, Ms James told AMs that social housing is her priority as the impact that it can have on someone’s life cannot be overstated. She stressed that policies in closely aligned areas such as decarbonisation, planning and building regulations need to be considered in the round.

National Development Framework
Julie James announced that a consultation on the National Development Framework will begin in August after the Brecon and Radnorshire by-election.
Called-in Applications
The Welsh Government updated its list of planning decisions being considered by Welsh Ministers.

‘No-Fault’ Evictions
The Welsh Government launched a consultation on increasing the notice a landlord must give when seeking to end a contract. The consultation closes on September 5.

Empty Properties
The Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee took evidence from Hannah Blythyn in the final evidence session of its inquiry into empty properties. The Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government told AMs that a Welsh Government enforcement team has been set up within her department to provide additional support and guidance to local authorities and communities on the issue of empty properties. The Welsh Government will look to procure external expertise for the team. Discussion focused on performance monitoring and council tax premiums.

Regulations
AMs agreed the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2019. Julie James said the regulations were introduced in response to a loophole created by the EU Settlement Scheme, which was introduced in January. The Minister for Housing and Local Government explained that an unintended consequence of the scheme is that individuals – who were previously ineligible for housing assistance – will have an additional right to reside, making them eligible. Ms James raised the example of a person living in the European Economic Area whose only current right to reside is derived from his or her status as a jobseeker. She added that the regulations extend eligibility for housing assistance to unaccompanied refugee children from other European countries and those transferred from refugee camps in Calais, bringing Wales into line with the rest of the UK.

Fire Safety
The Welsh Government launched a consultation on amendments to statutory guidance on assessments in lieu of fire tests. The consultation closes on September 20. Welsh Ministers also published an advice note on balconies in residential buildings.

Prisoners
Julie James announced funding for a project to support prison leavers into housing.

Compulsory Purchases
The Welsh Government formally responded to the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee’s report on compulsory purchases.

Infrastructure
National Infrastructure Commission
The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee took evidence a year on from the establishment of the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales (NICW). AMs were critical of an apparent lack of progress, highlighting failures to publicise terms of reference or any detail about its work. Chair John Lloyd Jones defended his record, noting that the brief given to NICW was incredibly broad and honing it had taken time. He said the appointment process for commissioners had been robust and the commissioners were now receiving in-depth briefings from Welsh Government officials. Mr Lloyd Jones confirmed NICW would produce an annual report focused on decarbonisation, digital connectivity and resilience for
publication in November. From this report, a work plan and budget would be developed. A further state of
the nation report was anticipated in 2022 which would consider the wider questions facing NICW and may
challenge the Welsh Government’s approach in some policy areas.

**Bus Station**
The Welsh Government confirmed that a Cardiff bus station forms part of a deal with Legal & General and
Rightacres Property.

**Swansea Bay City Deal**
The Welsh Government issued an update on the Swansea Bay City Deal.

**Brexit**

**Legal Aid**
During Brexit Questions on Wednesday, July 10, Joyce Watson outlined the current pressures on legal aid
due to cuts, saying that more pressure will be placed on it after Brexit. She expressed particular concern
on the growing number of parents representing themselves in child custody cases, arguing that a decrease
in funding places pressure on families and obscures the right of the child. The Labour backbencher asked
what discussions have taken place with the UK Government on how Brexit will impact on families who
currently qualify for legal aid. Brexit Minister Jeremy Miles agreed that additional pressure will be placed
on funding and families, adding that work is being done to support families outside of legal aid. He said
that a no-deal scenario would put civil judicial co-operation within the EU under pressure and the Law
Society has been advising lawyers about steps which can be taken. He said the government has provided
funding for organisations for legal advice on immigration status. Jeremy Miles said he would be happy to
consider Angela Burns’ request for the creation of a legal aid group, which would allow AMs to shadow
legal aid lawyers. Ms Burns described a similar group in Westminster, comprising of the undersecretary
with responsibility for legal aid and shadow secretary for Wales.

**International Strategy**
The Welsh Government launched a consultation on its first draft international strategy. The consultation
closes on October 23.

**Joint Ministerial Committee**
Jeremy Miles issued a statement on a Joint Ministerial Committee (EN) meeting in Manchester on June
28. The meeting focused on negotiations, intergovernmental relations and common frameworks.

**No-deal Brexit**
The Welsh Government urged all businesses and organisations across Wales to make urgent preparations
for a no-deal Brexit.

**EU Citizens**
Jeremy Miles announced a package of support to help EU citizens prepare for Brexit. The External Affairs
and Additional Legislation Committee announced a consultation on post-Brexit freedom of movement.

**Preparedness**
In a statement on Tuesday, July 16, Brexit Minister Jeremy Miles argued that Jeremy Hunt and Boris
Johnson are ignoring the fact that the European Union has repeatedly said it will not renegotiate the
withdrawal agreement. He added that Brexit is not the sole focus for the EU, noting that the EU-27 are
preoccupied with the need to install a new European Commission. He expressed concern that crashing out of the EU without a deal is becoming a very real possibility and that the next Conservative Prime Minister will take the UK towards a no-deal exit.

**Priorities**
David Rees, chair of the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, updated AMs on the committee’s priorities for Brexit for the rest of 2019. Mr Rees focused on three priority areas: Brexit preparedness and implications for the Welsh economy; the risk to devolution and the future of the UK; and the impact of Brexit on EU and European Economic Area nationals living in Wales. The committee chair said the National Assembly must address the emergence of UK-wide common policy frameworks and the impact on devolution of UK international agreements. He highlighted the committee’s consultation into the implications of the UK Government’s white paper on the future of immigration rules after Brexit.

**Common Frameworks**
Jeremy Miles issued a written statement on the European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks. The Counsel General and Brexit Minister also criticised politicians who describe no deal as a legitimate means of leaving the EU.

**Devolution**

**Assembly Reforms**
Plaid Cymru AMs led a debate calling for the number of AMs to be increased as recommended by Professor Laura McAllister’s report, A Parliament that Works for Wales. Adam Price pointed out that there are 44 AMs able to hold the Welsh Government to account compared with 113 in Scotland and 522 in Westminster. Mark Reckless, the Brexit Party’s group leader, argued that there is no appetite among the public to increase the number of politicians. Jane Hutt agreed about the principle of increasing the number of AMs. However, the chief whip of the Welsh Labour group told AMs that it should not be introduced without a public mandate via a manifesto commitment. Paul Davies, leader of the Welsh Conservative group, argued that an increase in the number of AMs should be funded via savings from an overall reduction in the number of elected representatives. He said the four Welsh MEPs cost the equivalent of funding 24 additional AMs. Elin Jones told AMs that the Assembly Commission hoped to proceed with reforms to the electoral system and the size of the National Assembly before the 2021 election. However, she said it was not possible to proceed with the reforms, which would require a super majority of two-thirds, during this Assembly term because of a lack of consensus in the Siambr. This was reflected in the vote: the Plaid Cymru motion was not agreed, with 11 AMs in favour and 40 against; the motion as amended by the Welsh Government was passed by 27-24.

**Constitution**
The Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee launched a consultation as part of its inquiry into Wales’ changing constitution. The consultation closes on September 30.

**Air Passenger Duty**
Finance Minister Rebecca Evans reiterated the Welsh Government’s call for the devolution of air passenger duty. She described the UK Government’s stance as “intransigent” and warned that it was inconsistent with the devolution of other taxes and the treatment of other devolved nations. She acknowledged environmental concerns and stressed there would be rigorous assessment against the Well-being of Future
Generations legislation and decarbonisation agenda. Plaid and the Welsh Conservatives spoke in favour of the motion. Andrew RT Davies said he hoped a change of Tory leader would move this situation forward.

**Review**

Blaenau Gwent AM Alun Davies used a [topical question](#) to criticise former PM Theresa May for announcing a devolution review without consulting or informing the devolved administrations. Jeremy Miles agreed that Cardiff Bay and Holyrood should have been told but welcomed aspects of the Prime Minister’s speech – including the recognition that devolution is now a stable and permanent part of the UK. He raised concerns over recent comments from Boris Johnson suggesting there should be a “strong Conservative influence” in how the Welsh allocation of the Shared Prosperity Fund is spent.

**Fiscal Devolution**

During a short debate on [tax devolution](#), Mark Reckless highlighted that Wales has a ‘fiscal gap’ of £13bn between money raised and spent in Wales, adding that there is debate over fairness on what is offered free in Scotland compared to England. Rebecca Evans responded that part of the challenge is in improving the tax base. The Finance Minister highlighted the amount raised through taxation, saying fair funding is ensured through the ‘funding floor’ negotiated with the UK Government. She also discussed the [tax policy framework](#), saying it gives the government the ability to align taxation with policy objectives.

**National Assembly**

**Budget**

The [timetable](#) for the consideration of the Welsh Government’s 2020-21 draft budget was confirmed. Draft proposals will be laid on December 10 with scrutiny ongoing through February and the annual budget motion tabled on March 3, 2020.

**Citizen Assembly**

The National Assembly [highlighted](#) that the first Citizens’ Assembly met in Newtown on July 19-21.

**Party News**

**Neil McEvoy**

Former Plaid Cymru AM Neil McEvoy [withdrew](#) his application to re-join the party, citing an “absence of natural justice”. Helen Mary Jones said the party would respond through its solicitors.

**Plaid Cymru**

- ‘Bland’ – Labour’s latest legislative programme shows it has run out of its own ideas
- [Plaid in call to give neuro-divergent people protection under the law](#)
- [Adam Price calls for Wales to have power to legislate on gender recognition reform](#)
- [Independence ‘a question of when not if’](#)
- [Plaid Cymru tops Assembly poll for the first time in party’s history](#)

**Welsh Liberal Democrats:**

- [Wales now a remain nation](#)
- [Time to embrace zero-carbon housing](#)
- [Welsh Lib Dems applaud Lord Bourne’s resignation](#)
Welsh Conservatives:
- Russell George challenges First Minister over £1bn M4 consolation fund
- Welsh Conservative leader comments on Labour’s Remain announcement
- Welsh economy weaker than rest of the UK, new research reveals
- Response to UK Public Accounts Committee report on devolved funding

Welsh Labour
- Social partnerships to bolster fair work

People and Appointments
- Mark Drakeford listed the special advisers in post during the 2018-19 financial year
- The Welsh Government advertised for a new Traffic Commissioner for Wales
- Hannah Blythyn announced the appointments to the Pembrokeshire Coast and Brecon Beacons National Park Authorities
- BBC Wales political correspondent Arwyn Jones was appointed as the National Assembly’s director of communications and engagement. He takes up the post in September
- Plaid Cymru selected Mabon ap Gwynfor as its candidate for Dwyfor Meirionnydd in the 2021 National Assembly election
- Julie James announced that John Lloyd Jones will continue as interim chair of the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales until December
- The National Assembly advertised for a legal librarian

Westminster

By-election
The Welsh Liberal Democrats won the Brecon and Radnorshire by-election. At the previous election, Conservative MP Chris Davies won the seat with a majority of 8,038. Last night, Jane Dodds won the seat with a 1,425 majority and 43.5% of the vote. The Labour Party finished in fourth place behind the Conservatives and the Brexit Party. The turnout was 59.6%, down from 74.6% at the last general election. As a result of the by-election, the Conservative majority at Westminster has been reduced to a single seat.