

Who did what?

Since May 1999, Wales has experienced a number of distinctive developments:

From the National Assembly:

- Removed statutory tests for 11-year-olds
- Created *Farming Connect* to help farming families
- People aged 60 and over are able to swim for free in local authority pools
- Launched the Free School Breakfast Initiative
- Prescription charges fell by £1 to £5
- Free bus passes and half price bus travel for pensioners and disabled passengers

From Westminster with the Assembly:

- Wales will benefit from an extra £555 million to support the delivery of structural funds programmes.
- Took initial steps to establish an independent Commissioner for Older People in Wales.
- The appointment of a Children's Commissioner for Wales, the first in the United Kingdom

Wales and the UK:

- Following the granting of additional monies for Objective One schemes in Wales, it was announced that English regions would also receive £600 million.
- Other parts of the UK followed Wales' lead in appointing a Children's Commissioner
- Wales' post 16 Education and Training Action Plan provided a valuable model for the Department of Education to follow in England.

2005 Election Special

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Church Participation

Since the formation of the National Assembly, the churches served by CYTÛN (Churches Together in Wales) have enjoyed a greater degree of access to those who hold political power in Wales and the UK as a whole. CYTÛN's Liaison Officer works on a daily basis with Assembly members, cabinet ministers, the regional and subject committees and works with colleagues at Westminster. National faith community leaders now meet every six months with the Assembly's First Minister and other party leaders to discuss matters of common concern.

Wales' faith communities have also been given a seat at the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council. The Council was, for example, active in assisting the National Assembly to respond to the withdrawal of the Children's Society from Wales. The Council tries to ensure that organizations are consulted at an early stage concerning the Assembly's policies. It has also at times exercised a degree of influence on UK policies. With others, the Council was successful in pressing the case for the waiving of fees on criminal records checks for voluntary groups.

It is hoped that these briefing notes will help the Christian electorate in Wales to understand the distinctive roles of members of Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales.

Members of Parliament

A number of policy areas have remained entirely with Westminster:

- Overall economic policy
- Defence and the Armed Forces
- Foreign Policy
- The justice system and prisons
- Police
- Broadcasting
- The National Lottery and related matters
- Social security and benefits
- Competition policy
- Labour market policy
- The National Assembly's powers

Assembly Members

Overall, the Assembly functions cover the following areas:

- Industrial, economic and social development
- Education and training
- Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and food
- Local government, housing, social services, transport, planning, the environment and the fire services
- Arts, culture and the Welsh language

Who decides what ?

The Economy - The Assembly defines the overall economic and social development strategy for Wales and how to deliver it through bodies such as the Welsh Development Agency but the Westminster Government provides the financial assistance to business in the whole UK, including Wales.

Education and Training - The Assembly sets the standards for schools in Wales and the content of the National Curriculum and oversees teaching standards. Westminster has retained control of teacher recruitment and aspects of student funding including loans but transferred powers over the student support and tuition fee regime in Wales to the Assembly.

Health - The Assembly has responsibility for the National Health

Service in Wales and more general aspects of public health. Westminster has control of certain areas of medicine such as surrogacy arrangements and human genetics. It also oversees the NHS professions.

Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Food - The Assembly's functions encompass most aspects of agriculture, forestry, fisheries and food policy. Much however is now determined at the European level. For Wales, issues such as regulating pesticides, providing a strategic approach to forestry, the promotion of foods overseas and food safety are held jointly with Whitehall.

Local Government in Wales has a different structure from that in England; consequently has developed distinctive policies. For example, local authorities in Wales have a greater freedom to decide how much money schools

receive. Westminster still funds the fire service and partially funds the police.

Housing - Westminster has no significant housing functions in Wales beyond issues relating to housing benefit and social security benefit.

Social Services - Local authorities provide most social services and the Assembly has to ensure a consistent standard of service. Westminster has retained some functions, especially those which bear on the justice system.

Transport, Planning and the Environment - The Assembly exercises functions concerned with road transport, environmental protection and water supplies. It also has certain powers to control marine pollution up to 12 nautical miles from the Welsh shore.

Arts, Culture and the Welsh Language - The only functions retained by the UK Government in this area are those relating to the National Lottery. The Assembly determines policy on the Welsh language, ancient monuments and listed buildings and the arts in Wales.

Foreign Policy has not been devolved to the Assembly but it has the right to discuss any matter of concern to Wales and make representations to the Westminster Government. Consequently, Assembly members have:

- **Promoted fair trade projects at the Assembly**
- **Expressed their concern to the Home Office about the policy of placing asylum seekers in Cardiff prison in 2001 and 2004**
- **Led the way by becoming the first UK legislature to recognise the Armenian Holocaust**

National Assembly Functions

Purpose

According to Lord Chancellor, the National Assembly for Wales was created to: 'serve an executive function, exercising the ... powers previously exercised by the Secretary of State for Wales, so providing a more transparent and democratic framework for the government of Wales.'

Setting a Budget

In March 2005, a leaflet outlining the differences people across Wales could expect to see as a result of the Welsh Assembly Government's spending plans for the next three years was published: 8 planned new hospitals and major improvements in others, at least 56 major school building projects, 400 more doctors and 3,000 more nurses, ending prescription charges by 2007, free bus passes for disabled people and for people aged 60 and over, free swimming for children and older people providing free breakfasts in primary schools.

Legislation

Acts of Parliament affecting Wales are passed at Westminster. However, Westminster and the Assembly make extensive use of subordinate legislation through statutory instruments, rules, regulations and codes of practice. Unlike Westminster, the Assembly has the power not only to approve or reject subordinate legislation but can also amend it in draft form. The Assembly has not passed all Westminster legislation affecting asylum seekers.