



The UK Delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE)

The National Assembly for Wales Committee on European and External Affairs

Thursday 6 March 2003

1. Introduction

This briefing, prepared by the Secretariat to the UK Delegation, explains the role of the Congress, how it operates, and the work of the UK Delegation. The briefing concludes with some current issues.

2. What is the Congress?

The Council of Europe created the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) in 1994.

The Council of Europe was established in 1949, and is a body dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights, the rule of law and pluralist democracy. Since 1990 it has become a pan-European body, admitting Central and Eastern European states. There are currently 44 member states (these are listed at the end of this submission).

The political institutions of the Council of Europe are:

- Committee of Ministers;
- The Parliamentary Assembly; and
- CLRAE.

CLRAE is the Council of Europe body representing local and regional authorities. Its main aim is to uphold and promote the political, administrative and financial autonomy of European local and regional authorities. It does this by encouraging central government to develop effective local democracy and apply the principles of subsidiarity.

CLRAE is also responsible for monitoring the application of the European Charter of Local Self Government in each of the member states. The Charter is an inter-governmental agreement, which came into force in 1988 and lays down common standards to protect and develop the rights and freedoms of local authorities.

3. How does the Congress operate?

Congress meets annually in Plenary session at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. It has 602 full members representing over 200,000 local and regional authorities. Members serve for a two year mandate, or two full plenary sessions. The current mandate runs from 2002-4.

The Congress is supported by a central secretariat, based in the Council of Europe. Its Chief Executive is Rinaldo Locatelli. The working languages of CLRAE are English and French with interpretation into French, English, German, Russian and Italian.

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The Congress is headed by a President, currently Herwig von Staa, an Austrian Christian Democrat and member of Innsbruck Council and First Minister of the Tyrol regional government.

The Congress has two chambers:

- Chamber of Regions - The President of the Chamber is Giovanni Di Stasi, an Italian Social Democrat, a regional councillor in the Molise region.
- Local Chamber – The President of the Chamber is Halvdan Skard, a Norwegian Social Democrat and member of Baerum Council and President of the Norwegian Local Government Association.

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The Congress has an executive body, the Bureau, made up of the President and Vice-Presidents from the two chambers.

The Congress carries out its policy work through four committees:

- Institutional Committee

It is responsible for preparing reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in member states and in states applying for membership; for regionalisation in Europe and for monitoring all specific questions related to local and regional democracy in a member state.

The Institutional Committee of the Chamber of Local Authorities is responsible, with its experts, for monitoring the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The Institutional Committee of the Chamber of Regions monitors developments in the regions of greater Europe.

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- Education and Culture Committee

It covers education, culture, media, youth, sport and communication policies.

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- Social Cohesion Committee

This committee covers social cohesion, employment, citizenship, inter-community relations, public health and equality between women and men.

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- Sustainable Development Committee

It is responsible for sustainable development, environment, and spatial and urban planning policies.

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Congress also has a Standing Committee, which is empowered to take decisions on behalf of Congress at the spring and autumn sessions.

The policy committees meet infrequently about two to three times a year. The Committees appoint members to be rapporteurs on key issues decided in part by the Council of Europe and part by each committee. The committees discuss these reports and they are then agreed by Congress in plenary session. The reports are referred to both the Committee of Ministers and Parliamentary Assembly to feed into their work programme.

There are three political groups, with secretarial support in CLRAE.

- The Socialist Group (The Labour Party and SDLP);
- The European Peoples Party/Christian Democrats (The Conservative Party and the UUP); and
- The Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (Alliance Party Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party).

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Members who do not wish to belong to any group sit as “non-aligned” members.

4. The UK Delegation

The UK Delegation has 18 full members (nine in each chamber) and 18 substitutes. A list of current UK members is attached at the end of this briefing.

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How UK members are appointed



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The nomination process is determined by member states in consultation with sub-member state government. In the UK, the lead department is the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). Last year the ODPM produced a nomination process in consultation with the Devolved Authorities, English regions, local government associations and political parties. The nomination process identified the Local Government Association as the coordinating body, and the Local Government International Bureau (LGIB) coordinated the nomination process on behalf of the LGA.

A summary of the process is as follows:

- The Local Government Association drew up a list of members in England, via nominations to its political groups and then consulted the English regional assemblies and the Greater London Authority on nominations for the CLRAE Regional Chamber.
- The Scottish Executive and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities agreed a list of members and forwarded them to the LGA
- The National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association agreed their members and forwarded them to the LGA
- The Northern Ireland Assembly and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association agreed their members and forwarded them to the LGA.

The final list was then forwarded to the ODPM and to the CLRAE Secretariat.

UK members sit in the Regional or Local Chamber as follows according to the nomination procedure. The places were allocated on the basis of population.

	<u>Regional Chamber</u>	<u>Local Chamber</u>
<u>England</u> 28 members (14 full and 14 subs).	Greater London Authority County Councils Larger unitary and metropolitan councils	London Boroughs Non-metropolitan councils unitary and metropolitan councils
<u>Northern Ireland</u> (2 members, 1 full and 1 sub)	Northern Ireland Assembly	Local Councils
<u>Scotland</u> (4 members, 2 full and 2 sub)	The Scottish Parliament The Scottish Executive	Local Councils
<u>Wales</u> (2 members 1 full and 1 sub)	National Assembly for Wales	Local Councils

The current political balance of the UK Delegation is as follows:

	<u>Socialist Group</u>	<u>EPP-CD Group</u>	<u>ILD Group</u>	<u>Non-attached</u>
<u>England</u>	12	9	6	1
<u>Northern Ireland</u>	-	1	1	-
<u>Scotland</u>	2	1	1	-
<u>Wales</u>	2	-	-	-

4.1. The UK Delegation in Congress

Welsh members

The two Welsh members are as follows:

Gwenda Thomas AM, a full member of the Regional Chamber and a member of the Education and Culture Committee.

Cllr Alan Lloyd, (Swansea), an alternate member of the local chamber and a member of the Standing Committee. Cllr Lloyd is also the leader of the UK Delegation and Leader of the Socialist Group.

UK Members in key positions

The UK delegation is very active in the authoring of reports, monitoring of local elections, participation in

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Committee of Ministers meetings and chairing committees.

The main office holders are:

- **Local Chamber**

Clr Alan Lloyd: First Vice-President of the Chamber and member of the Bureau.

- **Institutional Committee**

Clr Christopher Newbury: President of the Local Chamber Institutional Committee

- **Committee on Education and Culture**

Clr Mary Hunt: Vice-president of the Local Chamber Education and Culture Committee.

- **Committee on Social Cohesion**

Clr Doris Ansari: President of the Regions Social Cohesion Committee

- **Committee on Sustainable Development**

Clr Keith Whitmore: President of the Committee

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4.2. The United Kingdom Secretariat

The UK Delegation is supported by the Local Government Information Bureau (LGIB). The LGIB is a company limited by guarantee, and a central body funded by a top-slice grant from central government to carry out central functions, including the management of the secretariats for European and International representative bodies such as CLRAE and the Committee of the Regions. The LGIB also acts as the European and international arm of the LGA.

The LGIB is based in London, with an office in Brussels. The LGIB also funds a European and International officer, permanently based at the Welsh Local Government Association Office in Cardiff.

Secretariat support

The National Secretary is Mike Ashley, Director of the LGIB. Mike is the lead officer and coordinates liaison between the UK Government and the CLRAE Secretariat.

The Assistant National Secretary to the Delegation is David Lynch, Policy Promotion and Member Support Officer at the LGIB. David supports Mike and is responsible for the day to day management of the delegation.

Other LGIB officers provide ancillary support such as policy briefings, general administrative support and assistance for members in arranging travel and accommodation.

5. Current issues

The UK delegation has historically been very active in the work of Congress, in particular in the establishment and development of local and regional democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and recently in post-conflict South East Europe.

There are several issues that the UK delegation has identified that it wishes to make progress on and would welcome comments from the Committee.

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Administration

CLRAE is a traditional European bureaucracy, and part of a bigger Council of Europe bureaucracy. This raises two weaknesses that the UK Delegation would wish to address. The first is financial autonomy: Congress is financially dependent on Secretary General of the Council of Europe agreeing to their budget. The financial framework and regulations were set a decade ago and no longer support members to either attend without financial difficulties or allow the institution to develop a coherent and relevant strategy. Some members have experienced personal financial difficulties due to the inadequate level and poor administration of expenses. The second is that unlike the Committee of the Regions, there is no real attempt to develop an annual policy work programme. Part of this problem is the short length of mandate.

Substitute members

The limited size of the Delegation means that it is only truly representative of the UK across full and substitute



members. The UK Delegation seeks to involve all members of the delegation, and has had some notable substitute members in key positions and undertaking important work. However the committee structure and the infrequency of meetings limits their role.

External links

The UK Delegation is conscious that the reporting mechanisms differ across the UK. The LGIB reports the work of the Delegation and committees on its web site. The UK wants to see an improvement in developing a coherent work programme and linking the work of Congress to other European bodies. The UK Delegation is also aware that there need to be stronger links between the UK delegation and the UK Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly.

UK Delegation meeting

The first full UK delegation meeting will take place on 15 April in London. The aim of the meeting is to address some the issues above. All full and substitute members will be invited. The Delegation hopes to meet with the ODPM and members of the UK Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly. Members will have the opportunity to meet politically as well as in policy groups. The aim of the meeting will be to develop a UK strategy to promote policy and to better disseminate the work of the UK Delegation and Congress.

Contact Officers

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Council of Europe member states

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UK Delegation to CLRAE 2002-2004

Regional Chamber - Full Members

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|---|--|
| 1. Cllr Doris Ansari | Cornwall County Council |
| 2. Cllr Stuart McKellar | Northumberland County Council |
| 3. Cllr Owen Masters | Devon County Council |
| 4. Cllr Mohammad Nazir | Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council |
| 5. Sean Neeson MLA | Northern Ireland Assembly |

- [Liberal Democrat](#)
- [Labour](#)
- [Conservative](#)
- [Labour](#)
- [Alliance](#)

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6.	Peter Peacock MSP	Scottish Executive	Labour
7.	Cllr David Shakespeare	Buckinghamshire County Council	Conservative
8.	Gwenda Thomas AM	National Assembly for Wales	Labour
9.	Cllr Keith Whitmore	Manchester City Council	Liberal Democrat

Regional Chamber - Substitute Members

1.	John Biggs GLA	Greater London Assembly	Labour
2.	Cllr Sue Bolam	Northumberland County Council	Conservative
3.	Cllr Celia Cameron	Norfolk County Council	Labour
4.	Cllr Brian Coleman	Greater London Assembly	Conservative
5.	Cllr Gretta Cousins	Cheshire County Council	Conservative
6.	Cllr David Lloyd-Williams	North Yorkshire County Council	Liberal Democrat
7.	Cllr the Lord Tope GLA	Greater London Assembly	Liberal Democrat
8.	Cllr Kay Twitchen	Essex County Council	Conservative
9.	Ben Wallace MSP	Scottish Parliament	Conservative

Local Chamber - Full Members

1.	Cllr Sandra Barnes	South Northants District Council	Conservative
2.	Cllr Ken Bodfish	Brighton & Hove City Council	Labour
3.	Cllr Sue Davis	Telford & Wrekin Unitary Authority	Labour
4.	Cllr Mary Hunt	Waverley District Council	Liberal Democrat
5.	Cllr Robert Howarth	Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council	Labour
6.	Cllr Chris Newbury	West Wiltshire District Council	Independent
7.	Cllr Kathryn Smith	London Borough of Bexley	Labour
8.	Cllr Pat Watters	South Lanarkshire Council	Labour
9.	Cllr Derek Whittaker	Arun District Council	Conservative

Local Chamber - Substitute Members

1.	Cllr Olive Brown	Wear Valley District Council	Labour
2.	Cllr Diane Bunyan	Bristol City Council	Labour
3.	Cllr Jim Dillon	Lisburn Council	UUP
4.	Cllr Bill Flanagan	Chesterfield Borough Council	Labour
5.	Cllr Hugh Halcro-Johnston	Orkney Council	Independent
6.	Cllr Alan Lloyd	Swansea Council	Labour
7.	Cllr David Lyonette	Darlington Unitary Authority	Labour
8.	Cllr Amrit Mediratta	Three Rivers Council	Conservative

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Meeting information

Members attending

Officers attending

Location Map and Transport details

Contact numbers

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Annotated Agenda

Agenda Item	Note	Contact officer
Draft Agenda	-	David Lynch
Minutes	Meeting note of the last meeting attached.	Helen Jackson
Statement from the Chair	-	-
Future work programme 2003	UK Priority: briefing attached.	David Lynch
Bathing Water Directive	UK Priority: briefing and proposed amendments attached.	Clare Hudson
Marine Environment	In composite briefing	David Lynch
WTO	No briefing as document not translated in time.	Mike Ashley
Aquaculture	Briefing attached	David Lynch
National Disaster management (COTER) referral	Briefing attached	Sandra Schmidt

Heading

Sub heading