

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Priorities for the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
EIS 31 Ffederasiwn Busnesau Bach	EIS 31 Federation of Small Businesses



Arbenigwyr mewn Busnes
Experts in Business

1 September 2016

Mr Russell George AM
Chair
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Mr George,

RE: Future Work Priorities

FSB Wales welcomes the opportunity to present its views to the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee on its future work priorities. FSB Wales is the authoritative voice of businesses in Wales. With 10,000 members, a Welsh Policy Unit, two regional committees and twelve branch committees; FSB Wales is in constant contact with business at a grassroots level and undertakes regular online surveys of its members.

Whilst we recognise that the committee will be required to respond to and scrutinise the Government's policy programme on an ongoing basis, we feel the following areas are deserving of the attention of the committee within the early part of the Fifth Assembly.

1. **Rural Wales Matters** – Given the development of the city and growth regions in South and North Wales there is a real risk that the remainder of (largely) rural Wales will be left behind in a debate that focuses on agglomeration and taking advantage of urban density. There is a need to ensure the Welsh Government's future economic strategy includes appropriate measures for rural areas. The committee could examine how the Welsh Government could better support rural enterprise; aid agricultural diversification; and provide better access to broadband and mobile coverage as well as other services required by businesses based in rural areas.



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2. **Diversity and equality** – FSB has recently published a paper on Women in Enterprise¹, and in line with the recommendation of the previous committee² we would like see “an inquiry into gender and the economy. This could include some gender budgeting to see the impact of spending decisions on different groups”. There are also wider diversity issues that should be examined by the committee.
3. **Data** – There is currently a lack of available economic data in Wales, with much data being published in an *ad hoc* fashion, or in formats that are not useful for economic analyses. The committee should examine what data the Welsh Government and other agencies could easily make available to policymakers to enhance the quality of economic debate. FSB Wales has published a paper on economic data³ which we invite the committee to examine. The committee should also look to the work being carried out by the Wales Governance Centre on analysing Welsh public finances⁴.
4. **Growing the Mittelstand** – This theme should be central in all of the committee’s work, ensuring the growth of small and micro enterprises into a healthy ecosystem of medium-sized firms is a distinct part of Wales’ economic strategy. The committee should seek to learn from international approaches and methods of support, examine the appropriateness of business support for growing medium businesses, and means of creating incentives for retention and growth of medium-sized enterprises.
5. **Integrated Transport** – Much work has already been done on integrated transport, but with issues such as the rail franchise, South Wales Metro and M4 relief road still “live” we feel it is worth revisiting this area during this assembly, in part to focus on successes and progress and suggest areas which may still need improvement. This should build on the work of the previous committee, which suggested its successors “consider what improvements have been made to integrating public transport”. FSB Wales published a major report on transport in Wales in 2016⁵.
6. **Export for small businesses** – We suggest the committee could examine how well Welsh Government and UKTI activity and support for SMEs dovetails, and look at key markets Wales can target post-Brexit, alongside barriers to export.

¹ FSB (2016) [Women in Enterprise: The Untapped Potential](#)

² Enterprise and Business Committee (2016) [Fourth Assembly Legacy Report](#)

³ Crawley, Andrew (2015) [Economic Data and Modelling for Wales in a Changing Union](#)

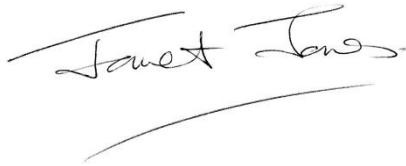
⁴ The Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University has published four papers on Welsh public finances during 2016 : <http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/wgc/publications/>

⁵ Cole, Stuart (2016) [Moving Wales Forward](#)

- Small Business Administration (SBA)** – With the proposals for the development bank likely to be brought forward before Christmas we would like to see the committee examine its remit and functions, and explore the role it can play in developing Wales' small businesses. The previous committee wanted successors to “seek further clarity on the precise remit of the Development Bank for Wales and the timescales for establishment”. This remit should include an examination of how well the development bank would meet the needs of small businesses for finance and support identified in our publication ‘Changing the Conversation: Opportunities and Practicalities involved in Establishing a Wales Small Business Administration’⁶.

I hope you find the comments of FSB Wales of interest.

Yours sincerely



Janet Jones

Wales Policy Chair

Federation of Small Businesses Wales

⁶ Pickernell, David *et al* (2016) [Changing the Conversation: Opportunities and Practicalities involved in establishing a Wales Small Business Administration](#)