To: Leaders

Dear Leader,

Information request to support WLGA campaign for continued EU membership

The WLGA committed in its Manifesto to campaign for the UK to remain a member of the European Union. It was the view of elected members that the benefits far outweigh any reservations there may be over continued membership.

A report on the EU Referendum was agreed by Local Authority Leaders at a meeting of the WLGA Co-ordinating Committee on 24th March (copy attached for information). This outlined the key reasons why continued membership is vital to Wales’ interests and sought Members’ approval to a set of recommendations. These were agreed as follows (Nos. 2-5 for local authorities to progress as appropriate in their areas):

1. To nominate myself, as WLGA Spokesperson on European Affairs, to represent WLGA on the Wales Stronger in Europe Advisory Group

2. To adopt motions and resolutions in support of continued UK membership of the EU

3. To co-ordinate and promote local campaigns by appointing local champions and working with all partners in your local areas to demonstrate the benefits of EU membership for your local residents

4. To organise a number of events promoting the benefits of EU membership for your communities, residents and businesses around Europe Day (9th May)

5. To keep WLGA informed of activities to ensure co-ordination of the local government message and to raise the profile of activities at the national level.

Obviously, WLGA is conscious of the pre-referendum protocols on campaigning and paying due regard to relevant deadlines. In relation to the above could you please seek assistance in completing and returning the attached short pro-forma. This will help
WLGA to co-ordinate information and intelligence regarding the above actions to inform the development of a local government position, providing an overall picture across Wales. This will be reported back to Leaders at the next meeting of the WLGA Co-ordinating Committee on Friday 27th May and will be utilised as part of the Wales Stronger in Europe campaign which is chaired by Geraint Talfan Davies OBE. We would be grateful to hear from councils who are developing any local campaigns or adopting a corporate position on the issue.

Thank-you for your help with this important exercise. Please email your completed proformas to Anne Stone (anne.stone@wlga.gov.uk) by Thursday 12th May.

Yours faithfully

Councillor Bob Bright
WLGA Spokesperson on European Affairs

.cc Cabinet Members – Regeneration
Chief Executives
1. Has your authority adopted, or are you planning to adopt, a formal position on the issue of the EU referendum? (please tick)

Yes        No

Planning to

If ‘yes’, please provide copies of relevant notices, motions, resolutions, minutes etc

2. What steps, if any, has your local authority taken to publicise the referendum and the implications of a vote either way for your local area? Please include brief details and attach any relevant materials you have used or are in the process of developing etc
3. Is your authority coordinating and / or promoting local campaigns with key partners and stakeholders in your area? If so, what are the key messages that form the basis of those?

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If ‘yes’ please give details below:
4. Is your authority planning any activities, events etc as part of Europe Day this year to demonstrate the benefits of EU membership for your local areas? If so, please provide details in the box below.
5. List up to three of the most important ways in which you believe EU membership has benefited the economy of your local authority area, giving examples in each case to illustrate.
6. List up to three other ways in which your authority area has benefited significantly from EU membership, again giving examples to illustrate your response (e.g. these might relate to cultural, social, environmental etc issues).

1.

2.

3.

Thank-you for answering these questions. Please return your completed form electronically to Anne Stone (anne.stone@wlga.gov.uk) by Thursday 12\textsuperscript{th} May 2016.
EU REFERENDUM

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to update members on the Referendum on UK membership of the European Union (EU), to outline the key reasons regarding why continued membership of the EU is vital to Wales’ interests and to seek a nomination to represent the WLGA on the Wales Stronger in Europe Advisory Group.

2. On 23rd June, UK voters will decide whether Britain should remain in the European Union. This follows months of negotiations between the UK Government and Brussels, and the Summit of European leaders on February 18th and 19th, at which a new settlement for the UK within the European Union was agreed.

3. Having made a firm commitment to campaign for continued membership for the UK within our Manifesto for the National Assembly for Wales elections, approved by members last November [http://www.wlga.gov.uk/local-government-policy-priorities-for-the-national-assembly-for-wales](http://www.wlga.gov.uk/local-government-policy-priorities-for-the-national-assembly-for-wales) the WLGA issued a positive statement following the EU Summit in February confirming its strong support for the UK to remain a member of the EU [http://www.wlga.gov.uk/media-centre-l-wlga-e-bulletins/wlga-voices-support-for-stay-in-eu-campaign](http://www.wlga.gov.uk/media-centre-l-wlga-e-bulletins/wlga-voices-support-for-stay-in-eu-campaign)

4. The benefits of EU membership to Wales are much wider than purely financial; these are captured below under three categories **Economy and Prosperity**, **Society** and **Security**.

Key messages

**Economy and Prosperity**

**Economic case**

5. Wales’ membership of the EU means businesses and consumers benefit from free trade with European countries, increasing trade and creating job opportunities as follows:

   - Goods exports from Wales to the EU are worth £5.8 billion a year
   - 585 firms in Wales are estimated to export to the EU, and 329 to import from it
   - Around 191,300 jobs in Wales are linked to trade with the EU

Wales would be particularly hard hit by a vote to leave the EU, as it is second out of the nations in the UK in terms of the importance of goods exports to the EU for the local economy (equivalent to over 8% of Wales’ economic value added).
As a result, both major employers in Wales, such as Airbus, Tata Steel and Ford, in addition to the overwhelming majority of small and medium sized businesses in Wales support the continuation of EU membership.

6 It is a misconception that withdrawal from the EU would eliminate so called ‘red tape’. There is a need for regulation in a wide range of settings, e.g. in relation to workplace health and safety, equalities, food safety and animal health. Such safeguards are vital. You have to have something in place and it’s wrong to suggest that coming out of Europe would remove the need for some form of control.

**Funding**

7 Wales is a [net beneficiary](#) of EU membership, i.e. we get more money from the EU than we contribute towards membership.

8 In the current EU programming period (2014-2020) Wales receives £1.8 billion under the [EU Structural Funds](#), which will derive a total investment of £3.2 billion in businesses, communities and individuals across the country. These funds support investments in transport, research and innovation, renewable energy, business competitiveness, regeneration, skills and employment.

9 Wales also receives £490 million from the EU under the [Rural Development Plan](#), which, with co-financing from the Welsh Government, is a programme of investment of around £900 million for rural communities across Wales.

10 In addition, Welsh farming directly benefits from around £230 million annually from the EU’s Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), in the form of the Basic Payment Scheme. This is a vital source of support for Welsh farmers, most of which would not be able to survive without it.

11 Both the Farmers Union for Wales (FUW) and the National Farmers Union (NFU) have adopted strong positions regarding continued EU membership for Wales, concluding that the best interests of Welsh agriculture is served by Wales staying in the EU. Access to European markets is vital to the Welsh food and drink industry and the risk of this access being denied, or granted on less favourable terms as a result of leaving the EU is too great.

12 The [funding that Wales directly received from the EU under the Structural Funds and CAP](#) is a guaranteed investment over a 7 year period. There is no guarantee that such scale of financial support would continue if Wales came out of the EU and was dependent on the UK Government. No UK Government could provide a guarantee of support for a 7 year period.

13 Further, due to the lack of a robust regional policy within the UK there would be no guarantee that Wales would receive anywhere near the investment it receives from the EU Regional Policy, a policy aimed at redistributing resources by supporting the most deprived areas to ensure that they are not left too far behind.

14 During 2014-2020 Wales is also eligible to apply directly to the EU under a number of large scale Themed Funding Programmes and Initiatives, totalling £110 billion. These programmes provide support for a wide range of activities, from research, development and innovation to supporting young people and to improve the environment.
15 Wales is also benefiting from a number of investments from the European Investment Bank, from the Ireland Wales Cross Border Programme and participates in both the North West Europe and Atlantic Area Territorial Cooperation Programmes, which provide opportunities for communities in Wales to work together with similar areas across the EU in addressing social, economic and environmental challenges.

**Society**

16 EU Social legislation on environmental issues, equalities, employment and health has a positive impact on the quality of life of Welsh citizens.

17 EU Environmental legislation protects and sustains the environment we live in, from ensuring clean beaches and rivers, cleaner air to a recycling culture. Over the past six years Wales has received around £47 million from the EU to support its Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Programme. Further, the role that the EU plays in combating climate change and securing future energy supplies is vital to the sustainability of the whole continent. These, along with the current migration crisis, are the main challenge facing the EU. These issues are not confined to national borders thus require cross-border solutions.

18 The EU protects and advances the rights of Welsh citizens, these include: guaranteed paid holiday (at least 4 weeks), paid maternity leave, fair treatment at work (equal pay and anti-discrimination), smoke-free workplaces and the freedom to travel, live and work across Europe. It also provides access to Welsh citizens to European health services across the EU.

19 Consumer rights are also protected and advanced by EU law, for example, mobile roaming charges will be abolished from June 2017, and a cap on credit card fees (which could lead to lower prices for consumers) came in to play in December 2015. Other benefits include cheaper flights and a two year guarantee for products.

**Security**

20 Action at the EU level in terms of protecting and enhancing the security of all citizens includes cross border policing to combat human trafficking, arms and drug smuggling and counter terrorism intelligence.

21 Wales’ membership of the EU also means that we can collaborate with our European neighbours to tackle international threats more effectively through legislation such as the European Arrest Warrant, which enables criminals to be caught across the EU.

22 The wider role of the EU in supporting democracy and human rights across Europe and beyond, and in civil and military co-operation in post conflict zones, resonates with Wales’ strong sense and tradition of internationalism, peace and security. This, along with the greatest achievement of the EU; laying the foundation for peace between European neighbours for over 60 years after centuries of war, makes continued EU membership for Wales imperative for our place in the world.
Campaign in Wales

23 Britain Stronger in Europe is the main, UK level, cross-party campaign to stay in the EU. Wales Stronger in Europe is the main campaign at the Wales level. The Wales Advisory Group for the Wales Stronger in Europe campaign met for the first time on Monday the 7th of March, membership as follows:

Geraint Talfan Davies (Chair)
Lord Dafydd Wigley (Board Member of Britain Stronger in Europe)
Wayne David MP (Labour)
Craig Williams MP (Conservatives)
Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM (Plaid Cymru)
Eluned Parrott AM (Liberal Democrats)
Beth Button (National Union of Students)
Hywel Ceri Jones (EU Funding Ambassador for Wales)
Alan Davies (FUW)
Ann Beynon
Rita Singh
Peter Price

WLGA, along with other key sector representative organisations, such as the WCVA, NFU, Higher and Further Education, have been invited to nominate representatives for the Wales Advisory Group. The WLGA representative will be supported in this role by WLGA officers.

24 The political parties, at UK and Wales level (and their MEPs), are also launching their own campaigns and putting out their own messages ahead of the referendum.

25 Welsh Government officials are in the process of drafting a case for continued membership of the EU for Wales, to be launched by Ministers prior to the pre-election period. This will outline the key messages of why it is so important that Wales remains a member of the EU. Following the National Assembly for Wales elections and prior to the pre-referendum period there will be a short window of opportunity (from the 6th – 25th of May) for the new Government of Wales to actively campaign for continued EU membership for Wales.

26 In terms of Brexit there are two main campaigns at the UK level. Vote Leave is backed by Mayor of London Boris Johnson and five members of the UK Cabinet (Michael Gove, Iain Duncan Smith, Theresa Villiers, Chris Grayling and John Whittingdale). Grassroots Out/Leave.EU is backed by UKIP Leader Nigel Farage and former Respect MP George Galloway. The Electoral Commission will have to designate which of these two groups will become the official Leave campaign. The process of decided that has already begun with a decision due by the middle of April.
Recommendations

27 Members are invited to:

27.1 Nominate a WLGA representative for the *Wales Stronger in Europe Advisory Group*

27.2 Adopt motions and resolutions in support of continued UK membership of the EU

27.3 Coordinate and promote local campaigns by appointing local champions and working with all partners in their areas on demonstrating the benefits of EU membership for their local residents

27.4 Organise a number of events promoting the benefits of EU membership for their communities, residents and businesses around Europe Day (9th May)

27.5 Keep the WLGA informed of activities to ensure coordination of the local government message and to raise the profile of activities at the national level

Report cleared by: Councillor Bob Bright
WLGA Spokesperson for European Affairs

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