Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Guidance on submitting effective written evidence

Written evidence is crucial to the Committee's work. All written evidence is important, and is read and used by the Committee. However, there are some key things that you can do to make your submission as effective and accessible as possible.

This short note explains how written evidence is used by committees, and how you can make sure your evidence has the greatest possible impact.

Why do committees gather written evidence?

Your evidence is vitally important. Committees gather written submissions for a number of reasons, including:

- **Democratic accountability**: To allow Members to ensure they understand the views and concerns of a wide range of stakeholders and the public when holding the Welsh Government to account during policy inquiries, scrutinising legislation etc.;

- **Clarity of evidence**: So that interested groups and individuals have an opportunity to take time to set out their views clearly and in a considered way; and,

- **Effective recommendations**: Effective written evidence allows the Committee to draw conclusions, form opinions and make recommendations soundly based on an understanding of the full range of perspectives on a given issue.

While the Committee takes evidence in many ways, including surveys, stakeholder events and formal oral evidence, written evidence is commonly the bedrock of a committee’s work.

How is written evidence used?

A call for written evidence will often be issued alongside either “terms of reference” setting out the issues the Committee is interested in, or a series of consultation questions. Evidence received is used in a number of ways:
– To inform Members who read and use it as the basis for questions to witnesses, including Welsh Government Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers;

– Clerks and researchers who support and advise the Committee use it when preparing briefings for Members;

– Written evidence will inform the Committee’s report and recommendations. Because of the quantity received, and the need to be focused in reporting, not all written evidence can be referenced. However, it is all used and influences the Committee; and,

– To select witnesses for oral evidence sessions.

**Written evidence will normally be published.**

What makes effective written evidence?

This section lists a series of points which will make your written evidence clearer and more effective, maximising its impact:

– Clearly state who the submission is from, identifying whether it is in a personal capacity or from an organisation, and *briefly* introduce yourself and / or your organisation;

– Be concise. Written evidence should be no more than 6 pages / 2,000 words unless otherwise stated in the terms of reference or on the inquiry information page;

– Think carefully about the key message(s) you want to leave with Members and prioritise;

– Include a brief summary of key points – ideally at the beginning of the paper;

– Respond directly to the consultation questions / terms of reference. However, you don’t need to respond to them all if they are not relevant to you. Equally, feel free to identify any relevant areas not addressed but which you believe to be important;

– Use numbered paragraphs;

– Check clarity of writing, grammar, spelling and punctuation;

– Include any pragmatic solutions or recommendations for action by the Welsh Government or others which you would like the Committee to consider;
Avoid just giving opinions. Written submissions are most effective when based on evidence and/or examples;

Avoid annexes if at all possible. Hyperlinks are a more effective way of linking to further information if it is needed. However, if this is not possible, annexes are preferable to inclusion of extensive material in the main body of the submission; and,

It is really important to respond by the deadline; even if the deadline appears to be very early, for example a couple of weeks before a Committee appearance to give oral evidence. Deadlines are carefully planned to allow enough time for evidence to be analysed and read by Committee members.

Thank you for taking the time to support the Committee in its work. If you have any queries please contact the Clerking team at SeneddCCERA@assembly.wales or on 0300 200 6363 to discuss your evidence and approach.