

agenda

Editor
John Osmond

Associate Editor
Rhys David

Administration
Helen Sims-Coomber and Clare Johnson

Design
WOOD&WOOD Design Consultants. wood2.com

To advertise
Telephone 029 2066 6606



Institute of Welsh Affairs
1–3 Museum Place
Cardiff
CF10 3BD

Telephone 029 2066 6606
Facsimile 029 2037 4322
Email wales@iwa.org.uk
Web www.iwa.org.uk

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branches

North Wales Secretariat
c/o Andrew Parry
North East Wales Institute (NEWI)
Plas Goch Mold Wrexham LL11 2AW
Telephone 01792 354243

Gwent Secretariat
c/o Jeff Edge
University of Wales Newport
Caerleon Campus P O Box 179
Newport NP18 3YG
Telephone 01633 432005

West Wales Secretariat
c/o Robin Lewis
The MAGSTIM Co. Ltd
Spring Gardens Whitland
Carmarthenshire SA4 0HR
Telephone 01792 354243

Swansea Bay Secretariat
c/o Marc Clement
Electrical and Electronic Engineering Department
University of Wales Swansea
Singleton Park Swansea SA2 8PP
Telephone 01792 295489

Wales in London
c/o Welsh Development Agency
6th Floor Tower 42
25 Old Broad Street
London EC2M 1HY
Telephone 020 7222 2822

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countering the brain drain

for the last three decades much of the politics of rural Wales have been preoccupied by the inflow of people from England and elsewhere and their impact on the housing market, schools, and the Welsh language. High-profile second home and Welsh-language campaigns have been prompted. However, a number of articles in this issue suggest that an over-emphasis has been given to in-migration. As much if not more of an issue is out-migration.

The facts are given by David Blackaby and Stephen Drinkwater in their analysis, pages 42–43. What they reveal is that while we have a net inflow of people of retirement age, we have a net outflow of young people in their twenties. Moreover, the young people leaving are highly educated. About a third of the Welsh-born living in other parts of the UK have degrees, compared to only around a tenth of the Welsh born still living in Wales. In short, migration patterns are simultaneously producing an ageing population while draining the country of well-educated youngsters.

Quite separately Cynog Dafis was struck by the same statistics. Overleaf, we print in full the talk he gave to the IWA's West Wales Branch in March. That he touched a nerve was reflected in the banner headlines given his speech in the press at the time. And it was indeed refreshing to hear some fresh thinking from a spokesman for the Welsh heartland that is usually associated with the pathology of in-migration into Wales.

Of course, analysis of the issue is relatively easy. Much more difficult is to come up with practical solutions that have some chance of being put into effect by mainstream policy makers. Elsewhere in this issue Peter Midmore provides a lucid overview of the economic problems of rural Wales, pages 44–46. He concludes by drawing attention to the politics behind the economics: there is no agency with a specific responsibility for rural Wales while, given the constituencies its members represent, the Welsh Cabinet inevitably has an urban focus.

An opportunity should be presented by the forthcoming finalisation of the Wales Spatial Plan, analysed by Kevin Bishop on pages 74–76. In his article Cynog Dafis throws down a challenge. Will the spatial planners take note of the visionary idea he outlines for identifying development domains in rural Wales? These are locations which have a chance of producing a critical mass of jobs, facilities, and other attractions sufficient to keep our talented young people in rural Wales. This is a big idea, one that should provide an opportunity for the administration to demonstrate that it means what it says when it insists that it is governing for the whole of Wales.



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- **IWA National Eisteddfod Lecture 2004**
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- **Cardiff Conference and Lunch: Policing South Wales**, with guest speaker Chief Constable Barbara Wilding. Thistle Hotel, Cardiff, Friday 24th September 2004.
- **IWA / Academi Event**
The Welsh World Heritage Experience: Blaenafon and Big Pit. Workmen's Hall, Blaenafon, Saturday 25th September 2004.
- **Caerphilly Conference and Lunch: The Future of Broadband Communications in Wales.** Llancaiach Fawr Manor, Nelson, near Caerphilly, Tuesday 23rd November 2004.

just published...

- **Quarterly Monitoring Reports:**
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migration, identity and development



arguing that we need to move from a protectionist to a dynamic approach to Welsh identity, cynog dafis says the biggest threat comes from people moving out of Wales, rather than those coming in

Some people get nervous as soon as the subject of the national identity of Wales is raised, fearing or making accusations about exclusiveness, discrimination, even racism. I heard one member of the National Assembly spit out the phrase “the politics of identity” with loathing. Such an attitude would close down discussion of a fundamental human need – to belong to, identify with, a group broader than the family and smaller than the human race at large.

Apart from the sense of warmth and security it brings, group identity is necessary in order to generate enthusiasm, commitment and collective endeavour, without which the individual will achieve little. The flip side of this of course is suspicion, even hostility, towards those not in the group, with sometimes hideous consequences, which is why we have to be constantly on our guard in dealing with the issue.

Why is *national* identity important? Because, notwithstanding increasing mobility and rootlessness, globalisation and the European Union, the concept of *nation* still carries unique significance for democratic political action. The nation-state is still the fundamental building-block of international relations – as indeed the word ‘*international*’ itself indicates.

Wales is not, and may never become, a nation-state. But since 1999, it has become a kind of sub-state and has a National Assembly. It did so – let us not forget – not simply because New Labour wanted to decentralise government in order to make it more effective or more accountable, but because Wales was perceived, and perceived itself, as having distinct needs, priorities and values. Wales, like Scotland, had a distinct identity and laid claim to being a nation. So the national identity of Wales has been a driver – but not as powerful a driver as that of Scotland – in the constitutional transformation of Britain. Of course, this process is far from being complete.

With Wales now established as an entity of government, the question becomes, how can Welsh government bring about worthwhile and progressive change? This is partly about powers, vision and strategies. But it is also about national identity.

Democratic political change is about give and take. It requires that certain individuals, groups, and regions are prepared to give, even to sacrifice, for the benefit of the whole. And what that in turn requires is that they see themselves as being part of that whole. They have to some extent to *identify* with those individuals and regions that will benefit at their short-term expense. That is, they have to share in a collective identity with them, and the most potent form of collective identity is national identity. To make self-government meaningful (and since 1999 we have had a degree of self-government), Wales needs a robust national identity and it needs to deploy it to political effect.

Bearing in mind that Wales is a small country (population 3 million) nestling at the side of one of the most powerful and expansionist countries in the world, England (population 49 million), the very survival of a Welsh identity until this day is something of a wonder. It has been remarkably resilient. As Phil Williams described in his IWA pamphlet *The Psychology of Distance*, it has always depended on the efforts and skills of its committed advocates.

Identity exists in the minds of people. It derives from external factors such as terrain and location. It is consolidated through organisational networks and shared institutions. Crucially it is fed by shared historical and cultural experiences. It is transmitted down the generations. Thus has national identity survived in Wales in the face of geographic realities unfavourable to a sense of unity and despite the complete absence until very recently of formal political structures.

If this is the case, it seems clear to me that patterns of migration over the last half century, but increasingly today, mean that the maintenance of a meaningful national identity in Wales into the future is problematic. The Office of National Statistics – note the word “national” here – published its report *Focus on Wales* in January 2004. Here are some of its findings, most of them relating to 2001:

- 22 per cent of the people identifying themselves as Welsh now live elsewhere in Britain, the great majority in the English South-East. This shows the scale of out-migration. It is up 2% on the previous census.
- 38 per cent of Welsh identifiers living outside Wales are graduates, compared to 10 per cent in Wales. This shows the nature of out-migration, losing to Wales its potential leaders.
- In 1991 only 75 per cent of people living in Wales were born in Wales – 20 per cent were born in England, 2 per cent in Scotland or Ireland, and 3 per cent outside the UK. In 1951, 83 per cent of the people of Wales were Welsh-born. This shows the combined effect over time of inward and outward migration
- Remarkably, bearing all this in mind, 60 per cent of Welsh people identified themselves solely as Welsh and a further 7 per cent as Welsh and something else, usually British. This shows the resilience of Welsh identity.

- However, only 51 per cent of people in Wales with a degree identified themselves as Welsh. This shows the erosion of Welsh identity among the most influential members of society
- In some areas those born in Wales are only just in the majority: Flintshire 51 per cent, Conwy 54 per cent, and Powys 56 per cent. Welsh-identifiers there will certainly be well under half the population.
- Between 1991 and 2001, the population of Wales grew by 1 per cent per year. However, the median age of the population rose by 10 years over that period. A linked figure given by Dylan Jones Evans in the Winter 2003/04 issue of *Agenda* is significant: that while the number of people over 50 employed in the Objective 1 region increased 38,000 between 2000 and 2003, the number employed aged between 16 and 35 actually went down, by 34,000. This shows the loss of young people from large parts of Wales.

There are clearly huge issues of loss of human capacity here. That is, by and large, how the *Western Mail* interpreted the issue in a powerful editorial when it reported the *Focus on Wales* report. However, it seems to me that the long-term effect of a continuing process of this kind on Welsh identity merits consideration. What should our response be?

- First, the issue should be brought out into the open in political debate, free of accusations and smears of discrimination and racism and opportunistic point-scoring.
- Second, it should be recognised as the significant challenge that it is and become a core theme in development strategies – economic, social, cultural and environmental. No responsible government should shut its eyes to the effect of processes that could undermine that which justifies its very existence.
- Thirdly, it seems to me that the main emphasis of the debate ought to be on out- rather than in-migration.

So far the discussion has concentrated on in-migration, and particularly its undoubtedly grave impact on the Welsh language. There are steps that certainly need to be taken in this area: interventions to ensure that local people can enter the housing market; the use of planning regulations to avoid the kind of over-development of housing that the Ceredigion Unitary Development Plan seems to promote; and so on. There should be no nervousness about using all the instruments available to manage in-migration in a way that is everywhere regarded as acceptable at nation-state level. Indeed, there is no *moral*, as distinct from *legal*, difference between nation-state and sub-nation-state level where important cultural issues are at stake. However, two points need to be made:

- Bearing in mind the power of the economic and social forces at work, such interventions can have only a relatively marginal effect.

- Welsh society has been so depleted, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, by the impact of out-migration and economic marginalisation, that it simply could not function effectively without the contribution of significant numbers of in-migrants, much less bring about the kind of economic transformation necessary to lay the foundations of a sustainable future. Interestingly, such a transformation would help to remove one of the drivers of large-scale in-migration: the chance to make a killing by cashing in on the difference in property values and average income between much of Wales and much of England.

In general terms, we need to move from a protectionist to a dynamic approach to Wales and Welsh identity. This I believe also applies to the Welsh language. And it implies an intention not merely to protect an *existing* identity but to forge a *new* identity from the culturally mixed bag of humanity that exists in Wales. However, that will not be possible unless we are able to bring an element of stability to the Welsh population, thus allowing those factors which create a national identity to come into play.

Tackling the out-migration issue implies giving priority to the economy. Dylan Jones-Evans's *Agenda* article shows just how important this is:

- Average GDP in the Objective 1 region was down to 67 per cent of the UK average in 2001.
- The gap in average pay between the Objective 1 region and the rest of Wales has risen by 40 per cent since 2000.
- The gap between the Objective 1 region and the rest of Wales had already increased by 20 per cent between 1998 and 2001.
- The reduction in economic inactivity since 2000 was only 0.2 per cent in the Objective 1 region, compared with 10.6 per cent in the rest of Wales.
- Employment in the 16-35 age-group in the Objective 1 region was down by 34,000 since 2000.
- Can transformation from such a problematic base be achieved, especially in the context of a UK Government policy framework calculated to strengthen already economically-advantaged regions at the expense of the rest? It is the responsibility of the Government of Wales to be leading the charge on changing the UK Government's approach, rather than constantly droning an apologia for it. But, leaving that issue aside, there is a need for a far more targeted and strategic approach to development policy in Wales.

What I've got to say about this is largely derived from the work of Professor Gareth Wyn Jones and Einir Young in their policy paper arguing for greater social justice within Wales and between Wales and the rest of the UK, *A Bright Future for Rural Wales* (Centre for Enterprise and Regional Development, University of Wales, Bangor, April 2003). The title is actually a bit of a misnomer, as their fundamental argument is that we should reject the old chestnut of the rural-urban divide.

Their starting-point is first that the young are increasingly mobile and attracted out of traditional rural communities towards urban centres which offer a wide range of well-paid career opportunities and high-grade recreational activities. Secondly, while land-based businesses remain important in rural Wales, especially for what Professor Peter Midmore, of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, calls the "deep" countryside, they cannot be the prime economic drivers for the transformation that is necessary for a sustainable Wales. As a result they proceed to advocate a radically new approach to achieving sustainable development throughout Wales.

Already the major urbanised centres are, to a varying extent, doing well: Greater Cardiff; Swansea Bay; Newport and its hinterland; the Bridgend area; and Wrexham-Deeside. The Valleys, conceived as single urban region with a population of around 800,000, urgently need a concentrated effort to raise it from economic and social decay.

In the rest of the country, the need is for the designation of Special Development Domains to provide a focus for investment in the commercial, retail, educational, cultural and recreational facilities crucial for the lifestyle now demanded by people, especially the young. Development within the domains would place particular emphasis on environmental quality and sustainability. Based on the existing realities of settlement, employment and travel patterns, Professor Jones and Einir Young propose:

- Four medium Development Domains with populations over 40,000: the Menai area; the Llanelli area; 'Aberconwy' including Llandudno, Conwy and Colwyn Bay; and the Clwyd Valley, including Rhyl and St Asaph.
- Six smaller Domains with populations between 15,000 and 30,000: the Ceredigion coast; Carmarthen to Llandeilo; Porthmadog to Cricieth; the Cleddau region in Pembrokeshire; the Newtown-Welshpool area; and Llandrindod-Builth.
- Special consideration for Holyhead and Fishguard as ports linking with Ireland.

The great majority of the population live within 10 miles of one of these domains or the major urban centres. Concentration on these centres would be accompanied by initiatives for the small (often market) towns, and development of value-addition land-based activities in the countryside. Villages and small-scale rural settlements would be seen as linked into the domains and the opportunities provided within them.

I have little doubt that a regional strategic framework on these lines provides the best chance of turning around both the perceptions and the realities of what is commonly, but misleadingly, termed 'rural Wales' which is currently experiencing extensive inward and outward migration. It offers a basis for strategic decisions about investment and

infrastructure development. It also provides a means of offering the best of urban and rural experience for which Wales is eminently well equipped.

Bearing in mind the need that I have identified to forge a significant Welsh national identity, it would need to be complemented by a national strategy for linking up the regions with transport, electronic and institutional networks. Further, it would provide a framework for identifying a wide range of career opportunities and career advancement within Wales – crucial for stemming the haemorrhaging of the qualified young from Wales. Achieving this must involve overcoming the excessive localism of much of the debate about jobs. It is simply not going to be possible to provide the kind of employment choices that the majority of young people demand, and have the right to expect, “within their local community”, to use a phrase that I have heard repeated ad nauseam. Taking advantage of the choices and the potential for mobility offered by a total of 19 major urban centres and medium and smaller Special Development Domains is an altogether different matter.

The other component in a strategy for the retention of young people in Wales comes under the rather boring title of Labour Market Strategy. In discussing this I am indebted to Professor John Lovering of the University of Wales, Cardiff, and his policy paper *A Labour Market Strategy for Sustainability and Social Justice in Wales* (commissioned by Plaid Cymru, 2003). He argues that despite the deployment of considerable resources over the years, Welsh economic development strategy “has not translated into high incomes or stable employment” and has often failed to benefit the most disadvantaged areas and sectors of society. The disadvantages often follow lines of ethnicity, culture and language.

Whereas the measures to improve skills set out in the 2002 *Skills and Employment Action Plan* (‘supply-side’ measures) are helpful, there is a failure to address the ‘demand side’ – the supply of employment opportunities looking for people to fill them. Lovering argues for a Welsh Labour Market Strategy to provide a new focus in economic development, with sustainable good-quality employment becoming a primary long-term goal. Public resources would then be allocated to achieve the best employment outcomes, in terms of quantity, quality and location; and in terms of promoting greater equality.

I agree wholeheartedly. John Lovering’s approach is entirely consistent with the arguments of Dylan Jones-Evans, Brian Morgan of the Cardiff Business School, and others in favour of targeting support on Welsh-based companies to enable them to achieve their potential for growth. It would also dovetail very well with Gareth Wyn Jones’s and Einir Young’s proposals for the dispersal of activity throughout Wales.



Too many of our talented youngsters are taking the road out of Wales.

However, a satisfactory Labour Market Strategy needs to be complemented with an additional component, namely a process of raising awareness of the range of career opportunities that exist in the various regions and centres of Wales, opportunities that would grow over time as the Domains strategy was put in place. What this implies is a conscious and explicit intention of raising the salience of Wales as a significant entity, not just for the purpose of sentiment but for the very serious business of creating an exciting and fulfilling career. For those who are likely to leave their “own communities”, whether temporarily or permanently, attention needs to be drawn to what is on offer in other parts of Wales.

The *Western Mail* journalist David Willamson, in his commentary on the *Focus on Wales* report put it thus: “If Wales is to thrive, it needs to be powered by something more potent than a welcoming patriotism coupled with an international taste in music videos. When a Welsh person is handed a university degree, the touch of parchment on skin seems to trigger a migratory instinct towards the English fields.”

Changing that now deeply-entrenched mindset should be a prime aim of public policy. The degree of retention of young people within Wales should be a key indicator of the success of Welsh economic development policy. When I proposed this more than once in National Assembly debates on Sustainable Development the response was at best hesitant. I wish I could say that I found this difficult to understand. The truth is that I understand it only too well.

- *Cynog Dafis is the former Plaid Cymru MP for Ceredigion and AM for Mid and West Wales. This article is based on a talk he gave to the IWA's West Wales Branch in March 2004.*

bryn says cardiff millennium centre “a bargain”



Opera star Bryn Terfel told a North Wales Branch dinner at Bontnewydd near Caernarfon in June that the Millennium Centre will offer better facilities for less than half the cost of redeveloping London’s Royal Opera House. A capacity audience of 160 at the Meifod Country House Hotel heard him pledge to sing more often at the new venue than at the New Theatre, where he had appeared only twice because of its poor acoustics.

The Centre’s chief executive, Judith Isherwood, warned that transport from west and north Wales was a potential stumbling block to the project’s success. “That’s the one thing that keeps me awake at night,” she said. “Unless we can get people there easily and cheaply then its not going to work. The more lobbying you can do to try to have transport issues addressed the better.”

- See *Where Icons Meet*, p10

members either in every issue or frequently.

When asked which areas of IWA research coincided most closely with their own interests members most frequently mentioned Welsh politics and devolution, followed by the Welsh economy. Housing, education, rural issues, and Europe emerged as topics of less interest. The same preferences are expressed when it comes to whom we should invite to address our lunches, seminars and other events.

However, some of the most interesting information garnered from the questionnaire came, not from the answers to specific questions, but from the additional comments that were provided. Members say they value the opportunity the IWA offers them to keep in touch with events in Wales and with areas relevant to their own activities. They also value the access which our events give to opinion-formers and policy-makers.

You have also provided us with interesting information on where the direction you think our research should take over the coming months. There is clearly a lot of interest in greater monitoring of the assembly, in the social economy, including local community regeneration, the environment, culture and tourism, and in what might be termed nation-building issues. We will be paying attention to all these suggestions.

the IWA and its members

Interested in Welsh politics and devolution, probably male, just past the first flush of youth, and conscientious about filling in questionnaires. This is you, the average reader of Agenda and member of the Institute of Welsh Affairs.

Earlier this year we included an eight-page questionnaire with Agenda as our way of trying to find out more about our members. Around 20 per cent responded, a reassuringly high proportion market researchers tell us.

Firstly, and very encouragingly, Agenda seems to be meeting a real need. For three out of every five of our members it is the most important reason for belonging to the IWA. More

than 80 per cent of those replying said they were either satisfied or, indeed, very satisfied with the quality of writing, range and relevance of topics, frequency of publication and the design and lay-out of the pages. Slightly fewer – just over 70 per cent – were satisfied with the quality of illustrations and graphics, so we will be paying attention to this in forthcoming issues.

Two thirds read the news section within Agenda, and more than half read Upfront, the opinion piece and politics and policy in every issue. Culture and Communications and Economy are also popular sections, but even the least-read section – social policy – is still perused by more than 70 per cent of



A capacity audience gathered at Bodysgallen Hall in May to hear Rachel Rowlands, Wales's former True taste ambassador, describe how she and her family built up the highly successful Rachel's Dairy brand, now available in supermarkets across the UK. Pictured here are David Lermon, area manager Wales of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, Nigel Beverley-Stone of Finance Wales, Rachel Rowlands, and Rhys David, Development Director of the IWA.

Welsh world heritage experience

In association with the Academi, the national writers organisation, the National Museums and Galleries of Wales, Torfaen County Council and Blaenafon Book Town, the IWA is organising a day-long event at Blaenafon on 25 September to celebrate its achievement in being designated a world heritage site.

Speakers include historians Dr John Davies and Dr Elin Jones, Dr Eurwyn William, Deputy Director General of the National Museum, John Rodger, the Blaenafon project Director, and poets Gillian Clarke and Patrick Jones. The day includes a tour of Big Pit and the Book Town itself.

The cradle of coal-mining and iron-making, Blaenafon sparked the beginning of a movement that was to transform the landscape, culture and society of the south Wales Valleys. In the process it helped changed the world through the Industrial Revolution. Today the area's designation as a World Heritage Site is contributing in new ways to cultural and economic regeneration.

- For information on attending this event, price £20 to include lunch, contact the IWA office.

IWA wins backing for early years study

An IWA research project to monitor the pilot phase of the roll out of Integrated Early Years Centres across Wales has won backing from the Welsh Assembly Government and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

The Assembly Government aims to have an integrated pilot centre in every local authority within Wales. It has already approved 15 centres and given £3.2 million towards their capital costs

Integrated children's centres are part of a centre-based network of services which support children and their families in a geographical area. They bring together the four key elements of early years education: childcare, open access play, training, and community development.

Beginning in September 2004, the first phase of the IWA's project will entail a review of early years provision in each of the 22 local authorities in Wales.

A second stage will involve selecting three integrated centres which will be examined in detail, taking into account the views of parents, teachers, nursery staff and other officers.

The way integrated centres address social problems will be a major focus of the study. The aim is to identify best practice and suggest recommendations for the further development of integrated centres in Wales.

when icons meet



bryn terfel explains his passion for the millennium centre, opening in cardiff this november

The opening of the Wales Millennium Centre in November will be an amazing time for performers in Wales. The eyes of the world will be on us. The Royal Opera House at Covent Garden holds 2,257 people. Our theatre has 1,900 seats. The Royal Opera House has three performing venues. We have four. The Royal Opera stage is 345 metres square; ours is 340 square metres. So we are up there in the highest echelons.

Of course, the Wales Millennium Centre is costing £106 million. That may seem a lot but in London the Royal Opera House has spent £214 million on its redevelopment. So I think we have got a bargain.

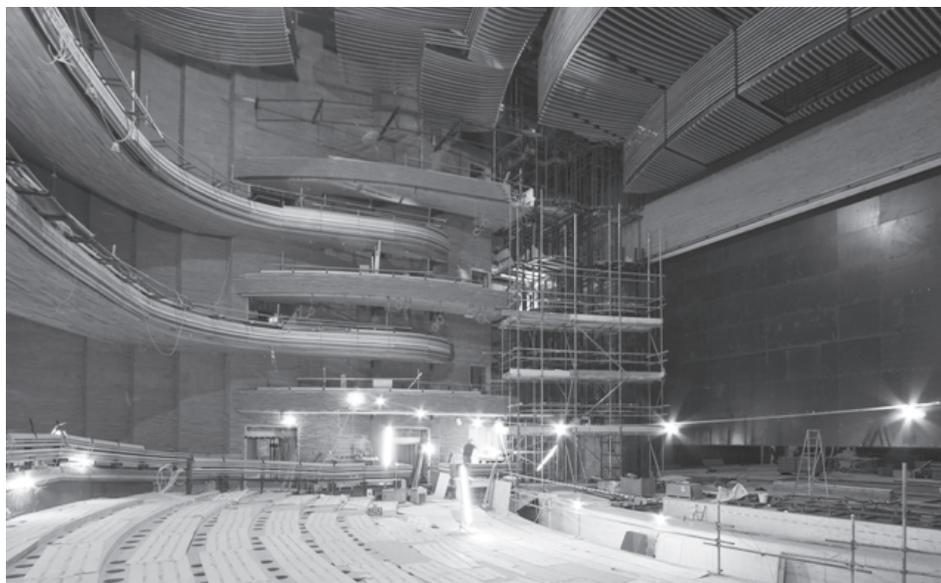
Our human voices are in the hands of the acoustic experts. As a singer you want to sing forward towards the audience. But when the director gives you certain movements that take you away from the microphone you need acoustic excellence. The Royal Opera House's refurbishment has heightened its brilliant

acoustics. The Birmingham Symphony Hall has one of the best in the world.

How will we fare with the Millennium Centre? The New Theatre in Cardiff is a horrendous theatre to sing in. That's the reason I've only sung there twice and I feel a little guilty about it. But at the Millennium Centre they had an acoustic test in June. The orchestra went into the pit, the chorus was on stage and they had tears in their eyes.

Recently I was on the stage of the new arts centre at Lichfield, and you could throw a 10p coin right to the back of the hall. That is how close the circle is to you in the Millennium Centre. And there must be only about fifteen rows of stalls. It's so intimate and although when I last visited it was only a shell, the acoustics were superb. The audience will be so close. I look forward to singing there.

The Millennium Centre is much more than an opera house. In London in one week in June I saw Rhys Meirion sing



The emerging shell of the Millennium Centre's auditorium – at an early acoustic test the orchestra 'head tears in their eyes'.

in *Ernani* at the English National Opera which was fantastic and may I congratulate him on his singing and his acting. Considering he was a headmaster a couple of years ago, he cuts a dashing figure. But I also went to see Ricky Gervais's comedy show on its opening night, and Alan Bennett's superb play, *The History Boys*, at the National Theatre. And, of course, I sang in *Faust* at the Royal Opera House.

When you are in London you have these choices and this is what I'm expecting from the new Millennium Centre in Cardiff. Already they have booked the Kirov Ballet and the Royal Ballet. The space will be used by Welsh National Opera for no more than 20 weeks. The rest is going to be filled by a fantastic, eclectic choice of performers from music, drama, and dance. It's going to be 10 per cent opera, 52 per cent musicals, 18 per cent ballet and dance, 15 per cent physical theatre such as circuses, and 5 per cent male voice choirs, eisteddfodau, the Urdd and others.

Quite apart from the value of variety, economics dictate that it can't just be about opera. In fact the enamel is beginning to crack in certain opera houses. Scottish Opera is in huge difficulty. It has just laid off half of its chorus members. Since 9/11 even the Metropolitan Opera has had difficulties. Perhaps people are not travelling to New York so much these days.

These are desperate times for opera. Houses that used to sell 98 per cent of their tickets through the season are now selling just 38 per cent. Recently I was singing to a very empty house at the Metropolitan Opera. And this is a house that pays over \$1.5 million upwards for productions, an amazing amount when they only receive a 2 per cent subsidy. All the other money is from the wealthy benefactors that they have, people like the South African businessman Donald Gordon who has, in fact, given the Wales Millennium Centre £10 million.

Currently Opera Australia is playing to 30 per cent houses. Covent Garden is playing to to 40 per cent. So you can see the difficulties that they are in. Opera Australia is making losses every year but they are working hard. If you live in Sydney they will give you three tickets at \$37 per night just to try and entice you. The Royal Opera House at Covent Garden have just had a huge donation from Travelex which will give all of us a chance to buy tickets for £10. You usually pay £170 for a ticket to the Royal Opera House. Even I have to pay that. I get two tickets for the first night and that's it.



Within these stones horizons sing.

As performers, what do we do when we walk into an opera house? The first, elementary consideration is parking. If we are to perform at the best of our capability we need the comfort of being able to park somewhere. In London I have to take the tube into Covent Garden. They had thought of building a car park underneath the Floral Hall but the Royal Mail had a special train service that goes in that direction so those plans were taken away. At the Metropolitan Opera there is not a parking space for the performers

because the wealthy benefactors get preference. But at the Millennium Centre in Cardiff, there's parking space for us. So from the beginning we have a smile on our faces.

When I've parked my car I need some very specific things. I need a clean dressing room, a toilet, perhaps a soft chair, plus a kettle to make a cup of tea. Religiously, I have a cup of tea before I go on stage and I eat a tangerine – very simple, but it's so important that they are there. It's so important, too, to be able to open a window for fresh air.

We don't have that at the Metropolitan Opera, or at Covent Garden. Where do we have it? At the Wales Millennium Centre. All these things have been thought of by the designers. In Cardiff we have something that is very special.

- *Bryn Terfel is artistic director of the Millennium Centre's opening weekend, on 26-27 November 2004. This article is based on an address he gave to an IWA North Wales Dinner at Bontnewydd, Caernarfon at the end of June.*

linking past and future



paul flynn traces the revival of the Welsh language in gwent to the 1988 newport eisteddfod

We've learned a Welsh song in school", my excited seven-year-old daughter told me in 1969. This was sensational news. In those days education in Newport had no Welsh content, either in language or culture. As a gesture of subservience to Prince Charles' Investiture in Caernarfon a Welsh song was being taught.

Proudly my daughter sang the words *The land of my fathers is dear to me*. This was the final straw. Even in multi-ethnic Cardiff I was taught our anthem in Welsh when I was her age. Along with thousands of other steelworkers from elsewhere in south Wales I had moved to Newport to work in the newly opened Llanwern steelworks in 1963. The newcomers formed the nucleus of supporters for Welsh education in Gwent. Dedicated parents in Risca, Newport and Cwmbran established nursery schools and school units in the late sixties and early seventies.

The first group campaigning for a Welsh school was set up in Newport in 1971 and a unit opened with eight pupils. It was a difficult task to win the support of parents in what they saw as a gamble in a tiny unit with no certain future.

Progress was swift and spectacular against the early bias and prejudice of local politicians. The language was then a political football. Putting the boot into Welsh by obstructing the growth in bilingual education was the easy way to punish emerging Plaid Cymru which had won a few council seats in the Gwent valleys.

The Newport Welsh school campaign was multi party. I was a new Labour councillor in Newport when I went to Merthyr to pass on our experience to local parents determined to establish their own unit. The meeting was held in the home of a young man employed at the local Hoover factory by the name of Dafydd Wigley.

Happily, Welsh medium education had good friends in the local education authorities, especially Hugh Loudon and Vaughan Williams. Without them hostile local councillors could have stifled progress. Many sacrifices were made by parents. Their work was tireless and painstaking. Often it was two steps forward and one back.

The hostility of Newport's councillors was deep seated. Most were educated during the war when Newport schools were blighted by a generation of incurable west Briton teachers who denigrated Welsh history and culture. The Chartists were dismissed as a drunken loutish mob. Monmouthshire, they taught, was part of England with the motto of *Faithful to Both*. This meant faithful to 'England and Wales' not to English and Welsh. Local Welsh place names were mangled, anglicised or displaced.

The 1988 Eisteddfod at Newport, the Urdd Eisteddfod and Conservative Wyn Roberts's courageous educational reforms all led to a transformation. The tiny Welsh-medium units attached to English-medium primary schools blossomed into permanent and popular successful Welsh-medium schools in their own right. In turn they forced the establishment of the brilliantly successful secondary school, Ysgol Gwynllyw.

Newport's Education Department report that today 22,813 pupils in the county are learning Welsh as a second language (at primary and secondary level), and 387 as a first language. According to a former head teacher from Newport, these figures represent a 1,000 per cent increase compared with the 1980s.

Not only that, it is a delight to see the visible presence of Welsh in all local schools. Signs direct visitors to the offices of the 'Prifathro', or the 'Yysgrifenyddes'. All classes greeted with a "Bore da, blant", will respond immediately. The Gaer School is liberally festooned with Welsh words for the seasons, animals, and the names of heroes. Half the children in Pillgwenlly School cup their hands in the Muslim tradition when praying; half join them in the Christian fashion. But they are saying the same prayers and some are in Welsh. Our Gwent children's link with their inheritance, shamefully broken by a dullard Philistine generation, has now been restored.

A living legacy of the 1988 Eisteddfod is the Choir, renamed the Newport Philharmonic Choir. For 17 years they have been Gwent's largest and most gifted choral institution presenting at least two top quality concerts a year.

The process of devolution in civil and sporting life has almost completely buried the schizophrenic confusion of mixed loyalties of the past. Newport and all of Gwent are now unquestionably Welsh. Elevating the issue beyond narrow party confines has eased acceptance. The ghettoisation that threatened throughout most of the last century has faded. Proof of the wide acceptance of Welsh is that Gwent's only elected Conservative AM – David Davies in Monmouth – has learnt Welsh as an adult, and that the first elected Plaid Cymru councillor in Newport is a Muslim. The sting of resentment against bilingualism has been drawn. Newport business and sporting teams have willingly adopted policies that go far beyond token bilingualism.



Paul Flynn being enrobed as a bard of the White Robe at the Mold Eisteddfod, 1989.

For only the third time in 110 years, this August Newport will be the capital of Welsh-speaking Wales when the national Eisteddfod is celebrated at Tredegar House, a site unrivalled by any other in Wales. The welcome will be the most authentic for centuries, with a record numbers of Welsh-speaking Newportonians. We are proud of the unparalleled success of the 1988 Eisteddfod. Now there is a new pride in our status as Wales's newest city and a new confidence in our ability to be welcoming host to the National Festival.

It is a great chance for the city to flaunt its robust, exuberant and intriguing personality. As the sunset industries fade, the town is luminous with high tech enterprises. The self belief of Newport is brazenly rampant in the massive, magnificent world class, Celtic Manor Resort. It bestrides one of the gentle hills that overlook the still remarkably beautiful Gwent fenland and tundra.

Part of the view from the splendid Ridgeway is an engineering treasure – the lovingly restored Transporter Bridge. It glides magically across the world's second highest rise tide. There is a bold plan to celebrate the twice daily

inundation with a statue of a goddess that would be covered and revealed each day by the changing tide.

After a heart-stopping decade of change, Newport has hit the ground thinking. It's inspiration is in its diversity. From an overgrown village in the eighteenth century it has grown with continuous flows of immigration, from Ireland, England, the Horn of Africa, the West Indies, Eastern Europe and Asia.

Eisteddfod week will rejoice in the ancient and the new. Still visible in a hill looking down on the Eisteddfod Maes are the ruins of Gwern y Cleppa. There Dafydd ap Gwilym sang the praises of his patron Ifor Hael in the fourteenth century. "As long as the Welsh language continues your praise will be sung", Dafydd assured Ifor. This August, against the background of a bewildering materialistic and violent world, our small nation will again bestow its greatest honour to a poet skilled in the art of Dafydd ap Gwilym.

- Paul Flynn is Labour MP for Newport West.

cymuned versus cymdeithas

carwyn fowler argues that it is time for factions within the language movement to collaborate



The politics of the Welsh language hit an intellectual low during early 2004. Writing in Welsh language weekly paper *Yr Herald* (28 February), novelist and Cymdeithas yr Iaith campaigner Angharad Tomos highlighted a decline in the activities of the Cymuned pressure group. It suffices to say that Tomos's article was a highly personalised attack on Cymuned spokesperson Simon Brooks, and highly sarcastic in tone. Brooks' response was coded but more insidious: a damning criticism, in the literary columns of *Barn* (No. 495), of a recent edited volume of Angharad Tomos's collected essays. The episode demonstrates the acute lack of self-confidence pervading within the Welsh language movement.

Recent talk of Cymuned's decline is a far cry from 2001. Cymuned's first public meeting drew around 500

people to a village hall in the tiny village of Mynytho, Gwynedd. Writing in the Cymuned newsletter, *Gwreiddiau*, Simon Brooks described Cymuned's formative meetings as 'revivalist' in feeling. Within just a few short months, the new movement had become flavour of the month with the Welsh media. It sent lobby delegations to the National Assembly committees on culture and housing.

Cymuned's most audacious media event was to present evidence at the United Nations in Geneva, thus making explicit in Wales the link between minority languages and international law. With a sophisticated array of policy documents and discussion papers on-line, Cymuned effectively dragged Welsh nationalist communications into the 21st century. In 2003, the *Rough Guide to Wales* enthused that "Cymuned is slick, modern and thoughtful, and could well prove to be the intellectual driving force for Welsh nationalism".

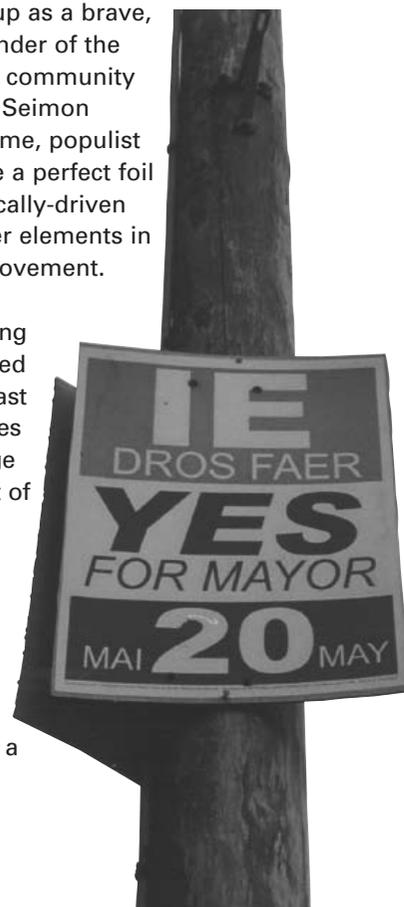
However, the most current event in the *digwyddiadur* (events) section of Cymuned's website (www.cymuned.org) at the time of writing is a Christmas Gig in Pontrydyfendigaid on 12 December 2003, featuring Tecwyn Ifan and his Band. The advertisement states that the bar will stay open till late, although we may assume that the beer will now be somewhat flat for the tastes of most *Agenda* readers.

What factors account for the recent decline of Cymuned's public profile? Writing in the Cymuned newsletter Simon Brooks talks of an a lack of political motivation and an inherent apathy among Welsh speakers in rural Wales. Certainly, it is true that declining participation is a fact of life in electoral politics across western Europe.

However, European public engagement with pressure groups of all kinds is at an all-time high. There is no particular reason, given the historic strengths of Welsh nationalist activism – not least the existence of a politically socialised Welsh-speaking student population – to suggest that Cymuned should be particularly vulnerable to apathy.

Instead, we should look at the ideological trajectory, or 'pitch' of Cymuned. It was ostensibly formed as a response to, and in support of, Gwynedd councillor Seimon Glyn, vilified by Welsh Labour and isolated within Plaid Cymru for his outspoken public comments on English newcomers to Wales. Yet there was an arbitrary feel to Cymuned's strategy, even at this early stage. When the occasion suited, the movement sought to portray Councillor Glyn as a misquoted, misinterpreted victim of the Cardiff media. On other occasions, Glyn was built up as a brave, outspoken defender of the Welsh-speaking community life. Either way, Seimon Glyn's down-home, populist rhetoric became a perfect foil for the ideologically-driven agenda of newer elements in the language movement.

Over the following months, Cymuned introduced at least three dichotomies into the language debate. The first of these was a resurrection of the age-old classification of 'ethnic' and 'civic' nationalists, an attempt to drive a



wedge between sections of Plaid Cymru's Welsh-speaking supporters. This was highlighted by Brooks in Barn (No. 463). A second, linguistic separation was drawn between 'Welsh-speaking' and 'English-speaking' ethno-linguistic groups, as if these were perpetually fixed entities. A third, spatial division occurred in Cymuned's proposed division of Wales into linguistically-contiguous areas, including the creation of a 'Welsh heartlands authority' to co-ordinate a range of government functions across predominantly Welsh-speaking counties. This proposal was made in Cymuned's submission to the Richard Commission.

Along with these divisions came a new vocabulary. Terms such as *coloneiddio* ('colonisation'), *prïod iaith* ('rightful language') and *cymhathu* ('assimilation') became the new *lingua franca* of the 2001 language campaign. Cymuned effectively sought to divorce the language issue from the nation-building project by reviving Saunders Lewis's message that 'language is more important than self-government' in his 1962 BBC lecture, *Tynged yr iaith* (Fate of the Language).

Leaving aside the theoretical strengths or weaknesses of Cymuned's ideology, the main, practical point to be made here is that highly complex issues, such as housing and demographic change in Wales, cannot be won without the broadest possible base of political support. Cymuned's idiosyncratic, jargon-laden imprecations were never likely to gain the hearts and minds of the nationalist movement, or even a majority of Welsh speakers, let alone a majority of Welsh people. In fact, Cymuned's stance has merely served to develop an entrenched divide on a right-left ideological axis, between Cymuned on the one hand and Cymdeithas yr Iaith on the other – with Cymdeithas being supported by members of Plaid Cymru's 'Triban Coch' socialist faction.

This divide has been played out in the recent electoral politics of Ceredigion. This episode calls into question the current

purpose and political future of the Cymuned pressure group. Cymuned members formed the nucleus of the Llais y Cardi campaign for a mayor for Ceredigion, on the grounds that a nationalist mayor might overturn proposed housing developments in the county.

Plaid Cymru and Cymdeithas yr Iaith opposed the mayoral plan which was rejected by 72 per cent of those who voted in a referendum on 10 May 2004. The death-knell for this embryonic group occurred in the following local elections on 10 June 10, when the Llais Ceredigion political party – a development arising from Llais y Cardi – fought five seats but failed to make any impression against local Independent candidates. In the Llanrhystud ward, for instance, Llais Ceredigion picked up a humiliating 15 votes.



Angharad Tomos – 'personalised attack on Cymuned's Simon Brooks'.

Cymuned activists will need to take stock in order to move forward. They should bear in mind that over the past 40 years, the Welsh language movement has proved to be one of western Europe's most successful minority language lobbies. At times, it has been helped by the accommodative 'union state' approach of the UK state and the sympathetic approach of government ministers such as James Griffiths and Wyn Roberts.

However, since 1997 the language lobby has struggled to make headway against a 'new' Labour government machine which has retained a distinctly 'old Marxist' attitude towards linguistic diversity in post-devolution Wales. Nevertheless, Carwyn Jones's recent IWA pamphlet *The Future of Welsh Labour* suggests a possible change of tack among progressive Labour members towards language issues and represents a possible opening for fresh dialogue.

In order to take advantage of such openings, the Welsh language movement requires a reconfiguration. The potential for a new movement is clear, given the various strengths of what has gone before in the development of a Welsh speaking civic society. Imagine a combination of the following: the presentational savvy of Cymuned; the technical expertise of the Welsh Language Board; the legal expertise of Cefn; the detailed policy analysis of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg; and the all-Wales geographical scope of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and Urdd Gobaith Cymru.

If these qualities were brought together, then one could begin to envisage a 'one-stop-shop' of resources to forward the provision of Welsh in the private sector and among prospective Welsh learners. This could combine an information network for the Welsh political village with a 24/7 lobby group having a strong presence in Cardiff Bay. Its membership would be broad-based – encompassing the cities and valleys of south Wales. Elected politicians would ignore or scorn it at their peril.

- Carwyn Fowler is a Research Assistant at the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Wales Aberystwyth.

books 'r us



peter finch charts how Welsh in English has progressed from being a parochial joke to a mainstream preoccupation

How many of you can name the contenders for Book of the Year?" asked Rosemary Butler, Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee, in a voice halfway between Ann Widdecombe and Clarissa Dickson Wright. I stuck my hand up. It was the only one. "Well done, sir." She smiled indulgently, forgetting for a moment that I was actually the organiser of that award. Clearly, there was work still to be done.

This was the launch for the Culture Committee's timely report into the future of Welsh Writing in English. Welsh writing in Welsh was running ahead like Colin Jackson. Politically correct, supported, subsidised, and often culturally magnificent, that Welsh corner had been rounded. Now it was the turn of the 80 per cent in Wales whose first language was English. Rumour had it that a leading AM had gone into a local bookstore searching for *Rhondda Roundabout* as a cultural gift for a visitor and had been told that Jack Jones hadn't been in print for decades. No interest. No demand. Something had to change.

We were in a first floor Assembly committee room in the building known in our colonial days as Crickhowell House. Outside was a wall of the Millennium Centre's brutalist red brick and the still-shrouded new premises for Academi – the Welsh National Literature Promotion Agency. This was the new world where art was going to mean something. Wales was no longer to be miners, steelworkers, men with hard hands and women with bent backs. Instead we were now parts assemblers, call-centre workers, financial advisers, retail managers, milk marketeers, media women, advertising men. Not only that, we were consumers of culture and readers of books. We needed to give them choice.

The push to examine Welsh writing in English – an awkwardly-titled branch of literature, if there ever was one – had begun with a presentation made to an earlier, pre-election version of the Culture Committee by our leading critic and literary powerhouse, Professor M. Wynn Thomas. Wynn had argued that Wales has two cultures, not one, and that they wound around each other in an interdependent relationship that many were either ignorant of or chose to ignore.

Evidence accumulated. The post-election Culture Committee cast their net wide: librarians, authors, publishers, distributors, dramatists, academics, and even the occasional independent bookseller (although significantly no one from the chain stores) were quizzed. All freely gave their opinions on the health and status of what was once known, in the glorious and politically incorrect 1970s and 1980s, as Anglo-Welsh Literature. It became apparent that something of considerable value was on the verge of slipping through our hands.

For decades it had been assumed that a shrinking Welsh language and its attendant culture needed all the assistance we could throw at it. Do this to the exclusion of work in English. Put Welsh first: protect; nurture. Do this or death may follow. The Welsh Books Council in Aberystwyth carried much of the burden. It took forty years of hard-focused effort to change Welsh publishing from the preserve of the amateur hobbyist to something approaching professional.

Meanwhile, the Anglos lingered. Books in English about Welsh cookery, sport, railways, castles, ship wrecks, mountains, pathways, churches, and occasionally even politics, all sold

tolerably well. But fiction and, breathe the word quietly, poetry, stuttered and staggered. Unless you were Dylan Thomas or Richard Llewelyn then the bookstores either didn't stock you or hid your books among the histories of the town in old photographs, the tide-tables and the monographs about the local rugby club. Have Welsh subject matter in your novel and the London publishers would ignore you. Being Welsh was a parochial joke. Shakespeare thought this and his view still held sway. Anglo-Welsh authors of Welsh-based pot boilers were forced to relocate their fictions in Ireland, changing Rhiannon and Myfanwy to Oona and Maighr ad just to get the works out.

However, the failure of Britishness, the advent of the Assembly and the rise of Welsh awareness has changed all that. A new generation of novelists and poets, all of whom give their work a distinctly Welsh perspective, are now being published by mainstream commercial presses based in England. John Williams, Gillian Clarke, Anna Davis, Malcolm Pryce, Trezza Azzopardi, Robert Minhinnick, Des Barry, Sean Burke, and others fly the flag. However, look around in Wales for support mechanisms for this burgeoning new literature and you won't find much.

The historical context is mostly out of print. Jack Jones, Glyn Jones, Gwyn Jones, Lewis Jones, Margiad Evans, John Tripp, Caradoc Evans are all hard to find. Welsh-based English-language publishers (including Welsh language publishers with an English list) such as Seren, Parthian and Gomer are all under-funded and are regarded as slow-selling local nuisances by many shops. Welsh-writing in English's perennial identity problem has allowed libraries to lose the stock among the vast reaches of their standard English and American holdings. Our newspapers regularly fail to spot the Welsh connection and give prime space to coverage of English titles because that's what they assume their

readers want. There are 80 per cent first-language English in the south east of Wales. Most of them who have not yet upgraded to digital have their aerials still pointed at the Mendip Hills.

It's always been assumed that English-language writers in Wales have access to the huge English-language market next door and, therefore, do not need



Robert Minhinnick, Editor of Poetry Wales, breaching the dam of the mainstream commercial press in England.

the nurturing subsidy their Welsh-language counterparts enjoy. What is forgotten, of course, is that not only is the English-based market massively competitive in a way pretty much outside Welsh experience (£500 for an article in a London national, £20 in the Western Mail if you are lucky) but it has little regular need for a Welsh angle on things. Paradoxically, this is part of the fall-out from devolution – we do things our thing, they do theirs. England is a radio station broadcasting to the world at a nuclear-powered 2000 megawatts. Wales has a hand-cranked machine doing two-and-a-half.

If we want to keep our writers then we need to professionalize them – respect them, offer them opportunities, pay them a living wage. When they are working in schools or giving promotional readings at festivals or in clubs and pubs Welsh writers regularly get paid less than their English counterparts. Rates offered by the Academi, the national literature promotion agency, are the same as they were when the Welsh Arts Council ran the service directly in the early nineties. Read in Wales and you'll get £60 to £100. Slip over the border and that fee will more than double. The Academi's bursaries fund – which enables authors to take time out from regular employment in order to complete a novel or a set of poems – is pretty much the same size as it was in 1995. £100,000 is shared between thirty or so writers. It doesn't go far. In the present year panel chair Simon Mundy identified at least £300,000 worth of valid, exciting and thoroughly supportable applicants. There were a lot of disappointments. And do authors get paid for the books they do publish? Yes, sometimes, but slowly, and always not enough.

That the Assembly should be even looking at the subject is good news. In earlier times, when much of south Wales imagined they were living in a west country shire, Dannie Abse took an anthology of Anglo-Welsh poetry he'd edited to an American publisher and was told that they couldn't see what made the set distinctive. Like the language itself as it approaches the border, our literature had become thin, pale and forgetful. Twenty-five years on it's a different world.

In the way that our Assembly does things the Culture Committee makes proposals and then the Government responds. By some sleight of hand the Minister manages to both sit on the committee and be part of the government. The committee has made a number of recommendations, almost all valid:



At a glittering ceremony in Cardiff's Hilton Hotel in June, First Minister Rhodri Morgan hands First Prize in the Academi Book of the Year competition to Niall Griffiths for his novel *Stump*.

- Ask the key players to emphasise the importance of Welsh writing in English.
- Increase grant aid to the publishers.
- Improve marketing.
- Bring back into print classic Anglo-Welsh texts.
- Demand greater prominence for Welsh writing in English at our libraries, our bookstores and in our newspapers.
- Enhance the Book of the Year Award.
- Increase support to the Academi's Writers on Tour scheme.
- Ask our tourism agencies to further feature our writers.

These are worthy, useful, some particularly helpful, and all deliverable at a fraction of the subsidy made to some other art forms. In his response Culture Minister Alan Pugh, said he agreed and allocated an extra £250,000 in the current financial year. Though a drop in the ocean, it was a start. The money will go to support the publishers' infrastructure and to establish a "Library of Wales for classic

works". Professor Dai Smith, Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Glamorgan, has been appointed to advise on selection. But was there anything immediate and tangible for living writers? Was there more Writers on Tour money or a move to increase royalties and other payments?

Don't let's get this out of proportion. Any new money directed at English language writing in Wales is extremely desirable. In principle both the Welsh Classics idea and the move to help publishers with their infrastructure (appointing editors, improving marketing, engaging in commissioning new works of popular appeal) are extremely welcome. With infrastructure improved more desirable books will be produced, more sold, more read. This is a corner-stone of the Welsh Books Council's philosophy for the running of our book-trade and one with which most in the business wholeheartedly agree. However, the Assembly Government's measures by no means go far enough. In particular the

decision to lead on the bringing back into print of works from the past at the obvious expense of writers working in the present is a poorly judged priority. Meeting in Llangollen recently, at the Arts Council's annual conference, representatives of the literature sector unanimously agreed that sets of uniformly printed classics, donated free to libraries up and down the country, were not the first place to which resources should be directed. Free gifts are often undervalued. Sets of the Dent *Everyman Classics* donated to schools right across the UK often remain pristine on their shelves, undisturbed by the hands of readers, grubby or otherwise.

There is a sense in this of *deja vu*. In an earlier version of this plan classics reprinted in the 1970s can still be found unsold in storerooms. Boxes of the celebrated 1990s literary tourism map sit next to them. Many of our better authors spend stretches of their time teaching, working for the broadcast media or leaving Wales simply to keep the wolf from the door. They did this in the 1960s and 1970s as well. What we should be doing is finding ways of keeping them, making it worth their while to be Welsh writers in English. As in Ireland we could give them tax breaks, and make the awards we pass their way big enough to matter. We should point forward. We should revive the past once the present has been managed. In terms of the whole culture budget it wouldn't take much.

- Peter Finch is Chief Executive of the Academi.

roland mathias

sam adams profiles a man whose literary achievement is being marked by a writing prize in his name

a native of Breconshire and now in his eighty-eighth year, Roland Mathias is among the foremost men of letters to emerge in Wales in the twentieth century. He can look back on major accomplishments as poet, short story writer, historian, literary critic and editor. Now a new literary prize in his name is being established for published works in the fields of poetry, the short story, literary criticism and Welsh history. Unlike other awards, it will be based not in Cardiff but in Brecon, under the auspices of the Brecknock Society.

That for much of his life writing went on alongside a successful career as teacher and headmaster, and active involvement in numerous community, educational and arts organisations, is testimony to his extraordinary intellectual and physical energy. Visiting lectureships at the universities of Rennes and Brest in Brittany and Alabama in the USA, are indications of the spread of his reputation. In 1985 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

In 1968 Roland Mathias received a Welsh Arts Council award for services to writing in Wales. This reflected both his personal achievements as a writer and his unstinting labour on the *Anglo-Welsh Review*, a showcase of Welsh writing in English, which he edited with flair and devotion from 1961 until 1976. In addition he has twice won the Council's poetry prize, for *Absalom in the Tree* (1972) and *Snipe's Castle* (1980). His familiarity with the history and topography of Breconshire is revealed in the titles and contents of many of his poems, from the early 'On Newport Reservoir' (that is, the reservoir at Talybont-on-Usk) to the wonderful 'Brechfa Chapel' and 'Jazz

Festival', late poems which appear in his last book, *A Field at Vallorcines* (1996).

While he sees himself primarily as a poet, Roland is a formidable exponent of the short story. Much of his work in the genre was collected in *The Eleven Men of Eppynt and other stories* (1956). However, having discovered in it a way of approaching the complexities and tensions rooted in relationships and family history, he continued publishing stories into the 1970s.

Trained as a historian (he took a First in history at Oxford), he has a remarkable relish for research. He chose to concentrate upon aspects of Welsh history and has written authoritatively on the shifting linguistic boundaries in Wales and the development of English as a literary language, on Welsh involvement in the Civil War and, in *Whitsun Riot* (1963), a splendid exercise in historical detection, on Catholic recusancy in the ancient border zone of Archenfield.

It is not surprising that as a literary critic he should have been drawn to another Breconshire poet, Henry Vaughan. His expertise in this field is very extensive however. Among the writers whose work has been illuminated by the power of his scrutiny are Alun Lewis, Vernon Watkins, David Jones, John Cowper Powys, Emyr Humphreys, Dannie Abse, R. S. Thomas and Dylan Thomas.

Roland Mathias was born and spent his early years at the home of his maternal grandparents near Talybont-on-Usk. Although his education at Caterham School, Surrey, and Jesus College, Oxford, and much of his subsequent career in education meant he was long resident in England, he maintained a



Roland Mathias – among the foremost men of letters to emerge in twentieth century Wales.

connection with the county. His parents settled in Brecon in 1940, on the retirement of his father, who had been a long-serving Army chaplain. The writer became a frequent visitor, in due course bringing his wife and children with him. When, in turn, he resigned the headship of a Birmingham grammar school and retired to devote himself to writing full time, it was to Brecon that he and Molly came. The intense and vigorous interest both brought to community and cultural affairs, not least in connection with The Plough, the congregational chapel they attended, ensured they were well known in the town.

Roland Mathias's choice of subjects as a creative writer and as a critic illustrates his commitment to Wales and his confidence in the quality of Welsh writing in English, for which he has always been the staunchest apologist. It is entirely consistent with this view that he has now decided to set up a fund that will provide a prize to be awarded biennially for a published work in one or other of those fields in which he himself engaged as a writer: poetry, the short story, literary criticism, history. The prize fund is to be administered under the auspices of the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends, with which Roland has long been associated.

- *Sam Adams is a poet, literary critic and editor of Roland Mathias' collected poems, published by University of Wales Press in 2002. The Roland Mathias Prize is open to works written in English and relevant to Wales and Welsh culture, by authors who are Welsh born or are currently resident in Wales. The £2000 inaugural prize, for a book published in the calendar year 2004, will be awarded in March 2005. Publishers are invited to submit volumes for consideration as soon as possible, but no later than 21 December 2004.*

word power

gillian clarke explains why writers and poets need more than a sense of place

Ty Newydd has taken over David Lloyd George's last home at Llanystumdwy in Gwynedd.

Ty Newydd, David Lloyd George's last home, in Llanystumdwy in Gwynedd, is now the house the poets, novelists and playwrights of Wales call their own. It's hard to believe that fifteen years ago there was considerable opposition to its establishment in some literary circles. Why, the argument went, would we need a building dedicated to literature? A writer needs nothing more than a pen and a room of her own. And readers read, unprompted, don't they?

Critics of the plan saw the point of subsidy for literary magazines, publishing houses, a warehouse to store books, a bookshop to sell them, publicity, promotion and prizes. A writers' house was a notion too difficult

to accept. Yet a missing link in the support for literature was education. Nobody was fostering literary talent, or teaching people to be better writers, or better readers. Writers were not passing their knowledge on to the young.

Some said, you can't teach people to be writers. Well, no, you can't, but you can encourage, nurture talent, foster a love of reading, and give people chances they might otherwise have missed. You can teach people to write a diary, keep a notebook, to carry poetry in the pocket or the head. You can change people's lives. In fourteen years Ty Newydd has done all these things and more for many, many people.

I recall when, not so many years ago, teachers and academics sniffed and declared Welsh writers were not up to scratch for serious study. This is in a nation whose national art is poetry, the nation which produced R.S. and Dylan Thomas, to name just the very famous; a nation with two languages and world class poets in both tongues. In the face of such indifference, without education and the passion that writers themselves are so good at passing on to readers and the writers of the future, all the subsidy might have mouldered quietly with unsold books in that warehouse.

There was, of course, the excellent Writers on Tour scheme, to this day the envy of England, and currently

administered by the Academi. But the scheme depends on public demand, the imaginative teacher, the passionate bookworm, the diligent organiser. Such events are a chance for the audience to hear the poet, not for the poet to listen to the audience. Something else was needed. Most successful writers speak of that one, inspiring English teacher who made all the difference. Many, many other people have no such experience, never discover the life-enhancing, transforming power of the word.

In 1989 I approached the Literature Committee of the Welsh Arts Council with an idea new to Wales: a house for writers. I had tutored over 50 courses for the Arvon Foundation which at the time ran two such houses for writing in England. At the end of the 1970s I had been invited to tutor my first Arvon course by Ted Hughes, himself an ardent supporter of the idea that young

or inexperienced writers, or those who had missed a good literary education at school, could learn from the professional writers of the day. No more than sixteen students would live and work, eat and mingle informally for a working week with two published writers. There would be two kinds of course: the open course, advertised in a brochure and open to all, and the closed course, for schools, colleges and other groups. There would be courses on poetry, fiction and drama.

That first course, and the others I experienced at the Arvon Foundation in succeeding years, swept all my doubts away. Over the years there have been so many magic moments that I now regard them as normal on such courses. Week after week tutor-writers report small miracles and transforming experiences. I recall the boy who had never tasted real orange juice before, or had a story read to him, who, by the

end of the week, was avidly reading Ted Hughes; the widow with years of a brutal marriage behind her, and an impoverished childhood before that, who turned to autobiography, and wrote like an angel in the safe house and the encouraging company of her fellow students.

Many came because they were lonely, or because long ago they had loved poetry in school, or they thought they had a novel in them. They returned again and again because the experience turned them into lovers of literature. This couldn't happen in some borrowed corner, a hotel, a conference centre, where shifting conditions, strangers and unpredictable surroundings would attract neither tutor nor student.

It is fourteen years too since the first course at Ty Newydd, which I tutored with Robert Minhinnick at the newly



Study session in Lloyd George's old library in Ty Newydd designed by Clough Williams-Ellis – known as the whispering room, because a whisper in one corner travels across the curved ceiling to the opposite side.

opened house. Sally Baker, Director and presiding brain and imagination behind the continuing and ever broadening venture, Elis Gwyn Jones, I and a few others, painted, put up shelves, scrubbed, shopped, made beds, and prepared the house for that first course. The hand-picked students were urged into signing up. All of them returned, most of them many times.

Since then, fourteen years of teenagers taking the stairs two at a time have shaken the ceilings and cracked the plaster in Lloyd George's sitting room. The beds, showers, and the ancient Aga, are all wearing out. A Grade Two listed building, the original seventeenth century farmhouse that looked south towards the sea is still visible in the rear of the ground floor. That humble original farmhouse was considerably extended to a rather grand house in 1750, with rooms on three floors, and a new stone frontage looking north down a long drive. The last time the house underwent a major building programme was in 1939, when Clough Williams Ellis extended the house, created the upstairs sitting room and designed the rear porch and the garden for Lloyd George. After so many developments it is a rambling building on many levels, and it does not meet twenty first century needs. It is difficult for the disabled, the elderly, those who need a single room, and impossible for a wheelchair.

Several years ago the Ty Newydd Trust applied for a Lottery grant, and were confronted by absurd hurdles, some erected by London, some by Wales itself. One was customer numbers. It took a lot of argument to convince the number-crunchers that 16 people a week receiving hours of teaching and personal attention for upwards of 30 weeks a year was an awful lot of happy customers. They didn't drift through a gallery and buy a postcard. They listened, read, wrote and discussed literature for four days and five nights, and became the audience for literature. The Arvon Foundation got all its grants through without a hitch while Ty Newydd languished. At last, however, it



Gillian Clarke takes the stage.

has been granted what the three similar writers' houses in England and one in Scotland received several years ago.

With architects' plans approved, the Lottery grant in place, partnership funding all but in the bank, and final fund-raising in full swing, it was planned to close Ty Newydd in the autumn of 2004 for nine months for Phase One of planned building works to be carried out. The funds will pay for the purchase of the house – leased for the past 15 years – its repair and refurbishment, will make it fit for the disabled and bring it up to scratch for new generations of students, more showers, more single rooms, and new accommodation for the writers who tutor them. Then, last minute funding delays caused further anxiety and threatened to finish Ty Newydd. With no tutoring programme planned for the summer and autumn of 2004, and no income-generating courses, the building work had to be postponed because of delays in funding decisions that were not of Ty Newydd's making. The unthinkable shadowed Ty Newydd: closure and the end of the dream seemed possible.

Writers sprang to the rescue. This summer's 2004 programme takes place

because of the generosity of poets, novelists and dramatists. It began with a spontaneous offer by the novelist Jan Mark, and soon writers from Wales, England and America offered their services, and to donate their fees to the Ty Newydd fund. Among those who will tutor or read at Ty Newydd this summer are David Constantine, Mark Haddon, Mick Gowan, Menna Elfyn, Emyr Lewis, Adrian Mitchell, Janice Moore Fuller, Twm Morys, Philip Pullman, Owen Sheers, Barry Simner and Nick Warburton.

The tutor-writers are professional, published, and are the very best of Welsh and international writers. The students are the young and the old. Ty Newydd is open to everyone who can pay, or who is awarded a bursary from Ty Newydd's own funds or other funding bodies. The secret is small numbers and personal attention from the very best of writers. The result is true literacy, the power of the word given to whoever wants to know it. The builders move in in the spring of 2005, and the house reopens on the first of January 2006. It will be worth the wait.

- Gillian Clarke is a poet and President of the Ty Newydd Writers' Centre.

spaces between



Stefan Rettich says that public art can promote regeneration in neglected urban environments

Urban Drift, a conference held in the disused but culturally resonant Moscow Café on Karl Marx Allee in Berlin in October 2002, impressed me with its energy and sheer variety of approaches. It presented a range of propositions and strategies for the regeneration of the urban built environment and the large brownfield sites of the industrial regions of former East Germany.

Faced with the seismic political and economic shifts the region has seen over the last decade or so, it wasn't difficult to see that such a frenetic approach to positive change was perhaps the only appropriate response. Essentially an annual three day festival with cultural events, nightly parties, performances by the hottest DJ's in town (boosting revenue), Urban Drift is in itself a strong feature in the regeneration and revitalisation of the former East Berlin. Organiser Francesca Ferguson, more recently appointed as Curator for the German Pavilion at this year's Architecture Biennale in Venice, personifies much of the energy and sense of urgency that accompanies the festival atmosphere.

At an *Urban Legacies* Conference in Cardiff in June, Ferguson provided a unique insight into her research for the forthcoming exhibition in Venice. She gave many examples of temporary and speculative interventions in buildings and urban spaces, abandoned and beyond their former use. The projects featured often provided a hotbed for entrepreneurs, encouraging artists, architects and designers to start small businesses or projects with low overheads. But most of all they induced a more imaginative approach to future redevelopment.

Stefan Rettich's contribution to the conference highlighted the effects of

the haemorrhaging of the population of the city of Leipzig in the late 1990s, due to the rapid decline of employment in the heavy industry. Together with other small, young architectural practices Rettich formed the collective L21. They mapped underused and disused spaces and buildings and raised public awareness of the breaking up of the city.

L21 established a small art gallery in an empty shop, and filled this with work borrowed from members of the immediate community. Whilst this proposes a new use for empty premises, more importantly it drew community members together with a common purpose and allowed them to show to the public their treasures. In doing so it revealed the nuances of cultural value within a population.

Their experience found parallels with Adam Caruso of Caruso/St John, who presented his evolutionary approach to the Depot project in Grangetown, Cardiff. To prepare this space for use as a venue for contemporary art projects he proposed no more than a thorough clean up and weatherproofing of the building. This would produce a flexible space that would allow the activities held there to transform it over time.

This approach prioritises audience development over architecture, eschewing expensive upfront refurbishment. It is not a radically new idea. Yet it is one that is still viewed with a deal of scepticism. And it is true that it lacks the high profile of an outstanding new building, traditionally viewed as the iconic attraction and investment magnet. However, you need both the financial clout and reputation for excellence of a Guggenheim Foundation to make that work.

That arts professionals continue to propose ideas with the potential to radically reshape a city, was demonstrated at the Urban Legacies conference by Dutchman Jeroen van Westen. This artist, who trained as a painter and originally produced books and soundscapes, now works on large scale landscaping projects, fundamentally ethical in their nature. He proposed to the City of Rotterdam the full-scale removal of 10 kilometres of raised urban motorway. This was in place of the initial commission to resolve the design of a short section under the flyover, accommodating a rainwater sewer overflow and a bus station.

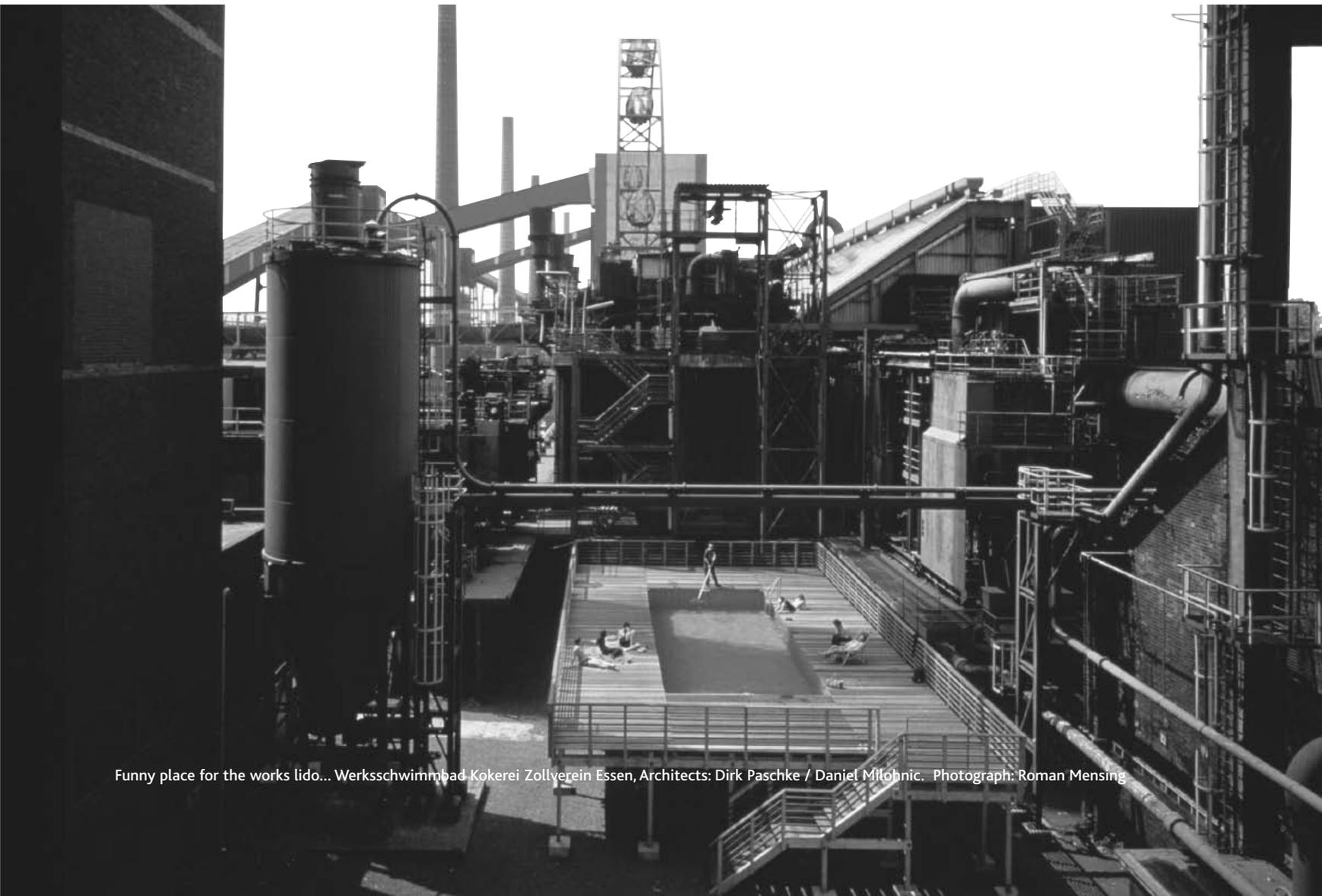
The successful resolution of this led him to an investigation of the informal uses of land sterilised by the road and from this he developed a master plan

for the creation of a new urban district through the removal of the entire stretch of motorway. Retaining as much as possible of the green and informal character of the original area, it would also allow for prestigious developments and would generate sufficient funds through investments, to pay for a reorganisation of the transport infrastructure. The plan was sound and serious enough to be considered for some time by the City and change the approach to consideration of the area.

Similarly the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based artist and architect partnership, Mags Harries and Lajos Héder, tackle problematic projects such as a narrow pedestrian passage between two high rise developments in San Diego. The only

way the waterfront could be approached was on foot (this is the States, nobody walks!). Other projects encouraged communities to participate in ritual discoveries of hidden parts of their city such as *Rolling Down the Charles*, a rediscovery of the Charles River in Arizona. Their design for a small hydro power station created a temple-like space celebrating the flow of water and linking the adjacent community to all the upstream tributaries of their river (see www.harriesheder.com).

Lively debate characterised the Urban Legacies event. For instance, Professor Katherine Moore, Vice President of the Landscape Institute, dismissed the concept of Genus Loci in landscape design as bland, unimaginative and restrictive. Instead, she said we should be looking at



Funny place for the works lido... Werksschwimmbad Kokerei Zollverein Essen, Architects: Dirk Paschke / Daniel Milohnic. Photograph: Roman Mensing



Empty pre-war housing in Leipzig. Photograph: Stefan Rettich.

Ruairí O'Brien's (robarchitects) detailed exploration of a small "milltir sgwar" Dresden. Originally this site housed a factory which produced concrete slabs for the post war prefabricated housing that is still found throughout the city. Rubble left behind following the destructive raids by Bomber Command was used as aggregate. The factory is now demolished but O'Brien has successfully proposed the retention of a small section of the development area as a museum garden, displaying gathered rubble, concrete and other materials found on the site (see www.betonzeitschiene.de).

Lucy Musgrave, co-director of the General Public Agency, presented several public sector projects in areas affected by the Thames Gateway initiative. She and business partner, artist Clair Cumberlidge develop cultural strategies in which they encourage their clients to engage with the "ambient playfulness" of sites, taking their cue from Situationists such as Guy-Ernest Debord and Jan Gel. In their proposals, artists and architects join forces to engage with communities socially and not purely as designers of new spaces and buildings.

Musgrave echoed an earlier presentation by artist Nils Norman on his study of the apparently ad hoc transformation of adventure playgrounds in Germany, contrasting approaches in Britain where he considered fear of litigation and consequently restrictive supervision, to have stifled imaginative proposals (see his volume, *An Architecture of Play: a survey of London's adventure playgrounds*, Four Corners Press).

This perhaps provides the best metaphor for what may be missing in regenerative projects in Wales. In locations such as Llanwern and the former Ebbw Vale steelworks, we should learn to "take pleasure from the sites", to quote Musgrave, and encourage a more playful and curious exploration of ideas, master plans and the commissioning of demolition teams. Above all, we should avoid the wholesale removal of what could provide distinctiveness and continuity.

Musgrave's "WIMBY", describing those that say Welcome In My Back Yard – represents positive engagement with a

process of renewal and change. It understands that securing and maintaining the quality of our environment, whether in its man-made, aesthetic and engineered form, or in its natural state, is a collective responsibility. WIMBY's are not suspicious of change but are willing to partake and so influence the processes associated with positive change.

In a culture of consultation, participation must be meaningful. New initiatives in built environment projects require fresh strategies, unconventional partnerships and more radical models in place of a formulated approach. Artists can make an invaluable contribution to the transformation of post-industrial landscapes and introduce important new approaches. They can redefine the perception of what is urban, injecting new ideas drawn from the cultural and social dimension.

In short artists can invigorate the process of regeneration and energise the search for new solutions. In the revitalisation of our post industrial urban landscape the creative and cultural industries are a major force in economic revival. Not since the Renaissance have the arts played such a major role in the rethinking and shaping of our cities.

- *Wiard Sterk is Director of CBAT The Arts and Regeneration Agency. Details of the Depot Project are available from Yvette Vaughan Jones, Director Cardiff 2005, Cardiff County Council, County Hall, Cardiff. Jeroen van Westen's Breathing in; Time out, a CBAT commissioned project for Cardiff County Council and co-sponsored by Tesco, was completed at the Lamby Way landfill in June and can be found through www.breathing-in.org*



richard's radical recipe



richard rawlings finds the richard commission went for the radical option on all the key choices it faced

In presenting its case for a legislative Assembly the Richard Commission has sent a powerful message. It was an independent review. The Commission had a broadly based membership. There was a voluminous evidence base. A strong internal logic infused the recommendations. And all ten commissioners signed the report.

In the long view of constitutional development the report will be seen as heralding a new dawn. Once its recommendations are implemented Wales will be authoritatively recognised as one of the four countries of the Union to the extent of having a tolerably robust and stable devolution settlement. Of course, these things do not happen overnight.

The way the Commission set about developing its recommendations on the basis of an agreed vision of the role of the Assembly is an important feature. It is in sharp contrast with the overly pragmatic and piecemeal approach of the past internal Labour Party compromises that were a recipe for muddle and confusion and for popular incomprehension. As the Richard Commission report declares (page 241):

"The Assembly is the democratically elected representative body for the whole of Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government should be able to formulate policies within clearly defined fields and should have the power to implement all the stages for effective delivery, in partnership

with the UK Government and other stakeholders. The Assembly Government should be able to set its own priorities and timetables for action. It should be accountable to the people of Wales through the elected Assembly for its policies and their implementation."

The striking feature is just how unremarkable this is from the viewpoint of comparative constitutional development. It is about bringing Wales into the mainstream – finally allowing England's first colony to join the great family of state and sub-state parliamentary systems across Europe and around the common law globe.

The clues to a generous scheme of legislative devolution jostle for attention in this passage. That is: *'within clearly defined fields'*, rather than a jigsaw of powers; *'all the stages'*, not the horizontal division of functions; *'in partnership'*, for which read especially the well-known Sewel convention; *'own priorities and timetables'*, not the Westminster bottleneck; and *'accountable'*, as in formally separate legislative and executive branches.

The Commission's terms of reference directed it to take a very practical focus. This was understandable since to make an impact its recommendations had to be grounded in fact, as well as being workable and realistic. Predictably however, given the inchoate nature of much in the so-called devolution settlement, the pervasive sense of the report is the more the Commission looked the more



it was driven to invoke such constitutional values as accountability and intelligibility, transparency and citizen participation. As a result the report cuts a broad swathe through the official evidence, which was determinedly about nuts and bolts questions.

Accountability is the golden thread of its findings. The evident need is for strong and effective forms of scrutiny reflecting the diversity of party politics in Wales. In this sense the wheel has come full circle. According to the 1997 devolution White Paper *A Voice for Wales*, the Assembly was justified on the basis of a democratic deficit or experience of the Conservatives' local 'quango-state'. Accountability is now seen to be unfinished business in Welsh devolution, not only in terms of current workings but also as a driver for, and essential design feature of, a legislative assembly.

Take for example the attempt by the Secretary of State for Wales to visit on Richard a 'practical delivery benchmark test' or assessment of individual recommendations for their contribution to particular domains like health care or education. Tasked to consider the framework of Welsh government and not substantive policies, the Commission quite properly avoided this, working instead on the pleasing constitutional assumptions that gains in democracy and accountability are valuable in themselves. Moreover, the report declares (page 241) that more open, participative and responsive governance is likely to produce better policy outcomes.

Richard had also to reflect on the big constitutional story of the Assembly's first term, the rapid emergence of 'a virtual parliament' or development inside the formal legal shell of the corporate body of two sides of the 'House'. The obvious next step is to move beyond cosmetics and adopt the standard parliamentary structure of a formally separate executive drawn from the Assembly. As the report has it (page 258):

"On grounds of accountability and clarity, there is a strong case for changing the Assembly's legal structure with the powers it has. With enhanced powers, the case is indisputable."

Then there are the day-to-day workings of governmental accountability inside the Assembly. Rightly, the contribution here of the all-party subject committees, the proverbial jewel in the crown of the original architectural design, was roundly criticised:

- Sessions were not sufficiently rigorous or challenging.
- There was insufficient opportunity to probe key issues
- The Assembly is too consensual for effective scrutiny.

Simply put, it is all too cosy. Ministerial membership, which "suppresses the development of a scrutiny culture... and obscures the lines of accountability" (page 258), should no longer be prescribed in the devolution statute. As for Wales and Westminster:

"... the fundamental problem is one of split accountability – proposals are initiated in one representative body and scrutinised and adopted in another" (page 180).

The arrangements for joint working actively promoted by the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, and what is now the Assembly Parliamentary Service, can help (Procedure Committee, *Joint activities with the National Assembly for Wales, 2003-04*). However, Richard understood that constitutionally-speaking this is only a palliative.

In making substantive recommendations, the Commission faced up to the good and the bad of the existing arrangements, as well as the ugly. Courtesy of the framework for organic change that is the Government of Wales Act 1998, there has been a rapid building up of a governmental apparatus worthy of a form of national devolution. There have also been some major experiments in

policy difference and distinctive laws and methods of implementation. At the same time there have been such basic sources of instability as the growing demand for, and restricted supply of, distinctive forms of primary legislation affecting Wales. There has also been the huge spectre in executive devolution of political 'cohabitation'. To which could be added the spottiness of the Assembly's powers, bewildering to all but a select few.

Perhaps not surprisingly, when launching the report in Cardiff at the end of March Lord Richard accentuated the positive aspects. As he put it:

"It is precisely the success of the Assembly and the Welsh Assembly Government in establishing itself as the government of Wales in key public policy areas that creates the pressure for change."

Yet elsewhere, for example speaking at the IWA's Cardiff conference on his report in April, he castigated the existing arrangements as "grotesque" and "a lawyers' nightmare". Notably, all sides in the local political process can find something in the report with which to identify.

Key to an understanding of the recommendations on powers is that three times Richard plumped for the most radical option. Rejecting the status quo – involving ad hoc, piecemeal development – as unsustainable was the easy bit. To quote Lord Richard, "The Assembly is very rapidly outgrowing the existing structure."

Again, a model of framework legislative powers or the stretching of existing arrangements via an agreed application of the 'Rawlings principles', adopted by the *Assembly Review of Procedure: Final Report* (February 2002) and standing for greater consistency and generosity in the allocation of devolved functions, offered no clear permanent solution. As for the appropriate constitutional way forward, the succinct explanation given by Lord



The Assembly in Plenary Session – searching for a stable devolution settlement.

Richard speaks volumes. As he told the Press Conference to launch the report, “A legislative assembly is the most logical and straightforward way to enable the Assembly and its government to do the job it has been elected to do.”

Turning to the general scope of the primary powers, the choice boiled down to a tripartite model of reserved powers; devolved powers; and an intermediate and temporary category of retained powers where the Assembly could legislate but only with London’s consent, and a dual model of reserved and devolved powers. In effect, this was a choice between two options:

- A phased programme of empowerment, one that incorporating comparative lessons from Northern Ireland would echo the strong evolutionary element in Welsh devolution; or
- A more conventional or Scottish-style design offering a cleaner and more generous cut from the outset.

As well as preferable constitutionally speaking – for reasons of clarity and legislative ‘space’ – the second model sits comfortably with the increasing pursuit of the positive opportunities for ‘made in Wales’ policies currently available. Adopting as a base the fields

of devolved functions originally listed in the Government of Wales Act, Richard duly recommended it.

The interim stage, covered by the Commission’s extended timetable for achieving primary powers in 2011, also demonstrates the radical edge. ‘As a bridge to full legislative competence’, so promoting local expertise in broad policy development and law making and providing for a smooth transition, the model of framework legislative powers was preferred here to more of the same.

A centuries long process of legal, political and administrative assimilation with a powerful neighbour cannot be wished away. Taking a view on primary powers more in tune with the concept of a ‘National Assembly’ is fine, but the Commission had also to factor into the equation the uniquely powerful geo-political concept of ‘England and Wales’, as classically expressed in the overarching unity of the legal system. This is of the essence of the idea – in Lord Richard’s words – of a “model specifically tailored to Welsh circumstances.”

In other words, Wales is not Scotland. On the one hand, as a terse treatment makes abundantly clear, legislative devolution in core areas of the administration of justice, both civil and criminal, was not seriously on the

agenda. On the other hand, the Sewel convention as developed in the Holyrood context, whereby, with the agreement of the legislative assembly, Westminster would operate as Wales’ ‘other Parliament’ by legislating on devolved matters, has special resonance. As the Richard report puts it:

“Such legislation is likely to be even more extensive in respect of Wales than it has been for Scotland. This would reflect cross-border issues as well as Wales’ closer historic and institutional relationship with England” (page 257).

The Commission could thus afford to be more relaxed about legislative devolution than it might otherwise have been. Following in the footsteps of the Scotland Act 1998, the Commission carefully avoided the legal minefield of a devolved scheme of defined functions, opting instead for a general model and presumption that primary powers pass unless reserved. However, because once again of the peculiar pull to uniformity, the list of specific reservations in the Scotland Act is clearly apt to be magnified in the case of Wales [see Lord Elis-Thomas’s contribution to this special Agenda report]. Administrative ‘turf wars’: the intergovernmental struggle with various Whitehall Departments is

the richard commission

nonetheless one that will have to be gone through if Wales is ever to have a governmental framework of tolerable clarity and stability.

As for the so-called consequentials, the report exhibits an especially strong internal logic, with the primary recommendation on legislative powers not only confirming the end of the corporate body but also grounding the case for a larger Assembly and in turn for a different electoral system. In light of the first term, the Commission was able to identify much slack in the workings of the Assembly as a deliberative body. Nonetheless, given the evident need in a legislative assembly for a stronger culture of challenge and scrutiny, Richard makes clear that a combination of efficiency gains and extra members would be called for, especially because of the additional burden on committees. Surprise, surprise: neatly fitting the nascent Assembly chamber, as also the current electoral map of 40 constituencies in Wales, the recommended expansion to help complete the unfinished business of accountability is from 60 to 80 Members.

The report concludes that the existing additional member system (AMS) could not sustain the increase. Perhaps this was inevitable given the local political culture and voting patterns and the continual voicing by Labour AMs of the fundamentalist objection of two classes of member. In the event, the Commission opted for the proportional representation system of STV on the principle of 'last man standing'; and on the basis of multi-member constituencies and not dual member ones where the dynamics of proportionality would scarcely have room to operate. That is, to coin a phrase, 'real' not 'virtual' STV.

As for the rest, the report demonstrates some good old-fashioned Welsh sidestepping. Replacing the Barnett formula on devolved finance: the Commission "is not in a position to



Lord Richard – heralding a new dawn for Wales.

evaluate". Tax varying powers, most obviously of the Scottish type, are "desirable, though not essential" if a legislative assembly is constituted. On whether a further referendum is needed this judgement "is one for the UK Government and Parliament to make". Cutting back on Welsh parliamentary representation: yes, but on the basis of the extended timetable "some time after 2011". In this respect – legislative power and internal architecture, composition and electoral system – the Commission kept an eye firmly on the ball.

In summary, unlike so much else in the Welsh devolutionary development, the report from this independent Commission stands for a triumph of constitutional design over delivery. As well as sending a powerful message, the Commission has by virtue of its radical proposals afforded local actors a certain freedom of manoeuvre; while giving the Secretary of State, who had already ruled out fewer Welsh MPs, "plenty of food for thought" (Wales Office press release, 31 March 2004).

Turning to the art of the possible, the question that naturally arises is the scale of the discount required for winning agreement in Labour circles, if indeed this is achievable. 'Rowing

back' on Richard, with a view to catching the Party tide, would be par for the course in the not so great game of Welsh devolution.

Better to convey the flavour, a few possibilities are worth mentioning. The option remains of reducing the fields in which the Assembly is (first) afforded primary legislative powers. This would both blur the case for another referendum and strengthen the case for retaining 40 Welsh MPs. Notably, whereas the core recommendation on powers has commanded general approbation inside Wales, it evidently took the local political establishment by surprise. Prior to publication, the smoke signals suggested an internal Party compromise on the basis of a phased approach (for example, *BBC Wales news report* 29 March 2004). 'Walking' before 'running', with thanks to Richard for a vision: any civil servant worth her salt could supply the brief.

The First Minister has raised the possibility of no change in the composition of the Assembly. In the continuing quest for primary legislative powers, going for 60 Members is an obvious line of less resistance. Hold down the numbers of AMs, so break the Richard 'consequential' of STV, and so reduce the local mathematics of the

case for fewer Welsh MPs, and – lo – the prospects for internal Party compromise are increased. A popular distaste for ‘more politicians’ would also be satisfied. To reiterate, however, Richard emphasises that there would be considerable operational problems in a legislative assembly of 60 Members, not least given the retarded culture of scrutiny and challenge in current arrangements. Such a design could be also expected to provoke strong opposition in the parliamentary proceedings on a Wales Bill, not least in the revising chamber.

The electoral system of ‘first past the post’ for a legislative assembly is also a possibility, given the outbreak of lusting in this direction by the Wales TUC conference at the end of April. Yet Richard makes clear that this ‘would not be defensible’ since in the particular conditions of small country governance the capacity for opposition and scrutiny would be seriously weakened.

In my view, in light of the assurances on representativeness in the devolution White Paper and popular assent afforded in the referendum, it would also be nothing less than a fraud on the people of Wales to move to first-past-the-post for Assembly elections without another referendum vote. The First Minister has evidently been thinking along similar lines (see *Assembly Record* 23 March 2004).

But will the Party line encompass primary powers? A fourth possibility, not so much cherry picking as rewriting Richard, and which thus smacks of an official salvage operation in the face of entrenched opposition in (UK) Labour circles, has also been floated by the First Minister (in his speech to ESRC’s devolution conference in Cardiff on 24 June). A model of framework legislative powers writ large, it would involve implementing Richard’s interim approach to powers on an open-ended basis, and doing this generally and backwards as well as forwards in new primary legislation.

So the devolved administration might be armed with widely drawn ‘Henry VIII’ powers to repeal and amend provisions in a long list of statutes or – perhaps as part of a phased programme of empowerment – in designated fields of devolved functions. Reading across from the constitutional rise at UK level of such powers, and reflecting earlier expectations of more generously drafted Assembly order-making functions, the idea represents the maximal scenario of Welsh constitutional development under the existing – modest – devolutionary scheme. Involving the devolved administration in making the type of policy rules traditionally expressed in, but without the proper status of, primary legislation, it would be a kind of ‘quasi-legislative devolution’. That is to say: in light of the short history of the Assembly, the model of ‘a virtual parliament’ – mark II.

Politically speaking, this approach would trump the arguments for more AMs, fewer MPs, and a referendum; much no doubt would also be heard of the speed of delivery as compared with the Richard timetable. So, too, the problem of the Westminster legislative bottleneck would be reduced. The device could also build on the Assembly’s distinctive machinery for scrutinising subordinate legislation and be easily combined as part of a Government of Wales (Amendment) Act with putting the corporate body out of its misery.

However, the problems and limitations of this ‘solution’ should not be glossed over. Apart from the political opposition, we are back with the issue of clarity and intelligibility, since the basic constitutional framework would still underscore the not so little matter of reservations. Vulnerable to more cautious interpretations reflecting entrenched Whitehall understandings and preferences, the approach would also be lacking in robustness. At one and the same time, it is open to the criticism of too little, grating for example with the idea of a

‘National Assembly’, and of too much, hollowing out the role of the centre (legislative devolution ‘by the back door’). Then again, it might allow leading actors to claim a compromise: ‘a new legislative partnership’ between MPs and AMs, with the door ajar for Richard-style primary powers one day. Watch this space.

In conclusion, Richard speaks an unfamiliar language in the Welsh context: and is very unsettling as a result. At the same time, it is important to keep matters in proportion. What in view of a peculiar history represents a radical set of proposals is also comparatively speaking a modest package, one that in the form of a legislative assembly simply seeks to maximise the advantages of small country governance as part of the constitutional ‘family’ of the Union State. So it should not be surprising that the great weight of evidence pointed in this direction.

Let us not be under any illusions. The road to a proper devolution settlement for Wales, robust and user-friendly, will not be easy. The big message that Richard sends out is that sooner or later it will have to be travelled. Obviously, much depends on happenings inside the Labour Party. In particular, will the Welsh MPs hold to the view that it is all too soon? Alternatively, will they opt to avoid the risk to the good governance of Wales of a prolonged period of political cohabitation under the current constitutional framework? Courtesy of the Richard Commission they cannot say but that they have been warned.

- *Richard Rawlings, Professor of Law at the LSE, is author of Delineating Wales: Constitutional, Legal and Administrative Aspects of National Devolution (University of Wales Press, 2003). This article is based on Say Not the Struggle Naught Availeth: The Richard Commission and After, Centre for Welsh Legal Affairs annual lecture, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, June 2004.*

size matters



john osmond
addresses the
Commission's most
politically sensitive
recommendation

Increasing the number of AMs from 60 to 80 was the most politically difficult of the Richard recommendations for the Assembly Government. Extending the powers met a ready consensus, at least in Cardiff Bay. However, increasing the numbers of politicians is hardly a populist cause. Not only that, it foregrounds the case for reducing the number of Welsh MPs at Westminster and strengthens the argument for changing the electoral system.

As Rhodri Morgan put it in his inimitable style: "Does having 20 extra AMs raise the argie-bargie over fewer Members of Parliament and, therefore, over boundary reorganisation?"

He raised these difficulties during the Assembly's first debate on the Richard Commission recommendations at the end of April. His civil servants would undertake a "time and motion study" over the summer on the work of AMs. This would assess what the additional burden would be if members were involved in putting through perhaps six pieces of primary legislation a year:

This effort reveals the narrow ground that is being prepared for a rejection of this core Richard proposal. Yet it is exceedingly narrow ground. Simply focusing on the workload ignores the wider democratic and political arguments for increasing the size of the Assembly. These are alluded to in the

Richard Commission report but not fully spelled out. The recommendation for 20 extra members is simply stated as part of the main conclusions.

Richard's main argument hinges around the Assembly's record of scrutinising secondary legislation and holding the executive to account. Here the Commission's findings are extremely robust. The fact of the matter is that so far, with just 60 members, the Assembly has yet to develop a strong culture of scrutiny. As the former Labour AM for Preseli, Richard Edwards, told the Commission:

"It is very difficult for Members to achieve their maximum potential in terms of knowledge and expertise of subject matter when they are members of several committees and the pressure of time means they cannot research as thoroughly as they might be able to do otherwise. I think this is reflected perhaps in the scrutiny function of the Committee. I think there is plenty of breadth in terms of scrutiny, but perhaps depth when it comes to subject matter is questionable."

As far as secondary legislation is concerned the report notes that during the first term nearly half of the Assembly's statutory instruments were made by the Cabinet under the Executive procedure, while only nine per cent of plenary time was spent debating subordinate legislation. The overall conclusion is that: "If the powers of the Assembly are increased, scrutiny will have to be given much greater priority in the work of the Assembly, particularly of committees. This would be an onerous responsibility since there would be no revising chamber and no reference back to Westminster."

Beyond the issue of democratic scrutiny there is a wider, more political argument

table 1: size and electoral systems of uk devolved bodies

UK Devolved Bodies	Constituency Members	Regional List Member	Total Members	Ratio FPTP:List	Ratio Member: Population
Wales	40	20	60	67%:33%	1:48,600
Scotland	73	56	129	57%:43%	1:39,200
Northern Ireland	Elected by STV system		108	n/a	1:15,700

Source: Richard Commission

for increasing the size of the Assembly. The intense committee workload of the AMs results in the National Assembly having very few 'backbenchers' in the sense of relatively independent, free-floating legislators who form a significant proportion of MPs at Westminster. Sixteen of the 60 Members are office-holders: the nine Cabinet Ministers and five Deputy Ministers, together with the Presiding Officer and his Deputy. The remaining Members have between them to cover a broad range of policy areas, often as party spokespersons or Committee Chairs. That is to say they have to oversee matters that in Westminster terms absorb the attention of some 400 backbench MPs.

The Richard Commission calculated that 46 'backbench' AMs have to fill 109 Subject and Standing Committee seats in the Assembly. Most of the AMs sit on four or five committees. The result is a totally different style from Westminster. As evidence from the Plaid Cymru AM Rhodri Glyn Thomas put it, quoted in the report:

"In the House of Commons, if you fall out with somebody, you can avoid them for three or four weeks, or even three or four years. In the Assembly you will bump into them the following morning. It is that kind of close, cosy arrangement ... [that] does potentially, I think, lead to a situation where scrutiny is not a natural process."

There is an additional dimension, which only became clear in the wake of the first elections to the Assembly. In any parliamentary institution the calibre of members varies. In broad terms, and perhaps being over generous, one can expect a quarter of an institution's membership to comprise outstanding individuals with qualities that fit them to be front rank politicians capable of holding high office. Another quarter or so one can expect to be relatively ineffective. Within the remaining 50 per cent one can expect to find a range of middle-ranking people with moderate abilities.



The new Assembly Chamber rising in Cardiff Bay – coincidentally having room for 80 members.

To make this point is not to criticise the present membership of National Assembly. It is a fact of life. It is enough, however, to make the argument that an institution with just 60 members provides a very small pool within which to find political leadership, especially when that has to be spread across four parties. Moreover, this is not just a matter of finding the leadership to make-up a Cabinet. There are two further requirements. As already underlined, there needs to be people of calibre who can fulfil the backbench scrutiny role. Additionally, the Assembly needs to be a training ground for the next generation of senior politicians, capable in one or two decades of taking a Cabinet role.

As the Richard Commission found when it examined other legislative bodies around the world, there are no accepted rules to follow when calculating their size. However, it is instructive to compare the National Assembly with the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Table 1 shows that while having the smallest membership of the devolved

institutions, the National Assembly has the largest proportion of members to population. In particular, in comparison with Scotland, and following the Additional Member electoral system, the relatively small size allows disproportionately fewer List members. Wales has only 33 per cent of its membership adjusted by PR compared with 43 per cent in Scotland (Northern Ireland, of course, has the more proportional STV system). It is hard not to conclude that the decision to give the National Assembly just 60 members was based on a narrow political calculation of allowing the maximum proportionality consistent with providing a Labour majority.

If first-past-the-post had been an option for the framers of the 1998 Wales Act it is likely they would have gone for 80 members, based on two members per Westminster parliamentary constituency. After all, this was the proposal in the 1978 Wales Act that would have established an Assembly at that time. And is it just serendipity that the gleaming Richard Rogers debating chamber, now rising behind its stockade in Cardiff Bay, has room for 80 members?

• John Osmond is Director of the IWA.

electoral indigestion



denis balsom
examines richard's
recommendation that
STV be used for
assembly elections

The Richard Commission addressed the Assembly's electoral arrangements from two perspectives: whether the present system permitted the election of an Assembly which was broadly representative of Wales; and whether changes to the system would be required if the Assembly acquired further powers.

Both these issues gave rise to discussion of whether the current size of the Assembly, with 60 AMs, was large enough for its present functions or to support an extension of functions. However, such constitutional niceties belie a vicious political struggle.

Following two elections with inconclusive outcomes, the question arises as to whether the present system is capable of ever delivering a majority. Can a credible alternative system be devised which would displace the much maligned regional members, on whom the Opposition parties are largely dependent. The critique of the List membership – largely, it has to be said, from the Labour side – is because it contains many members who have been defeated at the first-past-the-post polls, but are still elected by virtue of a curious 'fastest loser' convention.

The circumstances in which the present electoral system was adopted must also not be forgotten. Labour's White paper *A Voice for Wales* promised an element of proportionality to elections for the Assembly, in part, because legislation to create the Assembly could only be moved following a

successful referendum campaign. Labour's creation of the 'top-up', additional member (AMS) system followed careful analysis to discover a method that would ensure representation for the principal parties of Wales, yet did not negate the chance of a Labour majority being elected. Nonetheless, the 'Quiet Earthquake' 1999 Assembly election destroyed such aspirations, perhaps forever. This left Labour hampered by a system designed to appeal to all parties to ensure a positive referendum vote, but not ever intended to deny Labour a working majority.

Richard's proposals for the adoption of the single transferable vote (STV) recommend the creation of the required multi member constituencies by linking existing Westminster, Parliamentary seats. STV is most effective, and produces the most proportional outcomes, when representatives are elected from seats returning five to seven members. However, such a model would sit uncomfortably in Wales, particularly in the rural, less populated, areas. Richard's more pragmatic approach suggests 'twinning' Parliamentary seats and having these 20 joint constituencies each returning four AMs, giving 80 members in the enlarged Assembly they believe essential to sustain additional powers and responsibilities.

Richard is not overly prescriptive on this point and foresees possibly larger seats in cities, for example, or opportunities to utilise existing local authority boundaries for Assembly

national assembly second choice party preferences voting intention							
First choice	2nd choice	North Wales	Mid & West Wales	South Wales West	South Wales Central	South Wales East	All Wales
Labour	Conservative	15.8%	14.3%	15.9%	4.5%	8.3%	11.1%
	Liberal Democrat	39.5%	35.7%	47.6%	31.8%	29.2%	36.2%
	Plaid Cymru	22.4%	32.1%	27.0%	40.0%	30.6%	30.5%
	Others	2.6%	1.8%	3.2%	2.7%	1.4%	2.4%
	Would not vote	19.7%	16.1%	6.3%	20.9%	30.6%	19.7%
Conservative	Labour	18.5%	11.1%	7.1%	18.2%	25.7%	17.1%
	Liberal Democrat	27.8%	44.4%	57.1%	24.2%	45.7%	41.7%
	Plaid Cymru	33.3%	22.2%	17.9%	12.1%	5.7%	18.2%
	Others	5.6%	9.3%	3.6%	9.1%	8.6%	8.0%
	Would not vote	14.8%	13.0%	14.3%	36.4%	14.3%	19.8%
Liberal Democrat	Labour	37.5%	34.8%	19.2%	38.7%	50.0%	34.6%
	Conservative	41.7%	34.8%	38.5%	25.8%	7.1%	29.2%
	Plaid Cymru	8.3%	17.4%	23.1%	22.6%	28.6%	20.0%
	Others	4.2%	8.7%	7.7%	9.7%	7.1%	8.5%
	Would not vote	8.3%	4.3%	11.5%	3.2%	7.1%	7.7%
Plaid Cymru	Labour	40.0%	35.7%	48.8%	46.5%	57.9%	45.0%
	Conservative	14.0%	21.4%	22.0%	20.9%	10.5%	17.6%
	Liberal Democrat	22.0%	21.4%	14.6%	14.0%	18.4%	18.5%
	Others	4.0%	1.8%	4.9%	4.7%	2.6%	3.6%
	Would not vote	20.0%	19.6%	9.8%	14.0%	10.5%	15.3%

Source: NOP poll for ITV 1 Wales, June 2004.

seats. However, unlike Scotland, Wales seems unlikely to create new separate political territorial units for elections to the Assembly and for Westminster. Such a 'twinning' device may also facilitate other concerns, such as ensuring gender balance in future Assemblies and representation of minority communities.

Should such an STV system come to be adopted, the elector would be presented on polling day with a ballot listing probably four candidates from each party standing for election, plus those seeking support from sundry other fringe and minority interests. Under STV, the elector is required to rank their preferences 1,2,3,4... covering, if they wish, the full ballot of 20 or so likely candidates. The essence of the system is to set the electoral quota that must be achieved to secure election (the number of votes cast divided by the number of members to be elected + 1).

Once a candidate has reached the electoral quota, they are deemed to be elected and any additional, surplus,

votes they hold are transferred to the second choice candidates listed by their supporters. Should no surpluses be current at any stage of the count, the candidate with the lowest total is eliminated and their votes transferred their supporters' to second preferences. STV keeps the maximum number of votes in circulation throughout the count, allowing members to be elected without accruing vast majorities, nor reducing support for minor parties fearful of effectively wasting their votes. Electors can feel confident that their vote will contribute to the election of one of their preferred candidates, if not necessarily their first choice, whilst each elected member will have had to achieve the same electoral threshold and thus all elected Members will share equality of status.

Forecasting the likely outcome of such an election in Wales is fraught with difficulties. Firstly, one cannot predict with any certainty how the electorate would respond to a campaign fought on an entirely different premise, with parties putting up competing slates of

candidates. Proponents of STV would argue that the facility for various intra-party faction to be presented as a choice to the electorate, is just as important as offering conventional inter-party competition. Secondly, we have little evidence of how electors would choose to rank their support between parties.

Our present first-past-the-post system (FPTP) encourages tactical voting in some circumstances, but this need not be a genuine expression of next best choice. Elsewhere, in some local government elections, for example, voters may have more than one vote to cast on a ballot to elect more than one member, but they will tend to vote for either their party's 'ticket' or select on a personal view of the rival candidate's strengths and weaknesses. The recent ITV Wales poll however, asked respondents, to a standard Assembly voting intention question, which parties would be their second, third and fourth preferences in any election which allowed such choice.

The crucial finding of the poll, which would play a significant part in

determining the outcome of any STV or other preferential voting system election, is that electors preferences vary considerably across the country. For example, almost 40 per cent of surplus Labour votes would be transferred to the Liberal Democrats in North Wales, but a similar proportion would go to Plaid Cymru in South Wales Central. For



Photograph: Electoral Commission

analysis purposes, the poll was forced to use the current electoral regions as the best guide to varying patterns within Wales. In reality however, if such an electoral system were introduced, each constituency would exhibit its own particular range of party rankings. It should also be noted that a significant number of party supporters would not vote for candidates from other parties and thus, in any transfer of support, these votes would be eliminated from the count.

Using this information on party preferences, it is possible to reconstruct the likely outcome of the last Assembly election in 2003, had it been fought on an STV basis. Some important caveats must be noted. It has to be assumed, for examples, that party supporters would rank candidates from their preferred party as 2nd, 3rd and 4th choices before transferring to their next preference. In reality this will occur in part, but not rigidly across the electorate as a whole. Many might choose to support two leading candidates, irrespective of party.

It seems highly probably that many electors in say, Llanelli, might have quite comfortably voted for both Helen Mary Jones and Catherine Thomas at the last

election and not felt contradictory in doing so. The impact of such assumptions embedded in any predictive model probably fundamentally prejudices the outcome. However, notwithstanding these reservations, the evidence would suggest that Labour would not have won a near majority in any STV election for a re-constituted, 80 seat Assembly. At best, Labour might have returned 36 AMs, Plaid Cymru 15, Conservatives, 15, Liberal Democrats 13 and others (John Marek) 1. It should also be noted that STV based upon 4 member constituencies will not produce a wholly proportional election result – but is likely to be less disproportionate than the present FPTP method.

As the political parties debate their response to Richard, Labour faces the most acute dilemma. The party remains deeply divided on the issue of extending the powers of the Assembly, with a particularly difficult fault line appearing to divide the Westminster Parliamentary Labour party from those in the Assembly. Such tensions might be dispersed, especially prior to a General Election expected in 2005, by dismissing the Richard Report or consigning it to join its predecessor, the Sunderland report (on local government elections), in the long grass that flourishes in

Cathays Park. Such a negative response however, would forgo the opportunity to reject the present Assembly election system, an aspiration that, almost uniquely, unites Labour in both Westminster and Cardiff Bay.

From this impasse must emerge a way forward. The electorate would clearly see through a cynical re-introduction of FPTP for Assembly elections, in breach

of the referendum settlement, but still advocated by many Labour traditionalists and groups such as the Wales TUC. Secretary of State, Peter Hain, is a known supporter of electoral reform, but to a system such as alternate vote (AV) rather than STV. For him, the crucial test is that each AM should have been elected by a positive act of the electorate, rather than qualifying as a 'fastest loser' through a purely mathematical reallocation.

A choice must be made. There is a powerful logic to the constitutional arguments presented by Richard. This leads inexorably to the conclusion to increase the number of AMs and hence, to reform the electoral system. Such reform need not be STV, but public confidence in our politicians might reasonably expect an element of proportionality to be retained. For once, Labour must take the penny and the bun – even at the risk of severe indigestion.

• Denis Balsom is a political commentator and Editor of the annual Wales Yearbook.

cross-border obfuscation

lord elis-thomas assesses the difficulties of disentangling Welsh from English primary legislation



The richard commission report concludes that it should be relatively straightforward to separate legislation between Wales and England in major areas of policy, such as health and education. However, this optimism does not appear to be well founded on assumptions made earlier in the report.

For instance, on the basis of evidence the Commission received there is agreement that the boundary between powers devolved to the Assembly and those retained by Westminster should be simpler than currently exists. Hence, it should be possible to say: "For the fields set out in Schedule 2 of the Government of Wales Act – all executive functions in these fields, created by any Act of Parliament, are exercisable by the National Assembly for Wales, except in the following areas."

The Commission explored the scope for recasting the existing settlement in this way, but found it impracticable for a number of reasons. In particular, it would require a major joint exercise by officials of the Assembly and Whitehall to trawl through all Ministerial powers in the relevant fields to identify those which should be excepted from a presumption in favour of transfer. As the Commission noted, such an exercise would tie up significant staff resources.

Yet, the same problems would apply equally, if not more, to the process of identifying devolved and reserved areas of primary legislative powers.

We need only turn to Scotland to flesh out this case. There is a substantial list of exemptions in Schedule 5 to the Scotland Act 1998 under reserved matters grandly titled 'General Reservations' but followed by complex very Specific Reservations.

Political practice and experience leads me to doubt whether the United Kingdom Government and Ministers acting both as UK Ministers and English Ministers, and their Whitehall officials would be content merely to adopt the exceptions as in Schedule 5 of the Scotland Act for the purposes of setting out the primary legislative powers of the Assembly.

It seems to me that officials and Ministers will always find reasons for a possible multitude of specific exceptions, many of which are identified in the Richard Commission Report. Cross border issues might be the first such contingency. To quote the Health Minister in evidence to the Commission:

"It might have been more comfortable to have a Welsh Bill which could have collected all our particular reforms together ... [but] there is an issue about the England and Wales crossover, which is also a very powerful argument for having Welsh clauses in an England and Wales Bill".

I am not convinced that the complexities of cross-border matters, which made the original Transfer of Function Order of 1999 such an

impenetrable tome to understand in such areas as water and environment, would be simplified in setting out exceptions to primary legislative competence in these areas.

Why do I assert this with confidence? It is based on my experience, and that of my advisers, of the continuing practice of Whitehall officials in the whole field of devolution. They are guided by one principle alone and that is the concept of not devolving matters which they consider to be common to England and Wales. There lies obfuscation and complexity. Lack of clarity is an enemy of democratic scrutiny and debate .

Some in Whitehall, it could be argued, have a vested interest in obfuscation. The Assembly Review of Procedure firmly embraced six principles, suggested by Professor Richard Rawlings, that would allow the Assembly a good deal of discretion in implementing secondary legislation. However, the UK Government has resisted endorsing the Rawlings principles, arguing that each Bill must be drafted in the light of the policy decisions made in that particular case. So, for example, in relation to the Adoption and Children Act 2002 the Assembly Government had to prove a case for devolving a function to Wales. According to the Richard report, it had "to overcome Whitehall officials" reluctance to devolve some functions to the Assembly because they felt a common England and Wales regime should be maintained. This is legislating by contingency and not according to any laid down principles.

As we have recently seen, in legislating on matters such as the Children's Commissioner for the UK/England and on funding for higher education students cross-border issues, the scope for flare-ups are considerable.

Let's go back to 1969. These were the glory days of executive devolution. The fledgling attempts to create a national democratically elected body –

an elected council for Wales by Cledwyn Hughes as Secretary of State, were scuppered by the combined pressures of officials, Cabinet Ministers, and division among Welsh MPs. The alternative to an elected body was further executive devolution. The Transfer of Functions Wales Order 1969 proposed transferring matters relating to health in certain Acts of Parliament to the Secretary of State for Wales "in matters only affecting Wales". What 'only' meant was hotly disputed at that time between the then Department of Health lawyers and the then lawyers in the old Welsh Office. This was precisely on the cross border argument, because there was so many aspects of health which could be said to be of England and Wales interest.

The Richard Commission has identified these issues in the following terms:

"Although the Wales model of executive devolution seems to be the most complex set of arrangements, there exists also in Scotland and Northern Ireland the jagged boundary between devolved and non-devolved issues, which curtails the freedom of action of the devolved administrations in a number of areas."

However, in Wales the boundary is not so much jagged as undulating and mysterious, sometimes as illusive as Offa's Dyke itself. The Commission seems to support the Scottish model of devolved primary powers. Yet, if we look to Scotland there is no guarantee based on the Scottish model that exceptions will be delineated by subject areas. It is equally possible that exceptions to the Assembly's powers might be set out by relating to specific Acts of Parliament or even sections of Acts. This is certainly the case in relation to exemptions relating to the Scottish Parliament's powers of primary legislation in for example entertainment.

A close study of Schedule 5 of the Scotland Act is not as comforting as perhaps the Richard Commission would imply. In all cases known to me exemptions are not based on any set of political principles or constitutional practice but on the specific political context and debate over powers at the time.

One would expect such arguments over legislative powers to appear in areas where new legislation is being attempted. For example, media legislation has always been too complex and too late, as state-nations in their legislative frameworks struggle to control globalisation. Levels of governance unable to act globally are only too happy to try and assert their residual powers internally within the state as the then Culture Minister told the Richard Commission:

"Overall ... it has proved very difficult to get the UK Government to take account of Assembly Government policy interests, and to get these reflected in the Communications' Bill".

These words could apply equally to any Bill drafted in Whitehall and crafted in Westminster, or drafted in Cathays Park and scrutinised in Cardiff Bay in each of the 18 subject areas. Every Act or Bill within every subject area is a potential battleground involving officials purportedly or actively acting on behalf of Ministers. In no sense therefore can we afford the luxury of a theoretical debate about primary legislative powers while such arguments are raging in private.

How should we respond to this reality? First, I believe there is every benefit in reasserting at all times the Rawlings Principles, which can be summarised as follows:

- The Assembly should require any and all new powers in a Bill where these relate to its existing responsibilities.

agenda

- A Bill should only give a UK Minister powers which cover Wales if it is intended that the policy should be conducted on a single Wales GB or UK basis.
- Bills should not confer functions specifically on the Secretary of State for Wales, where functions need to be exercised separately in Wales they should be conferred on the Assembly.
- A Bill should not reduce the Assembly's functions by giving concurrent functions to a UK Minister.
- Where a Bill gives the Assembly new functions it should be in broad enough terms to allow the Assembly to develop its own policies flexibly. It should be permissible for a Bill to give the Assembly so called Henry VIII powers, that is powers to amend primary legislation by subordinate legislation or to apply differently for defined purposes.
- The Assembly should have powers to bring into force or commence all Bills or parts of Bills which relate to its responsibility.

These principles are a democratic clarification of current practice, and have been fully endorsed by a resolution of the National Assembly. Implementing them would gradually bring daylight to shine on the legislative process in Westminster and Cardiff Bay.

But there are further ways of developing current practice. The UK Government has shown that it considers that certain matters can be legislated on by means of Wales-only Bills for primary legislation. The Richard Commission did not recommend in detail whether the Assembly should be given the competences to enact such Wales-only legislation, though there are provisions for this which provide a precedent in sections 8 and 15 of the Northern Ireland Act.

The Richard Commission did not recommend any interim developments on its timescale to 2011. However, I see no constitutional objections to enabling the Assembly to consider Wales-only



The intricacies of the internal construction of the new Assembly Chamber mirror those between Cardiff Bay and Westminster.

Bills. A simple Parliamentary Bill could be drafted which would not have to exhaustively define the legislative competence of the Assembly. Nor would it necessarily require an increase in the numbers of officials or Assembly Members to prepare or scrutinise such Wales-only Bills. It should not cause further unease or worse among Welsh MPs who would continue to be involved in the majority of Bills affecting Wales.

But for me there is an even more powerful argument. In evidence to Richard in relation to the Education Act 2002 the Minister for Education said:

"The vast majority of clauses were England and Wales related.....we are not in an administrative or legislative position at this point in the Assembly where we could take on that sort of effort ourselves".

It is high time we trained ourselves fully as officials and Assembly Members in legislative procedures so that we are fully competent not just to comment on the content of draft Westminster Bills, but to legislate on Bills ourselves. There is no mystery in these matters of legislative process. It could be achieved simply by a one clause Bill on the following lines:

"The Secretary of State consenting by Order subject to affirmative resolution of both Houses of Parliament to the Assembly passing a Bill, the subject matter of which would be set out in the Order."

Once a Bill was passed by the Assembly it could be submitted to the Secretary of State for Wales who, provided he was satisfied that the Bill was within the provisions of the Order, would submit it for Royal Assent. This would take place after procedures such as in Sections 15 of the Northern Ireland Act of laying the Bill before Parliament had been carried out.

I await to hear the arguments against such a modest and practical proposal. By democratic practice over the past five years we have created within the framework of the Government of Wales Act, out of a dead body corporate, a Parliamentary Assembly. As it moves into its new parliamentary home, it is time we brought that Parliamentary Body to a fuller legislative life.

- *Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas is Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales. This is an edited extract from a lecture given to the Institute of Welsh Politics at Aberystwyth in May 2004.*

alan trench **objects to rhodri morgan's latest devolution compromise**

rhodri's retreat



When the First Minister announced his 'compromise solution' to the difficulties posed by the Richard Commission's report, he took many by surprise. His suggestion, made at an Economic and Social Research Council conference in Cardiff at the end of June, was aimed at negotiating a path through Labour's devolution divisions. However, his proposal makes little sense either constitutionally or politically.

Of course, the political difficulty Rhodri Morgan faces is an ongoing power struggle within his party. Many want to slow down the devolution process, despite opinion polls consistently showing strong support for more powers for the Assembly. As Rhodri Morgan put it at the Cardiff conference, he wants to avoid ten years of debate about the Assembly's powers and concentrate instead on what it can achieve with the powers it already has.

The first problem with his compromise proposal is working out what it is. To

paraphrase his speech, the idea is to use framework powers granted at Westminster not as an interim step toward full legislative powers (as the Richard report recommends), but as an end point. Such powers would look 'backwards as well as forwards', so the Assembly is able to reshape existing legislation as well as develop new approaches to its own timetable. This cryptic suggestion could be implemented in at least two ways.

One is a version of the idea canvassed by Ron Davies and others before devolution – that Westminster Acts would set out a detailed policy for England, with limited discretion for English Ministers, but only a broad set of goals for Wales so the Assembly could develop its own distinctive approach. However, this has not worked out in practice so far. It is hard to point to even a single Act where Wales has been granted wider powers than Ministers have had for England. Instead, Westminster has legislated differentially, applying a different policy for Wales, but under the same framework of powers as for England. What Rhodri appears to want is something along the lines sketched out by Ron Davies, coupled with greater scope for the Assembly to repeal or disapply existing Westminster legislation that would obstruct that policy. These are known to lawyers as 'Henry VIII' powers, after a King who gave himself the power to revoke legislation that displeased him.

The other approach is one the Richard Commission does not discuss, but which has been proposed for devolution in the past – for Scotland under the Scotland Act 1978. This

would mean a new Wales Act from Westminster, granting the Assembly power to legislate in certain defined areas like aspects of health or education, presumably starting with the matters for which the Assembly is already responsible. The difference is that these powers are much more limited because the Assembly can only legislate where it is specifically permitted, so the moment the Assembly strays outside those limits it loses the power to legislate. This model would also, on past experience, require the Secretary of State for Wales (not the Assembly) to present legislation for Royal Assent. This means it could be stopped if the Secretary of State, like a colonial Governor-General, decided to block it.

Neither of these models is likely to provide a coherent, durable, or stable settlement for Wales that will prevent an ongoing constitutional debate, the aim of the First Minister. Because any verbal description of fields of legislation is unclear, it will lead to ambiguity and uncertainty about legislative competence – a recipe for litigation. The Scottish settlement works because Holyrood has power to legislate for all matters not expressly reserved to Westminster: in cases of doubt its legislation will be valid. That is helped by a number of provisions in the Scotland Act to ensure that courts construe Holyrood's powers broadly not narrowly. These are strong arguments for saying the Richard Commission got it right in opting for the 'Scottish model'.

A second problem is that Wales will still be tied to the powers that Westminster, from time to time, chooses to give it.

There would be a number of ways open for Westminster to obstruct the Assembly if it objects to a Welsh initiative. If Westminster wanted to take powers back, there would be little Wales could do to stop it. There would be no constitutional restraint on losing powers under a settlement that is by definition incremental. Powers can be lost as well as won.

would care less (they have fewer votes to lose), so they would have less incentive to help the Assembly. That would also make devolution for Wales unstable and incoherent. Whatever the Assembly did would inevitably be influenced by Westminster, so reducing its ability to opt out of Westminster-led changes that is the great attraction of the Richard Report's recommendations.

Parliament can alter what Parliament passes, and Ministers should not be granted such powers. Such powers quickly enable governments to pick and choose what legislation they will apply and starts to undermine their accountability to Parliament, and its sovereignty. It may have an expedient attraction for Wales now, but it runs contrary to principles of good government. And setting aside a basic constitutional principle to help Wales would set a very dangerous principle for the UK Government to follow in other circumstances.

There is a further factor arising from the constitutional problems of these schemes. The First Minister's idea may make political sense within the Welsh Labour Party, but it loses any attraction it has as soon as it crosses Offa's Dyke. In particular many in the House of Lords would find such a proposal very controversial. A bill that seeks to carve up Parliament's powers without providing for proper accountability to a National Assembly equipped to scrutinise them would attract wide opposition. It would almost certainly attract critical responses from two important, all-party Lords Committees, the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee and the Select Committee on the Constitution. Getting any new Wales bill through Parliament will not be straightforward, but getting a gravely defective one through, against such opposition, will be immensely hard work.

What Rhodri is offering moves Wales a step on from the present half-way-house of devolution, but isn't even a three-quarters solution to the problem. It is more like five-eighths of devolution, but attended by practically all the problems of a more substantial measure. Why make all that effort if the prize is not worth having?

- *Alan Trench works in the Constitution Unit at University College, London, concentrating on inter-governmental relations.*



Conservative leader Nick Bourne attempts to throw First Minister Rhodri Morgan onto his back foot.

A key bulwark for Scotland under the present settlement is the way devolution was underpinned by the 1997 referendum. One attraction for Rhodri of his new idea appears to be that it would avoid the need for a referendum. Yet the very absence of that public endorsement would expose the Assembly to having its powers reduced at Westminster's whim.

Such arrangements might work adequately while Labour is in power in both Cardiff Bay and Westminster. However, as soon as that sort of political consensus ends there would be no inherent stability. The only safeguard for Wales would be political. While Labour would not want to risk losing Westminster votes in Wales, the Tories

If the first model sketched above – framework and Henry VIII powers combined – were used, there would be more grave problems. First, it relies on Westminster doing something it has conspicuously avoided, even refused, to do so far. While it would mean that statute by statute, the Assembly's powers would grow and increase, their 'jigsaw pattern' would remain incoherent. In any case, why should Westminster suddenly change its practices, and what would happen if MPs decided not to co-operate with the Assembly?

Second, it disregards the profound objections of most constitutional lawyers and many others to Henry VIII powers. This view is that only

david blackaby and
stephen drinkwater
unpick the statistics
of migration to and
from Wales

Wales has been a net importer of migrants from the rest of the UK over the past two decades, as shown in Figure 1. The inflow of migrants to Wales has grown considerably in recent years, from around 45,000 in 1981-2 to 64,000 in 2002-3. On the other hand, the number of out-migrants to other parts of the UK has remained around the 50,000 mark since the mid-1980s.

By comparison, the number of people entering Scotland from other parts of the UK has typically been much lower than the figure for Wales. On the other hand the numbers leaving Wales and Scotland for other parts of the UK have been similar over the last couple of decades. Part of the reason for the net inflow of people into Wales is that its rural areas provide an attractive location for retirement. Many of these migrants will have been attracted to Wales by comparatively low house prices and the relative safety of rural life.

In order to examine the cumulative impact of migration to Wales, Table 1 displays the population of each Unitary Authority by country of birth at the time of the 2001 Census. The table shows that Wales has by far the most diverse population, in terms of country of birth, of the four UK nations.

The age of migrants is particularly important since a net outflow of younger people from Wales to other parts of the UK will reduce the working population and increase the dependency ratio. On the other hand, a net inflow of older people can create pressure on social services.

brain drain

welsh migration flows to and from the rest of the UK: 1980 – 2002

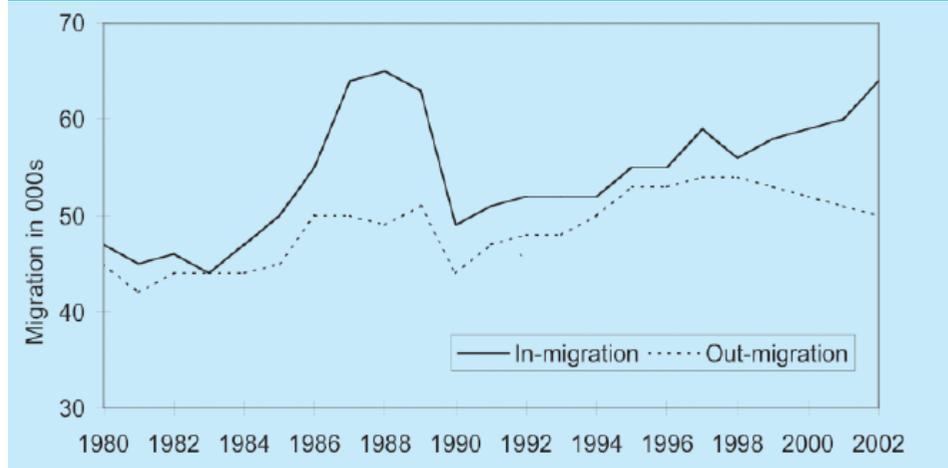


table 1: country of birth of residents in welsh unitary authorities and countries of the uk, april 2001

	% born in England	% born in Wales
Blaenau Gwent	6.39	92.08
Bridgend	11.78	84.69
Caerphilly	7.75	89.94
Cardiff	16.26	74.95
Carmarthenshire	16.76	80.07
Ceredigion	36.43	58.58
Conwy	41.18	53.96
Denbighshire	37.85	57.90
Flintshire	44.71	51.14
Gwynedd	26.55	69.81
Isle of Anglesey	28.37	67.57
Merthyr Tydfil	6.01	91.96
Monmouthshire	33.80	61.30
Neath Port Talbot	7.92	89.49
Newport	13.43	81.12
Pembrokeshire	26.33	68.72
Powys	40.62	55.59
Rhondda; Cynon; Taff	7.57	89.92
Swansea	13.34	82.07
Torfaen	11.51	85.53
Vale of Glamorgan	18.97	75.66
Wrexham	24.46	71.92
Wales	20.32	75.39

Source: Census of Population

Areas with an ageing population will be less able to respond appropriately to demand shocks and technological change as they become more dependant on older workers to meet developing skill needs. Whilst older workers are less likely to become unemployed once employed, they generally experience longer spells of unemployment and a greater tendency to become inactive than younger workers. They are also less likely to take part in formal education and workplace training. This can have implications for the flexibility of a local labour market and its attractiveness as a place to invest.

Table 2 reports migration inflows and outflows to and from Wales, as well as the overall net migration figure for each age group for 2001-2 (age-related migration flows to and from Wales are similar in other recent years). The only groups with a net out-migration are those between 20 to 24 and 25 to 29. The net outflow in the 20 to 24 age group may to some extent be due to relatively large numbers of Welsh students attending English universities. However, the additional net outflow of the 25 to 29 age

group is somewhat concerning. Overall, there was a net in-migration of around 11,000 people in the year 2001-2, with the 45 to 64 age group accounting for just under half of the net inflow. Counties which have mainly attracted this age group are Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Conwy, Pembrokeshire and Powys.

It can be seen, therefore the majority of the net migration inflow to Wales is accounted for by pre-retirement age individuals. However, there is also a net migration to Wales for each of the post-retirement age groups, with a net inflow of around 1,400 people aged 65 and over in 2001-2.

The skill composition of migration can also be a key driver of the future economic performance of both the sending and receiving areas. Within the receiving area, economic growth can be driven by the education and skills of its population of working age. On the other hand, an outflow (that is, a brain drain) has traditionally been thought to have a detrimental effect on the economic prospects of sending areas.

Table 3 can be used to establish whether or not a brain drain has occurred from Wales over time. The table contains information from the Labour Force Survey for 2003 on the

table 2: age related migration statistics for wales, 2001 ('000s)

Age	Inflow	Outflow	Balance
0-14	9.7	6.9	2.8
15-19	7.3	6.0	1.3
20-24	10.2	12.7	-2.5
25-29	6.3	6.8	-0.5
15-29	23.8	25.5	-1.6
30-34	5.7	4.8	0.9
35-39	4.5	3.2	1.3
40-44	3.2	2.2	1.0
30-44	13.4	10.2	3.1
45-49	2.7	1.6	1.1
50-54	2.8	1.4	1.3
55-59	2.9	1.3	1.6
60-64	2.1	1.0	1.1
45-64	10.5	5.3	5.2
65-69	1.6	0.8	0.7
70-74	1.0	0.6	0.3
75 and over	1.9	1.5	0.4
65 and over	4.4	3.0	1.4
All Ages	61.8	50.9	10.9

Source: National Health Service Central Register

cumulative impact of the migration of the highly educated to and from Wales since it reports educational attainment by country of birth and residence for the population of working age (the survey only began to collect this information from 2001.) Most notably, it can be seen that around a third of the Welsh-born living in other parts of the

UK have degrees, compared to only around a tenth of the Welsh born still residing in the country of their birth.

Although Wales also attracts highly qualified migrants, since 22 per cent of immigrants to Wales have a degree, this is not enough to compensate for the migration of the well-qualified Welsh born. These differences also seem to be widening given that it was reported in the 1991 Census that 20 per cent of the Welsh-born living in other parts of Great Britain were graduates compared to 12 per cent of the non-Welsh born living in Wales. The percentage of Welsh-born living elsewhere in the UK with no qualifications is also 4 percentage points lower than corresponding percentage of the non-Welsh born living in Wales. Interestingly, by way of comparison, only 27 per cent of Scots living elsewhere in the UK have degrees, whilst 30 per cent of non-Scots living in Scotland are graduates.

These figures indicate that Wales has lost a disproportionate share of its highly qualified human capital. Accordingly, despite the success the Welsh economy has had in creating new jobs in the recent past, greater attempts should be made to create high-value jobs and to implement development strategies which distribute them across the country.

Economic development policies which attract high valued added investment projects and which encourage indigenous development outside of the M4 and A55 growth corridors need to be further enhanced. This would increase and spread economic prosperity more evenly throughout the whole of Wales and help to meet the work aspirations of the working age population. Policies also need to be further developed which increase the supply of skills of the working age population, particularly technical skills.

table 3: highest educational qualification by country of residence and country of birth, 2003

	Welsh born living in Wales	Non-Welsh born living in other parts	Welsh born living in other parts of the UK	Non-Welsh born living in other parts of the UK
Degree	11.06	23.47	33.15	15.88
Higher education	7.97	9.34	12.08	8.59
A Level	22.90	24.28	20.44	23.85
GCSE/O Level	24.97	19.32	16.71	21.95
Other	12.49	10.45	8.36	13.69
None	20.62	13.13	9.26	16.05
Number of observations	4,341	1,713	1,101	115,484

Source: LFS

Notes

- 1 Table reports column percentages using unweighted data.
- 2 The data are obtained by pooling four quarters of the LFS from December 2002-November 2003. Only those respondents in their first or last wave are included in the table.
- 3 The table consists only of people of working age.

- David Blackaby is Professor of Economics at the University of Wales Swansea. Stephen Drinkwater is a lecturer in Economics at the University of Surrey.

peter midmore reflects on the factors that should underpin policy making in rural Wales

hinterland hopes

Bridge over the River Wye at Brockweir near Tintern

Wales is a more rural country than England. That is one rationalization, among many others, for devolution. Policies can be designed to suit the circumstances better, taking local understanding and preferences into account. And, depending on definitions, improving the performance of the rural economy is much more important for Wales.

In general terms, the areas around the M4 and A55 corridors are performing at least as well as the UK average. So, together with the Valleys, the rest of the interior of Wales provides the main obstacle to achieving the headline GDP targets guiding the Assembly's economic strategy. Economies, and particularly rural economies, are not easy to define. Distinguishing characteristics include:

- Industrial structure: rural activities tends to be more based on primary, land-based sectors.
- Demography: countryside populations are older.
- Culture: lifestyles are different.
- Population density.

On the last feature, "rural Wales" would consist of local authority areas with less than 50 residents per square kilometre (the OECD definition), forming a contiguous area covering the following counties: Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Powys and Monmouthshire from the Northwest, all of Mid and West Wales, and the far Southeast. However, this rural block is far from homogeneous, especially in economic terms.

Economists often try to represent the systems they study as a set of simultaneous equations, showing the interdependence between sales and purchases of different sectors. But for rural economies, and this is particularly relevant in Wales, there is hardly any integration at all. They are more like dependent satellites of the nearby metropolitan economies across the border, with few of the variables in the set of equations having any value other than zero.

This presents a headache for policymakers, since efforts to

stimulate economic growth leak away much more quickly than they would in an urban context. Historically, reliance on inward manufacturing investment as the source of new employment has been vulnerable to closures, as even SMEs can be major employers in scattered communities with small workforces. So a primary objective for rural regeneration should be to build up local self-reliance as much as possible. The absolutely small size of population means that there will always be considerable external dependence. At the same time, as much as possible of the external revenues should be retained locally to build up a resilient structure of businesses and employment.

A more reflective policy, based on this principle, should: first, develop a review of the current extent of rural economic problems; secondly an assessment of future potential; and thirdly an examination of the policy benchmarks set out by other, similar regions.

The statistical base is not good: one of the consequences of sparse populations. However, Table 1 shows some summary indicators of the economic situation for most of rural Wales. (For many indicators, Carmarthen, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire are lumped together; for Monmouth, its income figures are amalgamated with the highly urban Newport unitary authority area, and so is not reported; and even at this level, there are woeful gaps in information on wages).

In summary, these figures reveal that low wages rather than absolute lack of work contribute to lagging rural economic performance. While population growth from in-migration has been strong it does little to contribute to the problem. However, they do not reveal anything like the variation within this area of Wales. The most extreme example is Anglesey, where a high concentration of disadvantage in urban Holyhead drags down what would otherwise be a more respectable accomplishment.

More insightful detail can be brought together from the simple structure of a Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis. Strengths clearly include the quality of the natural environment, both in landscape and biodiversity. Resonances of the culture of small communities with distinctive lifestyles are an attraction for visitors, those who

move in more permanently, and the indigenous population. The quality of educational provision is high, with several universities, good performance by schools, and adequate vocational training. Although small in size, the quality workforce is an asset provided that the right match of employment opportunities exists, and localised clusters of manufacturing exist. This means that there are clear competitive advantages in tourism and niche food processing.

Offsetting this, for much of the area transport and communication is very difficult. Perhaps as a result, there is no cohesive identity, and the rural interest is neglected and often invisible. Agricultural incomes have been slowly but steadily declining, and with it the influence of the once powerful farm lobby.

The quality of tourism provision is poor, and far fewer resources are devoted to supporting its upgrade than in other areas of development. Nevertheless, compared with other parts of Wales, it has been difficult to attract inward investment. There are no agglomeration economies, and the lack of critical mass in labour and other markets means that it is hard to match up supply and demand to generate internal linkages. All of these influences, in combination, make rewarding careers for young people thin on the ground, and contribute to the demographic hole in the rural population between school leavers and

the middle aged. For those remaining, an aspiration gap in terms of drive and vision seems to exist, reflected in the small numbers of high-growth SMEs.

Opportunities thus exist for tourism development, mainly in the specialised areas of culture, landscape and environment. Policy shifts to environmental management in farming, where specific connections to tourism can be exploited, will expand this potential. Where food can be linked, niche agri-food marketing could be improved.

Because of the large distances between scattered businesses, many opportunities which could exist to improve internal linkages are simply unrecognised. Improved networking, perhaps by making greater use of ICTs, could realise the potential here. Also, there is still much scope for attracting lifestyle in-migrants in the high value end of ICT development, particularly as Broadband is increasingly switched on in the Welsh countryside. Many existing in-migrants have business skills which are untapped, and more could be made of the higher education establishments' new commitments to work to enhance their local economies and to spin out technology transfer.

Some clear threats exist from uncertainty stemming from the implementation of the latest round of CAP reform and EU expansion. Decoupled farm payments may have many different effects, of which at least the possibility of significantly reduced output exists, jeopardising many upstream and downstream linkages. Other developing effects of globalisation, particularly the flight of manufacturing industry to Southeast Asia, will undermine many enterprises unless they have a significant competitive advantage.

Similar effects may be felt from the centralisation of public sector and utility activities. Modern lifestyles

table 1: benchmark economic indicators for rural wales

	GVA per head as %	Population ('000)	Net migration as % of total population	Activity rate in working population (%)	Wages (£/week)
Isle of Anglesey	52	68	-2.7	68.1	-
Gwynedd	63	117	2.5	79.9	393.40
Conwy and Denbighshire	62	203	6.9	77.5	353.10
South West Wales	62	362	6.0	71.3	-
Powys	69	126	7.0	83.0	371.20
Rural Wales	62	876	5.2	75.5	-

Source: ONS. All figures are for 2001 except migration, 1991-2001



Feeding sheep on the Brecon Beacons.

(especially those of in-migrants) may erode the social capital base of communities – ironically, because often that is a significant component of the initial attraction. And finally, uncertainty about changes in the fee basis for higher education could limit the effectiveness of the institutions as fertile growth poles in otherwise unpromising surroundings.

There is no template for successful rural regeneration, as the specific circumstances of each area vary so much. The search for neat, workable definitions has always foundered because there are many different types of “rural” environments. Contrast, for example, some areas of Powys close to the English border with the Lleyn Peninsular, or North Pembrokeshire.

However, there are common principles which are recognisable in the few existing examples of impressive development performances in rural areas of Europe and North America. Three priorities suggest themselves:

- Competitive advantage needs identifying and then robustly exploiting, in order to increase the flow of external income. This requires considerable flexibility in response to changing market conditions.

- As much as possible of these earnings needs to be retained in local incomes, by ‘plugging the leaks’. This requires businesses to network collaboratively, sharing information informally as a means both of benchmarking their performance, and also to continuously explore and develop synergies with other enterprises.
- Both of these processes need to be underpinned by robust social capital, and ‘institutional thickness’. The latter is a concept developed by Amin and Thrift (*Globalisation, Institutions and Regional Development in Europe*, Oxford University Press) which expresses the degree to which networked firms can interact with supportive public institutions whose aim is to develop and embed entrepreneurial dynamism.

On sober reflection, rural Wales falls far short of these principles. However, the gap is at its widest in respect of institutional thickness. Its distinctive problems are not dealt with comprehensively, but are split up between all four of the economic forums which are charged with regeneration, three of which have populations with urban majorities. Local authorities, and the Assembly

Sponsored Public Bodies with an economic remit, are inward looking and defensive, and consequently there is no structure which allows local public leaders to play a key role in vision building and coordinated intervention. The one framework which offers most to development of rural social capital, business networking and particularly tourism development, the European Commission’s LEADER Plus initiative, will cease in 2006, as the framework of regional policy is tilted eastwards.

Can the Welsh Assembly Government be persuaded that greater effort should be made to revitalise local government, reorient public bodies to make their rural remit more effective, and refresh their own strategies? Since most of the governing party represent urban constituencies, and all of the Cabinet are from Greater Cardiff, it might be suspected that their appetite for action was faint. One argument, though, might work.

Because participation rates are substantially above average in rural Wales, relatively modest improvements in productivity could have a more marked effect on Gross Value Added. The potential that is displayed by similar rural regions elsewhere suggests that an improved and innovative economic focus, responded to by businesses, could raise wage levels substantially. With a 12-14 per cent improvement, the rural GVA gap would be well on the way to being covered. With a roughly similar population, half of the Wales gap would disappear, leaving only the more intractable difficulties of the Valleys.

- Peter Midmore is Professor of Applied Economics in the School of Management and Business at The University of Wales Aberystwyth.

communications special i

e-commerce potential

beverley evans and tony davies explore the business benefits that can accrue from broadband

It has been said that broadband will create as big a behavioural shift as the introduction of electrification over a hundred years ago. In the same way as those pioneers of electricity could not possibly have imagined the enormous effect that their discovery would have on social and economic development, neither can we visualise the full impact that broadband technologies will have in the coming years and decades.

In particular, broadband will have a major impact on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), bringing the advantages of affordable, high-speed, high-capacity communications. Of the 144,000 businesses in Wales, 99.9 per cent are SMEs with fewer than 250 employees, and with most having fewer than ten. These businesses are both socially and economically vital to Wales, accounting for 71 per cent of all private sector employment and 63 per cent of business turnover. They are an essential source of employment, innovation, entrepreneurship and growth. The extent to which they adopt the new communication technologies will be a key factor in determining economic growth and increased productivity within Wales.

The UK Government has set the target for the economy to have the most competitive broadband market within the G7 group of countries by 2005. It is investing more than £1 billion in broadband connectivity for public services between 2003-2006 and has established a £30 million fund to develop broadband networks and pilot projects throughout the UK. By April 2003 the UK had progressed from fourth to third place in the G7 for competitiveness and by October 2003 was placed equal third with the USA for extensiveness. In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government has announced a £115 million Broadband Wales Programme to provide a sustainable broadband environment.

Research conducted by the eCommerce Innovation Centre at Cardiff Business School suggests that businesses using higher bandwidth services tend to make more extensive use of the Internet and be more advanced in their use of eCommerce. They also have a greater propensity to leverage their connection in innovative and productive ways than those with a traditional dial-up connection.

The pan-Wales eCommerce and Broadband report *State of the Nation 2004* (<http://www.ecommerce.ac.uk/>) was launched by the Innovation Centre in

mid June. It presents the findings of a second Wales-wide study that measures the progress of Welsh SMEs in implementing eCommerce and adopting other enabling technologies to promote business longevity and growth. The study benchmarks the current state of play within SMEs in Wales and measures changes in key indicators over time.

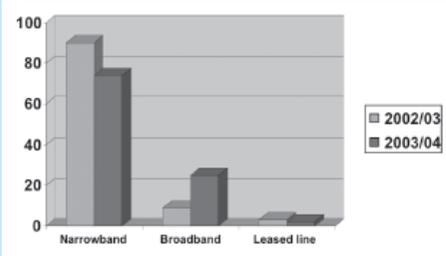
Other studies carried out by the Cardiff Broadband Centre, a partnership between Cardiff Council, the eCommerce Innovation Centre and BT, reinforce the *State of the Nation 2004* findings. Using extensive surveys, case studies and focus groups, we now have an in-depth understanding of the benefits of implementing broadband as well as future intentions, adverse effects and barriers to further exploiting the potential that broadband offers any business. Benefits include increased efficiency and productivity, improved competitiveness, reduced costs and more flexible working arrangements. Intangible benefits include the ability to react faster to the business environment and increased staff satisfaction.

Classifying SMEs into narrowband and broadband users, the report unsurprisingly shows a decrease in narrowband access coupled with an increase in broadband access over the previous year (Table 1 and Figure 1).

table 1: extent of sme broadband connections				
Connection type	% of SMEs			
	All	Micro Less than 10 employees	Small 10 to 49 employees	Medium 50 to 249 employees
Narrowband	74	75	63	50
Broadband	25	24	32	38
Leased line	2	1	4	13

Figure 1: Growth of broadband connections

figure 1: growth of broadband connections



Medium-sized businesses exhibit the greatest shift in the switch from narrowband to broadband. Again, although this may be expected, it highlights the fact that broadband presents the smaller business with the opportunity to behave as, and appear to the world as, a far larger company.

Results by industry sector (Table 2) show that the agriculture sector continues to rely heavily on narrowband technologies with the construction, manufacturing and services sectors being the greatest users of broadband technologies. This may be a reflection of the availability of ADSL broadband (broadband over the telephone line) to date. It is feasible that developments in other wire-based and wireless technologies for the delivery of broadband will change this picture in the future. Our work with SMEs has provided some insight into the barriers to adoption over and above the physical availability of broadband. These are described elsewhere in this article.

In order to measure the use of eCommerce at any point and to enable

comparison over time, an eCommerce Route Map has been devised for use within the Opportunity Wales programme. This is a simple model that allows a business to understand its current position on a seven-step 'ladder'. This ranges from the first step of basic use of eMail through the implementation of a web site to use of advanced eCommerce. The steps in the model, as used in Figure 2, are:

The results in Figure 2 show that broadband users tend to be further along the Route Map than narrowband users. We would expect this gap to widen over time. The implication of these findings is that those businesses that are not actively integrating broadband into the way they work risk being left behind by those who are. Broadband users also demonstrate greater use of advanced technologies such as extranets and local area networks than do narrowband users.

SMEs' expectations of using an Internet connection and of adopting eCommerce are similar for both narrowband and broadband users. The top three expected benefits for both include increased customer base, new business opportunities, and improved communications with customers. However, it appears that broadband users *experience* the benefits to a greater degree than narrowband users. The following numbers are used in Figure 3 to represent the benefits actually experienced by SMEs using narrowband or broadband.

SMEs readily achieve the 'quick win' benefits associated with high-speed, always on connectivity. However, they then struggle to realise the full benefits of broadband connectivity by moving to the more advanced applications of ICTs which would deliver a real return on their bandwidth investment.

Our results also indicate that a lack of knowledge of the issues involved, a lack of Business Change and Change Management skills and a lack of understanding in where and how to measure return on investment represent major barriers to fully exploiting broadband connectivity for Welsh SMEs. Other barriers include a dearth of high bandwidth applications and services. There is a requirement for further support, training and general awareness-building of the potential applications and benefits of broadband if the predicted economic benefits of support for broadband infrastructure implementation are to be realised.

For smaller businesses to realise the full benefits of broadband connectivity and achieve the promised increased productivity, efficiency and competitive advantage will require them to redesign their business processes; to do this successfully they need additional, specialised and focused advice and support as well as suitable high bandwidth applications and services. These are issues yet to be addressed by policy makers, funding and advisory bodies, and product and service vendors.

The eCommerce Innovation Centre is working on several complimentary initiatives to support SMEs in the acquisition of, and more importantly the effective use of, broadband technologies. The team provides coaching and education that enable organisations to realise the full benefits of broadband connectivity by progressing to the use of more advanced applications including eProcurement and eMarketing.

table 2: broadband connections by sector

Connection type	% Narrowband		% Broadband		% Leased line	
	2002/03	2003/04	2002/03	2003/04	2002/03	2003/04
Agriculture	97	92	2	7	2	1
Manufacturing	87	63	12	32	2	5
Construction	89	66	11	33	1	1
Services	84	66	15	31	4	4
Retail and Wholesale	89	72	10	27	2	1
Hotels and Restaurants	95	81	4	17	1	2
Transport and Distribution	90	73	8	24	4	3

figure 2: sme positions om seven-step e-commerce ladder

use of e-commerce	
1	Use eMail only
2	Use eMail and web
3	Basic web site
4	Effective web site
5	On-line store
6	Integrated systems
7	Advanced eCommerce

Figure 2: SME positions on the seven-step eCommerce ladder

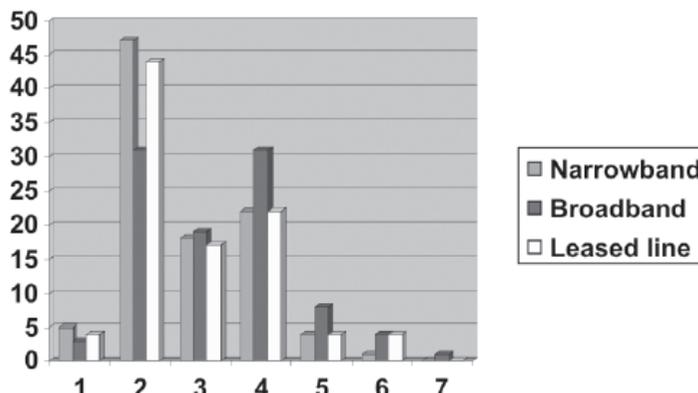
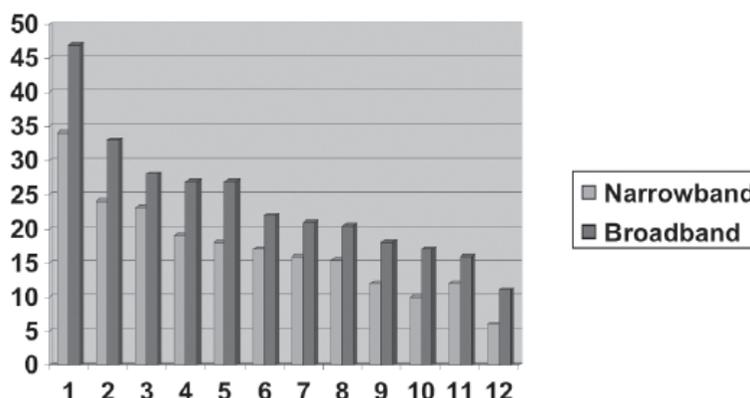


figure 3: benefits experianced by sme's using narrowband or broadband

benefit	
1	Improved customer communications
2	Increased customer base
3	Improved supplier communications
4	More efficient marketing
5	New business opportunities
6	Faster decisions
7	Increased turnover
8	Reduced costs
9	Increased profit
10	More efficient processes
11	International trade
12	Higher customer retention

Figure 3: Benefits experienced by SMEs using narrowband or broadband



The establishment of the Cardiff Broadband Centre partnership at the eCommerce Innovation Centre confirmed the Welsh capital's position as one of the leading 'connected cities' in the UK. The aim of the Centre is to promote the increased use of broadband in small and medium-sized businesses, to shorten the learning curve for Welsh businesses, and to understand the real barriers to adoption and adaptation of broadband as an enabler for eBusiness. The Centre also works with external business advisers and product and service vendors so that they too are better able to meet the needs of the SME community in Wales.

The eCommerce Innovation Centre has recently been awarded a major

contract by the WAG Broadband Wales Programme to establish a Broadband Observatory. Working closely with Broadband Wales, it will monitor broadband activities in Wales and other countries around the world to provide the evidence that will direct and shape the outcomes of the £115m investment.

Wales needs to lead in the provision of appropriate, accessible and affordable training and support for businesses, not only in technical and ICT issues but, even more critically, in business redesign. This means that businesses need to understand how to use ICTs as a catalyst for changing the way that they do things – processes, systems, organisation, jobs, beliefs and culture. This is the stuff that larger

organisations have been grappling with for the past decade. It is about much more than just getting to first base – with those immediate paybacks from technology such as email, always on and so forth. The real, sustainable means of keeping ahead of the competition is to change all aspects of the business in a coherent and integrated change project. It also means understanding the barriers to change and how to resolve or minimise them.

- Beverley Evans is Manager of the Cardiff Broadband Centre. Professor Tony Davies is BT Professor of e-Commerce at Cardiff University.



communications special ii

broadband wales

andrew davies explains how internet access is being expanded across Wales

before the start of the Broadband Wales Programme, the availability of mass market broadband was extremely low in Wales, with approximately 30 exchanges ADSL-enabled and only 35 per cent of the population having access to broadband via this mode of technology using existing landlines.

A report was therefore commissioned by the Welsh Development Agency on the Assembly Government's behalf to look at improving the situation. Entitled *Ubiquitous Broadband Infrastructure for Wales*, this assessed the potential impact of broadband on the Welsh economy. It was acknowledged that without public sector intervention the situation was unlikely to improve.

In July 2002 I launched the five-year, multi-million pound technology and supplier neutral Broadband Wales Programme. Launched to bring high speed internet access to business and leisure users in urban communities as well as more rural and peripheral areas of Wales, it represents one of the most significant investments in a broadband programme anywhere within the UK. It is important to remember that while the Welsh Assembly Government is

unable to act as a supplier of broadband technology, we are launching a series of targeted interventions to tackle market immaturity.

Without tangible signs of demand commercial operators will not consider it economically viable to invest in all parts of Wales and make broadband infrastructure available at a competitive price. The overall aim of the programme is to create a 'virtuous circle' where increased demand feeds further supply that will result in lower costs. This will then result in an increased demand that will ultimately help to attract a number of new commercial suppliers to Wales able to offer a competitively priced broadband service. The Programme has the following objectives:

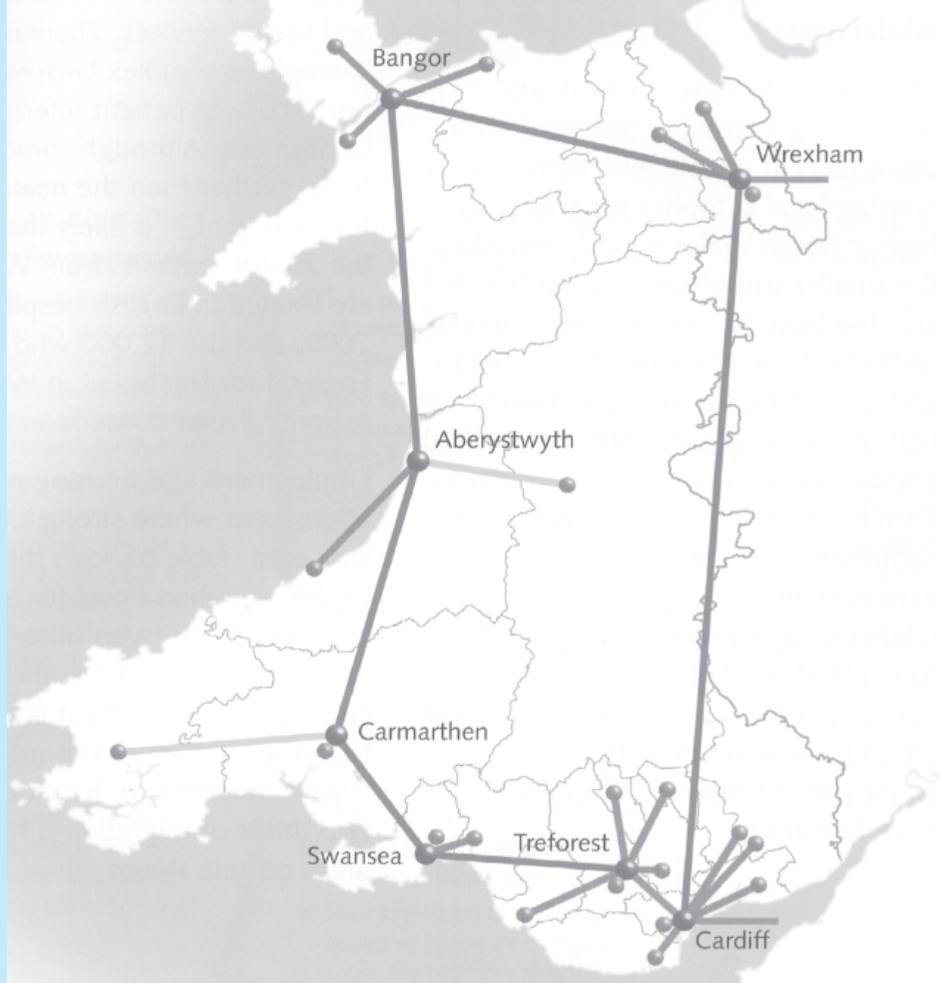
- To increase the availability of affordable terrestrial broadband services in Wales by approximately 30 per cent, with 310,000 extra business lines potentially being able to access broadband.
- Between 50 to 100 local or regional initiatives developed to deliver broadband solutions.
- Affordable broadband connectivity to be available in strategic business parks in Wales.
- Approximately 1,200 additional public sector sites linked to broadband.
- Broadband services made widely available throughout Wales at or near DSL/cable prices.

- To increase awareness of broadband through the communication of its business benefits.

Since July 2002 the availability of "mass market" broadband services in Wales has continued to rise. Latest figures suggest that 78 per cent of homes and businesses within Wales are now in reach of an DSL enabled broadband exchange. Broadband take-up has also increased. It is estimated that 10-11 per cent of the Welsh population access broadband via a range of technologies including DSL, wireless, cable and satellite.

In April 2004 BT made a commitment to enable all of the remaining all viable exchanges in Wales by the summer of 2005. Connecting a further 135 exchanges will result in nearly all areas of Wales being close to blanket broadband coverage via ADSL. Although I am aware that this will still leave the 35 exchanges that BT considered to be commercially unviable for broadband connection, the Assembly Government is currently examining a number of options to address this problem.

The WDA-led SME Satellite Support Scheme has helped over 250 businesses to access broadband via satellite with a subsidy of up to £1,500. While continuing to assist businesses throughout Wales, this initiative now offers increased financial aid of up to £3,000 for the charity and voluntary



Wales's public sector broadband network, linking all major business parks. It will be completed by the end of 2004.

sectors to connect to broadband. The subsidy allows eligible organisations to install broadband via a range of different technologies, which include but are not limited to xDSL, Cable, Wireless, Dedicated Internet Access Connection (Leased Lines) and Satellite.

In addition there are a network of ICT Support Centres within each county equipped with a range of broadband technologies. These offer applicants free 'Try Before You Buy' services to experience the broadband technologies available under the scheme and the benefits they can offer. Free advice is offered on all aspects of information communication technology.

Moving from an industrial to a knowledge economy is the key to increasing the economic success of Wales. The Broadband Wales Programme has played a significant role in educating and strengthening the provision of Lifelong learning across Wales. As a result of the Lifelong Learning Network being rolled out

throughout the country, 96 per cent of secondary schools, 77 per cent of primary schools, 87 per cent of libraries and 63 per cent of ICT centres are connected to the lifelong learning broadband Network. By making these facilities available to the public the Welsh Assembly Government has succeeded in stimulating an increased interest in the capabilities of broadband technology and has convinced many of the validity of having these facilities installed at home.

NHS Wales and the Assembly Government have made a £20 million broadband investment that will make it easier for clinicians to share information and undertake remote diagnostics. All hospitals and GP surgeries now have access to broadband.

A Broadband Wales Taskforce has been recruited and is promoting successful partnership initiatives across Wales, focusing on supporting broadband activity and projects at the local level. They are able to put those interested in

touch with other broadband projects or suppliers that are present throughout each of the economic forum areas of Wales.

The Regional Innovative Broadband Support Project has received approval from the Welsh European Funding Office and will support innovative projects in Objective 1 areas of Wales. This is a £13.4 million project designed to deliver affordable broadband technology to communities, citizens and SMEs by offering match-funding to innovative, local and regional projects in the Objective 1 areas that would not otherwise have access to a high speed communities network.

A marketing campaign is underway to help create a sustainable environment in which increases in supply are matched with significant increases in demand. This will position Wales as an attractive and dynamic market for competitive growth and sustainable provision of broadband.

The Fibre Speed Services to Business Parks/locations is a project being taken forward by the WDA on the Assembly Government's behalf to identify parks/locations in Wales which need immediate access to very high speed broadband connectivity. The WDA have completed a business modelling and regulation analysis and they are considering their next steps.

Since the launch of the Broadband Wales Programme in July 2002, the availability of high speed internet access via ADSL has increased significantly. I have arranged for a Strategic Review of the Broadband Wales Programme, launched in April, to be completed in the summer. A new broadband strategy will be announced this autumn to reflect current and planned market conditions.

- *Andrew Davies is Economic Development and Transport Minister in the Welsh Assembly Government.*

communications special iii

learn direct



jeff greenidge
describes how
e-learning is
improving the Welsh
skills base

Wales has yet to solve the persistent problem of its relatively low skills base, which is costing our economy some £588 million a year according to the Basic Skills Agency. The Welsh Assembly Government's document *Skills Strategy for Wales* links low workforce skills to the Welsh GDP gap (80 per cent of the UK average) and highlights our unfavourable position in relation to most other parts of the UK and Western Europe.

Research conducted by The Opinion Research Business (ORB) revealed that 28 per cent of adults in Wales have poor literacy skills and 32 per cent have poor numeracy skills. This means that nearly half a million people struggle with day-to-day tasks that most 11-year-olds have mastered and most of us take for granted. As around half of these adults are already in the workforce, the skills deficit is impacting on the ability of companies in Wales to operate efficiently and to compete effectively.

Studying via the internet can have a pivotal role in tackling the problem. However, recent research by the Welsh Consumer Council shows that 53 per cent of consumers in Wales do not access the internet – way above the UK average of 36 per cent. The Welsh Assembly Government is encouraging people to take advantage of the online learning opportunities that are now available. The Broadband Wales Programme, which provides high-speed internet links and aims to achieve 100 per cent coverage of Wales by 2005, is a key part of this strategy.

E-learning has several advantages. It is highly flexible and allows people to follow courses in their own time, at their own pace, in a location convenient to them – either at home, in the workplace or at learning centres. Learning via the internet breaks down traditional barriers such as shortages of time and money, inconvenience of travelling to colleges or places of study, and the pressures of family commitments. There are hundreds of online courses which are relatively inexpensive, can be widely accessed and can be fitted into most people's lives.

Learndirect, the largest e-learning partnership network in the UK, is providing the means to deliver a large part of the Assembly's e-learning



Learning tutor Andre Norris helps Learndirect learner Pat Jones with her studies on board the Cyberlink bus in Bridgend.



Learner Pamela Short catches up on her Learndirect course at work – the Pulse Service Centre in Newport.

strategy. Launched less than four years ago, it is on target to recruit its 50,000th learner this summer and to register a total of 100,000 courses. In the process it has built up a network of 60 centres across Wales in addition to home and workplace access.

Learndirect is reaching a lot of people who may not otherwise consider adult education. It is also stimulating more providers to enter the marketplace and that further increases the learning opportunities that are available. There are some excellent examples of what can be done. The North Glamorgan NHS Trust is using e-learning to overcome skills shortages and greatly improve the efficiency of its staff training. It has devised course content relevant to its needs and staff are provided with online access.

As Helen Thomas, the Trust's Head of Training and Development, put it, "We have approximately 3,300 employees across the Trust and we need to engage every one of them in some kind of training. We deliver statutory, mandatory and personal development training programmes, covering a wide range of disciplines. We are currently developing a blended approach using both fixed tutor-led sessions and a variety of e-learning resources which can be accessed flexibly at convenient times."

More than 3,000 SMEs are now engaged in over 10,000 courses in Wales. Companies such as Borg Warner, ATL and Airbus have opened internet-equipped learning centres to enable staff to pursue development programmes. Remploy has opened

learning centres in every one of its factories in Wales. In addition, Learndirect has forged strong links with the Further Education colleges in Wales, and together we are developing our learning network to increase the e-learning market.

There is growing enthusiasm for e-learning in Wales. The challenge now is to ensure that we further increase demand. All the bodies involved in Wales's e-learning strategy need a way of working closely together on joint actions that are monitored and reviewed against agreed objectives.

- *Jeff Greenidge is Head of Learndirect in Wales.*

right tracks



TGV crosses the Avignon viaduct

french levels of funding are needed to give Wales a modern railway argues stuart cole



the journeys from Swansea to London and from Paris to Bordeaux both take three hours. But there the similarity stops. While Swansea is 200 miles from London Bordeaux is 350 miles from Paris. The average speed between Swansea and London is 66mph. Between Bordeaux and Paris it is 117mph. Cost per mile in France is 17p; in Wales it is 27p. The main reasons why people choose one mode of transport over another are cost, speed and journey time, together with frequency and reliability. Apart from frequency, all are more attractive on trains in France. The relatively long journey time from Swansea to London reflects the differences in investment over the past 20 years. However, more than £500 million is to be spent upgrading track structures and signalling on the Great Western Main Line over the next three years. This should bring a noticeable improvement in reliability.

The IWA's *Capitals United* report, commissioned from the Wales

Transport Research Centre in 2003, contained an admission from Network Rail that the rail infrastructure connecting Wales and London does not perform as well as it did in 1984. Indeed, much of the track and signalling dates from the 1960s and 1970s. Many more temporary speed restrictions are in place today than twenty years ago.

While the age of the track is an important consideration, longer and so heavier trains, maximum speeds, and a congested network also have an impact on running times and reliability. All of them mean that running times for trains between Wales and London are proving less easy to sustain than ten years ago.

The new Adelante trains introduced on certain London to south Wales services can accelerate faster than High Speed Trains (HSTs), but because of this they are best used on services with more stops, and are being transferred for this reason to the London-Oxford route. The south Wales services will receive re-engined and refurbished HSTs

(which passengers in any case appear to prefer). The provision of completely new trains, the HS2, from the German manufacturer Siemens, which had been suggested by the route operator, First Great Western, was rejected in Cardiff recently by the chairman of the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA), Richard Bowker, on affordability grounds.

In contrast SNCF (French Railways) have invested heavily in the Paris to Aix en Provence, Avignon and Marseilles route, broadly similar in Britain to the East Coast Main Line, the West Coast Line or the Great Western Main Line.

There are several reasons for this different approach. Firstly, rail construction costs in the UK are 30 to 70 per cent higher than in other EU member states, according to a recent Commission for Integrated Transport report *High Speed Rail* (February 2004). Costs could be reduced through a tighter, and unchanged specification of the work, and by reducing the length of time involved in the planning inquiry process by paying proper compensation at the start. Decisions to build to meet the actual market rather than a possible market would also help – the Channel Tunnel Rail Link provision for freight is unlikely ever to come to fruition.

Secondly, the evaluation process currently in use by the Department for Transport has been criticized for its risk analysis methodology for on time and on budget projects where it appears to ignore the achievement in the building of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

Thirdly, the use of private finance, other than bonds, demands a higher financial return on the risk taken, so that while a short term affordability problem is solved, the longer term cost may be higher. Finally, French Railways (SNCF) was able to achieve a high socio-economic rate of return on the TGV network. This was because the existing railway was a relatively classic slow railway compared with Britain's railways, and distances between large centres of population in France are much greater.



TGV terminus in Avignon.

French Railways introduced the first TGV high speed service from Paris to Lyon 20 years ago, reducing the journey time for the 200 mile trip from three to two hours. This was followed by the service from Paris to Bordeaux (the TGV Atlantique) with a new line to Tours (operating at 190mph) with upgraded track southwards from Tours (operating at 120mph). The total cost was £1 billion for infrastructure and £830m for rolling stock and locomotives. Marseilles, Lille, Calais and Le Mans are also now on the TGV network.

The French Government has now decided to construct a further 500 miles of high speed track at a cost of £14 billion, bringing the total rail mileage built since 1983 to 1,000 miles. The lines will be upgraded to 200mph and extended to Metz (eastern France) by 2006, Strasbourg and Germany by 2010, Bordeaux, Rennes, Toulouse and Nice by 2012. Currently, these electrified lines have TGV trains operating at 120 mph

In Britain, by contrast, there is unlikely to be any further investment in 200mph train track beyond the 80 mile Channel Tunnel Rail Link, costing £5.2 billion, of which 50 miles has already been

completed. The West Coast Main Line, with a diesel traction route which links into north Wales, is currently being upgraded at a cost of £9 billion but only provides for 140mph operation.

The benefits of a dedicated self-contained track between London and south Wales are shown in Table 1 in terms of travel time reductions. The stations on a new line would be located on the outskirts of towns. In France, stations similar to Bristol Parkway in distance from the city centre, have been built at Avignon (about the size of Cardiff) and at Aix en Provence (about the size of Swansea and Wrexham), with links into the existing lines to these cities.

Landore, north of Swansea, is a possible location on a new south Wales line and a station near the M4 at Wentloog could serve Cardiff and Newport. The cost of such a scheme is estimated at £3.5 billion and could offer benefits similar to those now coming from the extension of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. The first stage to north Kent completed in 2003 reduced journey time between London and Paris by 25 minutes, to 2 hours

table 1: rail journey comparisons of wales and france – cost and time

Journey	Miles	Time (hours)	Speed (mph)	Cost (£)*	Cost per Mile (p)
Swansea – London	200	3	66	54	27
Paris-Bordeaux	350	3	117	62	17

* Based on Saver type walk up and go ticket

35minutes, with the final section into London St. Pancras reducing it further to 2 hours 20 minutes.

The IWA *Capitals United* report recommended the construction of a new 200 mph railway line between Cardiff and London. The Commission for Integrated Transport report supported this view unreservedly and proposed routes to south Wales, the west of England, and Scotland. A similar scheme, called GW 200, has been proposed by First Group, parent company of First Great Western.

This would use TGV/Eurostar type trains to reduce travel times between Cardiff and London to 70 minutes and from Swansea to London to 120 minutes. There was general agreement from the south Wales business community that “this kind of long term strategic thinking is needed ... to overcome the lack of investment in the south Wales network” and “will secure major benefits to industry in south Wales.”

Such a scheme would also be a pre-requisite for an international airport within 50 minute train travel time of west London. This would form part of a UK airport strategy, as envisaged by two groups campaigning for such a development in the Newport area. In turn, the demand generated by such an airport would enable a higher rate of return to be achieved for the new rail infrastructure. Demand forecasts prepared for the UK Department for Transport (Halcrow, December 2000) indicate 2.4 million passengers a year by 2015 and 5.5 million by 2030 for such an

airport. These figures would rise to as many as 3.9 million and 9.5 million respectively if capacity at Stansted Airport remains unchanged. A further link from London Heathrow Airport to Llanwern / Severnside with a 40 minute journey time could also add to the financial and economic viability of the railway.

Recent discussions on the Strategic Rail Authority’s 2004 Plan, which the UK Government has refused to publish, provide an illustration of the very different positions France and Britain have adopted towards rail investment. In 2002 the House of Commons Transport Committee concluded that despite an increase in the UK Government’s share of rail investment to £33.5 billion, it is still dwarfed by the real cost of modernising Britain’s railway network.

The Welsh Affairs Committee has consistently pressed for “adequate funding” via the Strategic Rail Authority for the Welsh rail network, and for powers of direction over the authority to be transferred to the Welsh Assembly Government in Cardiff. The aspirations of the Rail Passengers Committee Cymru Wales (1999) and the Assembly Government’s guide for franchise bidders (2002) provide the basis for a thoroughly modern European railway. The Strategic Rail Authority’s decision in December 2003 on the Wales and Borders franchise subsidy profile of £120 million, reducing to just over £100 million a year over 15 years, will offer only a smartened-up railway, welcome though this is. In a statement to the

Assembly two years ago Sue Essex, then Transport Minister, agreed that the figures shown in Table 2 would be necessary to deliver a railway service in Wales comparable to the best in Europe.

A new high speed line between south Wales and London can be justified using the cost benefit criteria applied by the French Government to long distance rail investment. These include:

- Reductions in journey time for rail and road users.
- Transfers from other transport modes.
- Crowding and congestion relief.
- Employment and decentralisation of economic development impacts.
- Environmental factors.

The Commission for Integrated Transport report suggests that the best distances for high speed rail is in the 185 to 370 miles range from London. This would include Swansea. It could, however, be as low as 125 miles. This would include the Cardiff and Bristol travel area. The development in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, of existing rather than new lines, was a consequence of spare capacity being available. Most of this has now been taken up on the Great Western Main Line by the half hourly Cardiff-London service, Virgin trains and the Heathrow Airport services. Rebuilding existing lines is also disruptive and adds time costs to current travel (as north Wales travelers have experienced).

Our rail links to south-east England, from both north and south Wales need the kind of investment French railways have enjoyed if they are to give equal efficiency and value for money. The Channel Tunnel Rail Link scheme, opened 20 years after France’s first high speed line, was described by the UK Secretary of State for Transport Alistair Darling as showing “how well the railways can operate if money (investment) is put into them” (BBC Radio 4, 16 September 2003).

- Professor Stuart Cole is Director of the Wales Transport Research Centre, University of Glamorgan.

table 2 alternative investment levels in the welsh rail network

	Thoroughly modern European Railway £1m	Smartened-up railway (SRA proposal) £1m
South Wales main line	400	200
North Wales main line	150	"
Valley Lines	250	"
Other lines: including the Cambrian Coast, Mid Wales and Wrexham to Manchester	400	"
Total	1,200	200

Sources: Swift Rail Strategy 2001; Network Management Statement 2001; SRA Strategic Plan 2002; various rail studies (1996-2001)



jon owen jones argues that performance indicators should be made to count in local elections

by thy deeds



The local and European elections threw up a mixed set of messages for politicians in Wales, with no party having particularly good reasons for being pleased with themselves. The main story of the evening was the retreat of Plaid Cymru from their breakthrough in 1999. In that year they took advantage of Labour's internal troubles to score a triple success in European, local and National Assembly elections. Now all three have slipped away. Transport House can look with some satisfaction at their campaigns against Plaid Cymru since the disasters of 1999.

In 1999 commentators speculated that they might overturn a century of Labour domination to become the leading party in Wales. However, that prospect has receded as they have been pushed back into their traditional areas. In last year's Assembly elections Plaid only narrowly remained the official opposition. In the local elections this year they lost their two Valley councils, one in a humiliating landslide. In the European election they lost an MEP, well over a third of their share of the vote and were easily beaten into third place by the Conservatives.

Elsewhere, however, the results were less good for Labour. Its share of the vote was up from 1999 in the European elections, but was still low by historic standards, although the popularity of minor parties

in PR elections might partially explain that. Outside of the valleys Labour's local election results were poor, particularly in the relatively prosperous M4 corridor, where we lost control of Swansea, Cardiff and Bridgend.

In part these losses can be put down to a generally bad year for Labour, the perils of over-long incumbency and local factors. However, there is a strong argument that the Labour party needs to refocus itself away from the threat posed by Plaid Cymru and concentrate instead on the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives.

The Torie's local election results were reasonable, and leave them in a position to challenge much more strongly in the next general election than they have in the last two. They have also cemented their position as the second party of Wales, especially if you consider that UKIP took most of its votes from the Conservatives, which in 1999 they lost to Plaid. It was however very far from being the performance of a party about to win a general election, and their results were not good outside areas where they have traditionally been strong.

The Liberal Democrats had a good result in the local election, and now have a significant say in the running of Wales' largest cities. On that basis they can be happy. However, the ease

table 1: parties percentage share of the vote in june european and local elections

Election	Labour	Lib Dem	Con	Plaid Cymru	Other
European	32.5	10.5	19.4	17.4	20.2
Local	37.5	15.0	12.6*	15.5	20.1

* The Conservatives don't stand in many local authority areas in Wales



with which UKIP came from nowhere to beat them into fifth place in the European election shows their vote is extremely shallow. In Cardiff they polled 27,102 votes in the local elections. However, of those only 17,555 – less than two-thirds – also voted for them in the European elections.

UKIP's success was less pronounced than elsewhere in the UK but was still impressive. Whether it is more than a one off remains to be seen.

What is worth commenting upon is that the Welsh local elections took place in a different context from those in England. That is to say, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association have decided to publish far fewer performance indicators on Welsh authorities than are published on their English and Scottish counterparts.

In England a plethora of performance indicators are published on each authority, including a bald statement on their performance, ranging from excellent, through good, fair, weak, to poor. Similarly in Scotland it is possible to compare the performance of a local authority with its peers on a wide range of issues. In both countries comparative data is made easily available on dedicated websites.

In Wales this is not possible. Indeed, a recent Welsh Audit Commission report on local government ranked authorities

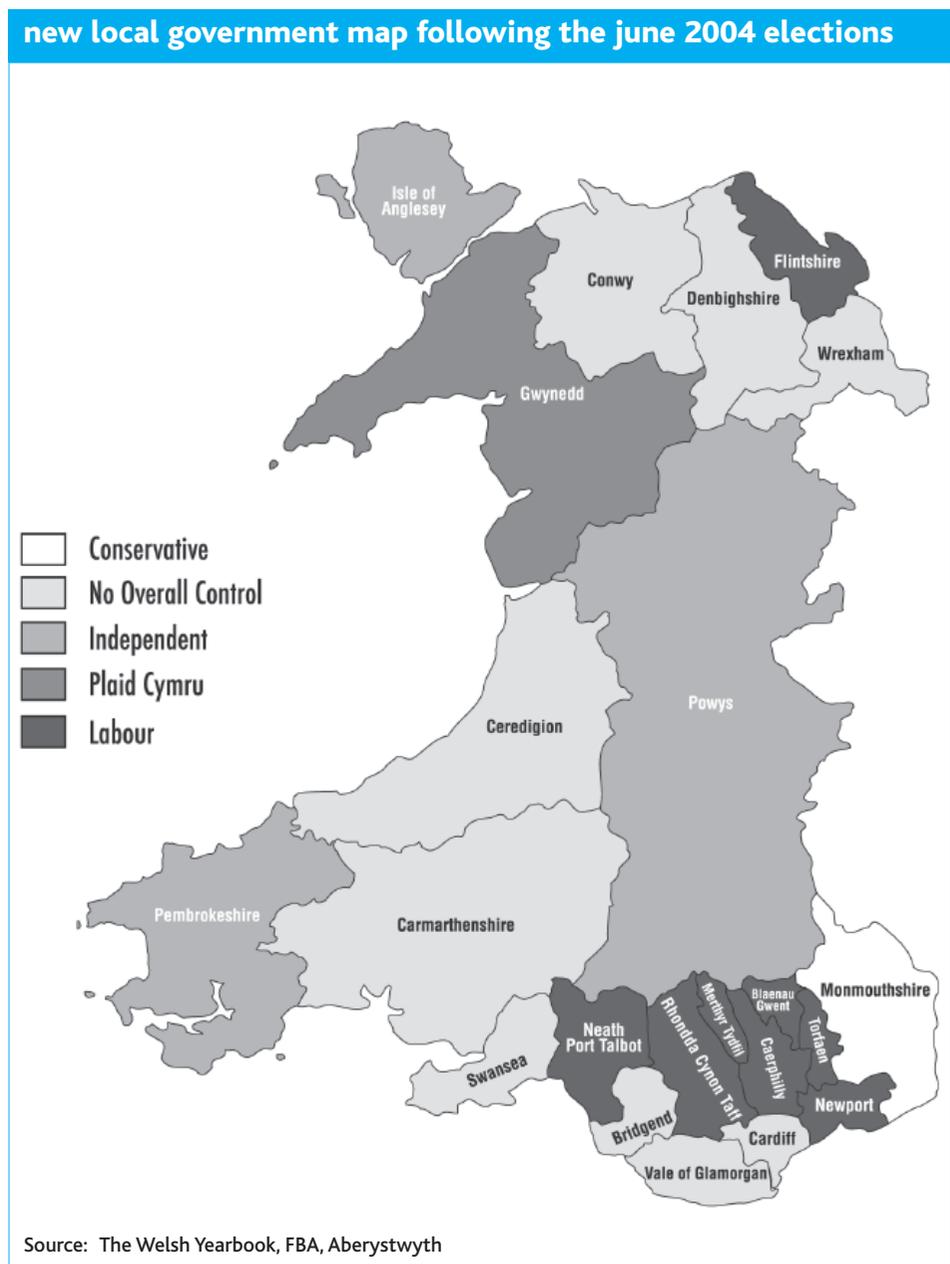


table 2: correlation between performance indicators and change of control in English local authorities in the June elections

Rating of council	% change in control
Excellent	12.5
Weak	26.7
Poor	33.3

table 3: political distribution of English councils correlated with performance

Rating of council	Lab +/-	Con +/-	NOC +/-*
Excellent	0	0	0
Weak or Poor	-2	+5	-3

* There were no changes of control involving any other party.

on a range of subjects but obscured the names so you could not tell which authority was which. The Director-General of the Audit Commission Wales, Clive Grace, acknowledges this and concludes that it puts greater responsibility on Welsh local authorities:

“A distinct policy agenda in Wales which does not rely on published categories of achievement, league tables or ‘naming and shaming’ has placed greater responsibility on local government itself to change and improve the services it provides.”

It is an open question to what extent local government performance contributes to local government elections. Evidence from this year's English elections suggest that to some extent it does. Table 2 shows a significant correlation between performance and change of control in English local government in the June elections. Parties in control of an excellent council were less likely to lose control than those in charge of a weak or poor council.

Perhaps more interesting was the change in political distribution of councils in the various categories, shown in Table 3.

Among excellent councils the only changes were that Labour lost one council to NOC (no overall control) and gained one from NOC. Consequently, the distribution of these councils among the parties remained the same. However, among councils rated either weak or poor Labour lost two and the Conservatives picked up five. Poorly performing Conservative or Conservative-run councils were not punished by the voters, but Labour ones were.

This suggests that a local authority can protect itself from a national swing through good performance to some extent, and that poor performance will exaggerate the national swing; neither on balance seem to reverse the national swing.

Of course, we can never know whether the publication of performance indicators in Wales would have altered any of the results. It could be argued that residents can tell how well their councils are performing and have no need of objective, comparable information. Nonetheless, such data certainly gives political parties ammunition. Even so, in Cardiff the Liberal Democrats chose not to concentrate on scathing reports about the record of social services in the city. Instead, they concentrated their

table 4: local government elections in wales, june 2004

Constituency	Votes Cast						Total Votes Cast
	Labour	Lib Dem	Con	PC	Ind	Other	
Blaenau Gwent	29710	6417	0	2261	10635	317	49340
Bridgend	21545	11832	7691	3731	9068	538	54405
Caerphilly	54412	1694	3177	38946	13317	1378	112924
Cardiff	73766	81431	53471	25718	3981	6680	245047
Carmarthenshire	23751	1729	584	24394	20890	3895	75243
Cerdigion	785	5291	26	10100	5423	4481	26112
Conwy	12479	7612	12105	6484	15324	604	54608
Denbighshire	11494	2470	6829	4983	14457	5904	46137
Flintshire	19999	7524	2747	792	11206	2751	45019
Gwynedd	4366	1692	0	10118	5831	3464	25471
Isle of Anglesey	1177	675	535	4035	4210	7809	18441
Merthyr	19195	476	0	2367	9939	569	46234
Monmouth	6811	5833	14229	1021	5526	58	43478
Neath/Port Talbot	34092	2720	0	12921	4785	17349	71867
Newport	36562	16964	27594	4349	2962	2837	90818
Pembrokeshire	6613	3733	204	4687	15447	10895	41579
Powys	575	5057	841	83	6451	6580	19587
Rhondda Cynon Taf	54589	2564	0	34841	5588	1111	98693
Swansea	50969	40423	19293	15261	5089	22196	153231
Torfaen	23794	6744	2725	1410	11701	5184	46113
Vale of Glamorgan	22528	1666	31062	17364	7889	1342	81851
Wrexham	13248	5407	1656	535	12657	1076	40024
Total	522460	219954	184769	226401	202376	107018	1462978
%	35.7%	15.0%	12.6%	15.5%	13.8%	7.3%	

Notable other groups standing

Merthyr's People Before Politics	29.6%
Neath and Port Talbot Ratepayers Association	17.3%
Swansea Independence Alliance	6.8%
Green Party in Swansea	6.8%
Forward Wales in Wrexham	10.7%

Source: The Welsh Yearbook, FBA, Aberystwyth

campaign on Iraq, top-up fees and the personality of Russell Goodway.

Welsh local government has been allowed greater freedoms by the Assembly Government than has been permitted by Whitehall for English local government. It has been prepared to accept the argument that local government is accountable to its electors rather than central government. Paradoxically, however, it has deferred to the wishes of local government to deny objective information to their voters.

These arguments may soon become academic when the Freedom of Information Bill comes into force in

January 2005 requiring the Assembly Government to disclose its data on the performance of local authorities. Some councillors who have lost their seats may feel bitter that data on their performance was not there to help them convince voters, while others who kept their seats may well be thankful.

- Jon Owen Jones is Labour MP for Cardiff Central.

must plaid lose?

richard wyn jones and
roger scully ask
whether plaid cymru
will be an eternal
party of opposition in
the assembly

elections are a seismic event in a democratic political system. They re-shape the political landscape, and for the losers in an election, the aftershocks can be traumatic. The clear losers of the 2003 National Assembly election in Wales were Plaid Cymru. Their vote share fell by 7.2 per cent in the constituency vote, by 10.8 per cent in the regional list vote, and they lost five of their 17 Assembly seats. This defeat helped prompt a vicious bout of post-election infighting within the party, and also prompted more thoughtful members to think deeply about what lessons can be learned from the experience.

This article draws on evidence from a detailed survey of the Welsh electorate, conducted immediately after the election, to investigate the reasons for the failure of Plaid Cymru in May 2003. Was an electoral setback inevitable for Plaid after the stunning advances of four years previously? Or were Plaid the authors of their own fate?

One substantial difference for Plaid Cymru in 2003 compared to 1999 was the nature of the opposition ranged against them. All the other major parties had to some extent learned the lessons of Plaid's success in 1999, and moved onto the ground that Plaid had largely had to itself in that election: a left-of-centre party with a clearly 'Welsh' identity. All of the other parties – even the Conservatives – have to some extent made efforts to 'Welsh up' their images.

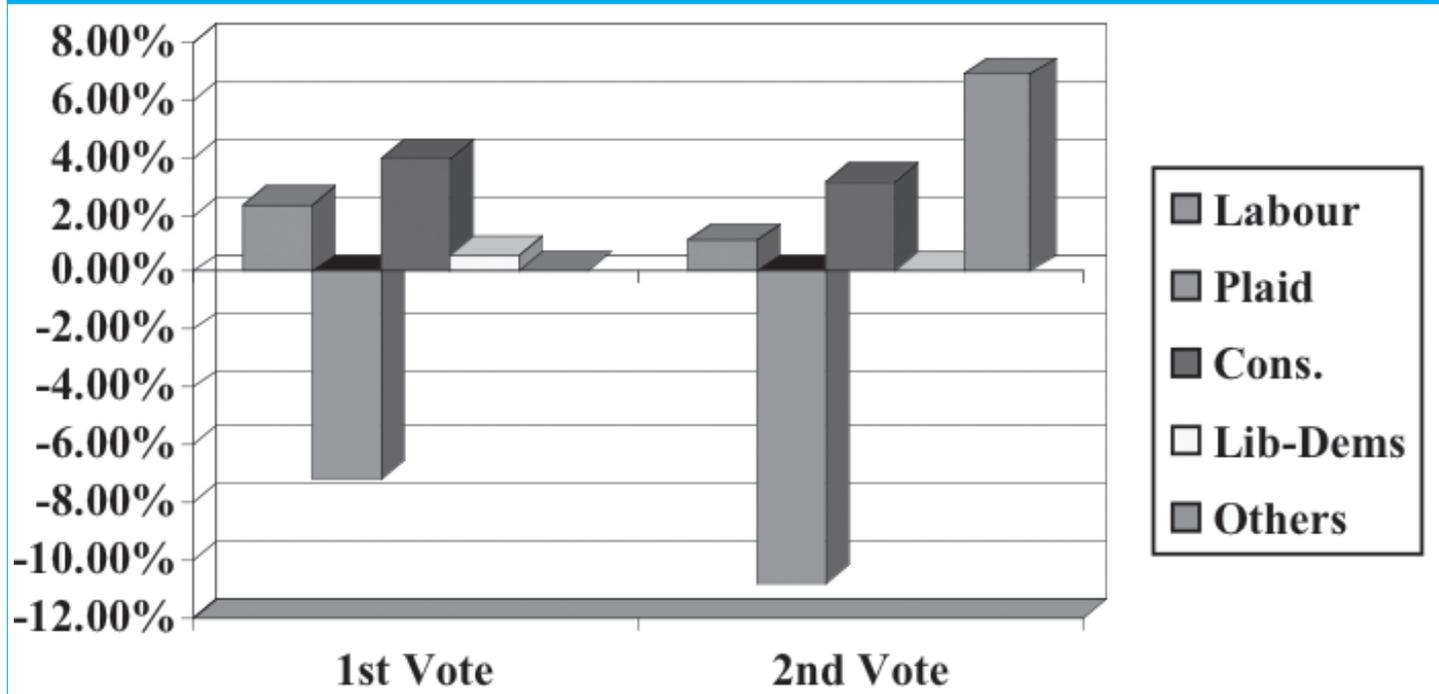
However, the most ostentatious changes came in Wales' dominant party. Under its new leader, the Labour Party in Wales projected itself at the Assembly 2003 elections as much more clearly independent from London than four years previously. No matter how

incoherent the philosophy underlying it might be, the 'Clear Red Water' slogan suggested a distinctive Welsh agenda. Labour's campaign concentrated heavily on the personality of Rhodri Morgan and several eye-catching populist pledges on public services.

Yet while Labour may have sharpened up its image since 1999, and while it certainly improved its constituency campaigning in the key seats, the voters were not that wildly impressed. Labour's vote share increased only 2.4 per cent on the first vote and 1.1 per cent on the second vote compared with a 1999 performance that was universally viewed as disastrous. Not only that, in 15 of the 40 constituency seats Labour's vote share actually went *down*. And in terms of how the voters rated 'Labour in Wales' as looking after the 'working class' or 'Welsh people in general', the party actually score worse in our 2003 survey than four years previously. Plaid Cymru's problem was not that Labour had become more popular but that it had become substantially less popular.

Of course, Welsh Labour were not the only political force to enter the 2003 Assembly election under a different leader than four years previously. Ieuan Wyn Jones had become Plaid Cymru leader in 2000, after overwhelmingly winning the contest to succeed Dafydd Wigley. While the exchange of Alun Michael for Rhodri Morgan could only play to Labour's advantage, the change in Plaid leadership was less certain to have a positive effect. Moreover, as the sole leader of his party – unlike the other parties, who also had UK-level leadership figures – Wyn Jones's public image would certainly be crucial to Plaid's electoral fortunes.

figure 1: the parties' change in vote share in the national assembly elections, 1999-2003



Our survey in 2003 asked voters to rate the main UK and Welsh party leaders on a scale out of 10. Three main things are notable in Table 2. The first is that none of the leaders scored even a 6 out of 10: politicians are not particularly popular in general. The second is that Rhodri Morgan towered above the other Welsh leaders. Not only was he the most widely recognised leader, by some distance he was also the most positively evaluated. The third notable feature is that Ieuan Wyn Jones possessed precious little public appeal. That his rating among Welsh voters was lower even than that of Iain Duncan Smith tells us most of what we need to know about Wyn Jones' stature as an electoral asset for his party.

repeated hostility from sections of the print news-media – most notably the *Welsh Mirror*. This paper's political stance, and particularly that of its political editor, Paul Starling, conspired to label the party as 'extreme' with repeatedly virulent attacks around Welsh language issues.

Plaid Cymru appeared at something of a loss as to how to combat these accusations. But did they actually have an effect? Results from our survey suggest that they may well have done. Table 3 compares evaluative ratings (out of 5) for Plaid Cymru, given by voters in 1999 and in 2003. Splitting the sample into two groups – *Mirror* readers and non-readers – we see that

while there was no substantial difference in how the two groups rated Plaid Cymru in 1999. Yet four years later the attitude of *Mirror* readers' to Plaid was significantly more negative.

The 2003 Welsh election occurred within three weeks of the fall of Baghdad; but also just a few months after the huge anti-war protests that had sought to prevent the onset of military action. Yet the election results in both Wales and Scotland were notable for the absence of any substantial anti-war vote. The more 'pro-war' parties – Labour and the Tories – did somewhat better than many anticipated, while the more anti-war forces – the Liberal Democrats and the nationalists –

generally underperformed. To what extent did the war shape the election outcome to Plaid's disadvantage?

War coverage certainly dominated much of the news

Another major difference between 1999 and 2003 for Plaid Cymru was that in the latter electoral contest, and throughout the years leading up to it, they had to face far greater and

table 1: welsh labour's and plaid cymru's ratings for looking after the interests of the 'working class', 'welsh in general' and 'welsh speakers'

Ratings out of 4, where 4 = 'very closely'

	Welsh Labour		Plaid Cymru	
	1999	2003	1999	2003
Working Class	2.72	2.62	3.08	2.63
Welsh in General	2.80	2.68	3.42	2.92
Welsh Speakers	2.67	2.64	3.70	3.30



Plaid Cymru Assembly Leader Ieuan Wyn Jones greets the new Party President Dafydd Iwan – “Much of the internal blood letting that followed May 1st 2003 seemed motivated more by a desire to settle old scores from the 1980s and 1990s, than by a serious analysis of the reasons for their electoral failure.”

agenda in the period preceding the election. However, the evidence presented in Table 4 suggests that it did not dominate to the extent that some may have expected. When asked on what basis they made their voting decisions, voters appear to have been, if anything, *more* Wales-focused than in 1999. Doubtless, if the election had happened later, when the position in Iraq had worsened, there might have been more anti-war votes to be harvested. But on 1 May 2003, it seems that the war had been successfully concluded. In any event, most voters do not appear to have considered it very relevant. Iraq does not offer itself as a valid excuse for Plaid’s electoral failure.

Our analysis suggests that the electoral defeat suffered by Plaid Cymru in May 2003 was not about Welsh politics returning to ‘business as usual’ following the ‘aberration’ of 1999. Labour’s 2003 vote was little higher than four years previously, and Labour continues to attract much lower levels of support in Wales for National Assembly elections than Westminster ones. The more significant change was the collapse in support for Plaid Cymru. This defeat was not inevitable, but largely the consequence of three factors:

- Plaid was hurt by the change in Labour leadership, and the efforts of Welsh Labour to re-brand itself and campaign more aggressively in the

key seats. This was something that was largely outside the control of Plaid Cymru.

- For much of the electorate Plaid’s image was also damaged by the attacks from the Welsh Mirror and others. These attacks came from outside Plaid; but the party might potentially have responded to them much more effectively than it actually did.

- Finally, Plaid was damaged by the replacement of a popular leader, Dafydd Wigley, with a new party leader, Ieuan Wyn Jones, who was and is singularly lacking in electoral appeal. This was largely a self-inflicted wound for which Plaid Cymru had really only itself to blame.

Since the election, Plaid Cymru have appeared reluctant to learn the hard lessons that one might have expected the election defeat to have seared into their collective consciousness. Much of the internal blood-letting that followed May 1st seemed motivated more by a desire to settle old scores from the 1980s and 1990s than by a serious analysis of the reasons for their electoral failure. Meanwhile the re-election, with an under-whelming mandate from the party membership, of Ieuan Wyn Jones to lead an Assembly group in which he appears to command little respect, can hardly be viewed as launching the party on the road to recovery. Plaid’s patchy performance in the 2004 local and European elections, even as their Labour foes were under immense pressure, suggested that the party may have, at best, ‘bottomed out’.

- *Richard Wyn Jones and Roger Scully are Senior Lecturers in the Institute of Welsh Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.*

table 2: party leaders ratings

Leader	Score (out of 10)
Tony Blair	5.81
Rhodri Morgan	5.46
Charles Kennedy	4.74
Iain Duncan-Smith	4.35
Ieuan Wyn Jones	4.32
Nick Bourne	3.63
Mike German	3.50

table 3: the welsh mirror’s ‘paul starling’ effect

	Average Ratings for Plaid Cymru (out of 5)	
	1999	2003
Mirror readers	3.31	2.86
Non readers	3.30	3.03

table 4: the welsh mirror’s ‘paul starling’ effect

	1999	2003
Mainly Welsh Issues	42.2%	50.1%
Mainly UK issues	32.5%	32.1%
UK and Wales Equally	20.2%	11.5%
Other	5.1%	6.4%

devolution yesterday and tomorrow

slippery slope

duncan tanner and
andrew edwards
revisit the dire
predictions of the No
campaigners in 1979

Devolution soured Welsh politics in the later 1970s. Its defeat contributed to a climate of national self doubt after 1979. Opponents of devolution came from across the political spectrum and from a wide range of social, cultural and political institutions. However, it was the opposition from Labour's 'gang of six' MPs – Leo Abse, Neil Kinnock, Donald Anderson, Ioan Evans, Fred Evans and Ifor Davies – that captured most attention. Their objections were wide-ranging and all-encompassing, ranging from the cultural and linguistic to the social and economic. It is this opposition – remembered as 'betrayal' in nationalist mythology – which has generated so much antagonism across the last 25 years.

The referendum defeat followed a dirty battle. Some anti-devolutionists developed their own version of the 'domino theory', portraying devolution as the next step (following the creation of a Welsh Office in 1964) toward Welsh independence. This view was shared by many in Westminster. In 1975, when the Labour government met at Chequers to discuss devolution, Roy Jenkins voiced his strong opposition on the grounds that it would lead to further nationalist advances in Wales.

Advocates reacted abrasively. Plaid Cymru vilified Neil Kinnock in particular, arguing that those who opposed devolution had their hearts (and their homes) in England. He and others were accused of betraying Wales, sacrificing their own Welshness in the interests of an English political career. Acid was poured on his car. There was a good deal of personal abuse. The Wales Labour party exerted

less personal, but equally forceful pressure on those who rebelled, although as Kinnock himself recently put it, the London-based party didn't join in. As he put it, "It didn't give a bugger".

Some 'no' campaigners were equally strident. They exploited north-south rivalries, jealousies and animosities. Leo Abse, then MP for Pontypool, depicted a Welsh Assembly overrun by the *crachach*. He claimed it would be an elitist, antiquated, talking shop, refusing to accept the realities of a changing world and placing greater emphasis on the culture and language of a minority than the on 'real' economic problems of the majority.

Sensationalism and xenophobic sentiment permeated debate. Reference was made to border checkpoints manned by Welsh nationalists and restrictions on the movements of English 'aliens' into post-devolution Wales. It was suggested that nationalists had conspired to aid the Nazi war effort during the Second World War. A Welsh Assembly, according to Abse, would offer as much to Wales as would "Brains brewery to the treatment of alcoholics". Some Labour opponents of devolution questioned the calibre and quality of potential Assembly members, likening them to 'glorified county councillors'.

Most Conservatives shared these assessments. Fears of a nationalist advance (and of demands for independence) were an integral part of their perspective. This was 'opium for disenchanting Celts'. Many shared Pembroke MP Nicholas Edwards' belief

that devolution was a ‘magic potion’ concocted by Labour ‘witch-doctors’, a clear sign of its ‘political frustration and political opportunism’. In the run-up to the devolution referendum of 1979, other senior Tories, including Willie Whitelaw, urged the Labour government to abandon devolution and extend the powers of the Welsh Council and Secretary of State – this only a few years after the party had discussed abolishing the post of Welsh Secretary.

decentralisation. These arguments have been obscured by time and events. We need to recapture them in order to explain prevalent concerns.

The economic case for the union with Britain was very powerful, and was argued with growing fervour across the decade. The expenditure cuts instituted by the Labour government in 1975 created uproar within the Welsh Labour party. Local councils

“I am absolutely fed up with the whole business. I have twelve per cent unemployment, inadequate schools and health services, a housing shortage and every kind of industrial and social decay in my constituency; we have depression and racialism in the whole country; the Tories are on the edge of an electoral victory, and devolution – of all issues – is top of the agenda. I consider that to be, in the truest sense, fantastic.”



Despite the high profile he achieved as a result of his opposition to devolution in 1979, Neil Kinnock declared himself, at the time, as “absolutley fed up with the whole business.”

Most ‘no’ campaigners continued to focus their attacks on the bread and butter economic implications of the devolution settlement, portraying the proposed Assembly as a talking shop, without the powers to make a significant difference to the quality of life in Wales. On the contrary, it would be taking money away from local councils which had always protected and helped the people. Devolution was “a costly, risky and unnecessary attempt to appease nationalism which has nothing to do with the real social, economic and cultural problems of Wales”. Valuable money was to go into self-display, to fund expensive buildings, the costs of which would undoubtedly escalate: for if the architects stuck to initial estimates “it would be the first time this has happened since the Pyramids were built with slave labour”.

Opponents of devolution were not opponents of decentralisation. On the contrary, the archives show that in London and in Wales, there was considerable support for ‘regional’ devolution all round, that is for regional assemblies across the whole of the UK, with Wales and Scotland treated the same as everywhere else. As Donald Anderson recently stated during an interview with us, decentralisation was hijacked by nationalism. John Marek, now the Deputy Presiding Officer but in 1979 secretary of the Aberystwyth Labour party, also made this point strongly, as did Neil Kinnock.

However, it would be a mistake to see the opposition to devolution as simply a consequence of fears, prejudices, British patriotism, or even a left-wing belief in class unity against ethnic sentimentality. The opposition may have contained elements of all of these. Yet close behind was a more reasoned case, based on the economic benefits of the existing system, the weaknesses of the counter proposals, and a preference for other forms of

were forced to make drastic economies in public services. The electorate showed its displeasure. Several ‘safe’ Labour Councils fell to the Conservatives. In the run-up to the 1979 general election the situation worsened. Under pressure from the TGWU to support devolution, Neil Kinnock expressed his dismay at the priority afforded to the issue in a letter about the position in his constituency and in the country:

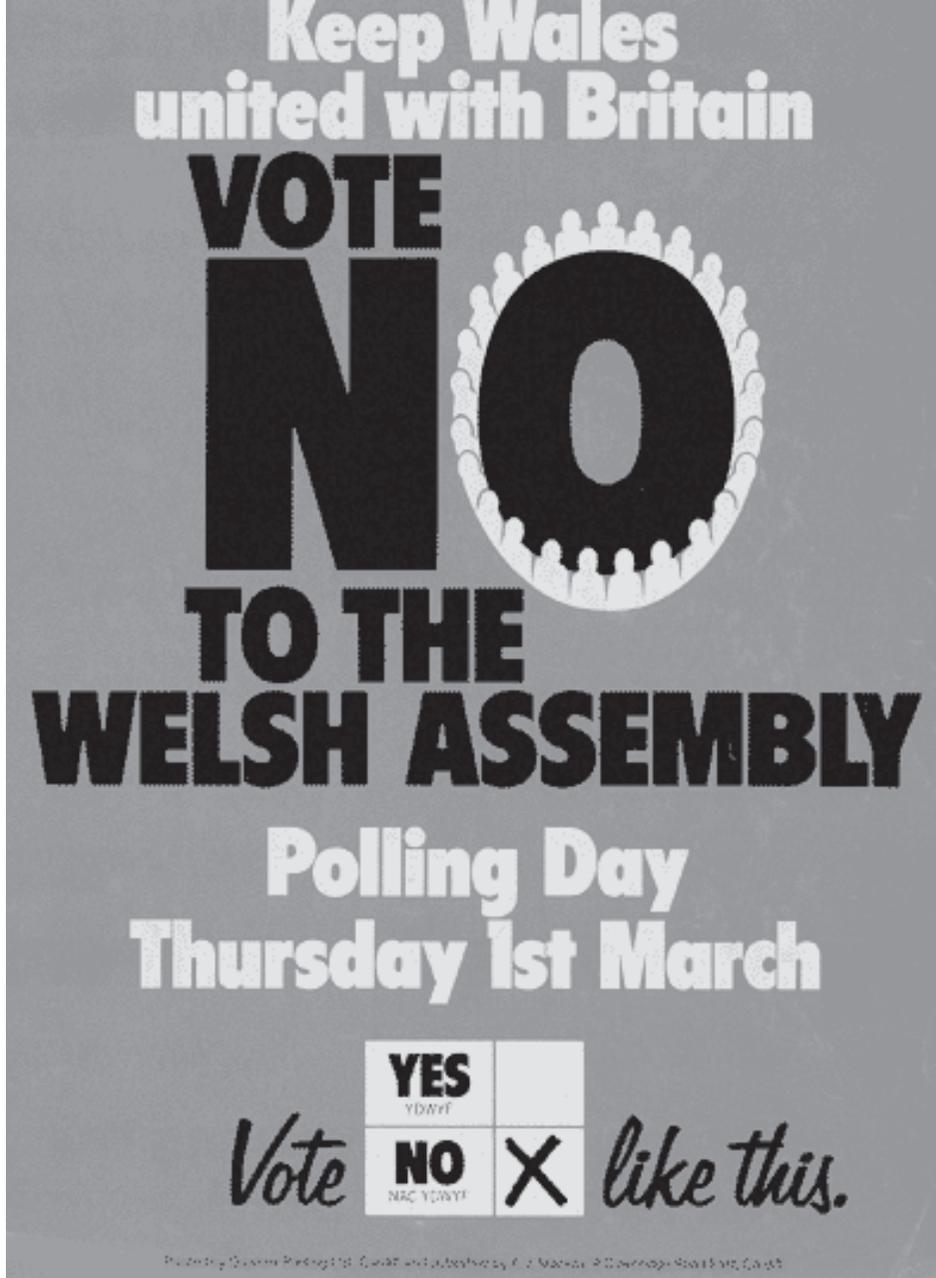
agenda

Similarly, rather than the *principle* of devolution many opposed the kind of Welsh Assembly offered in both 1979 and 1997. This included many nationalists. The lack of legislative powers provided a wealth of negative comment. Even prominent supporters of devolution, including Dafydd Wigley, voiced concerns over the installation of a “souped-up talking shop with no real power”. Others – though not Wigley – felt that supporting an Assembly should not be considered as it would undermine the case for separatism.

Plaid Cymru’s attitude was ambiguous. As a result, if some of the local Yes campaigns in 1979 leaned heavily on Plaid supporters, in other areas many members refused to participate. The post-defeat autopsy saw many party members call for a return to party values and emphasising independence.

Other current concerns were also raised in the 1970s. The probably diminished role of Welsh MPs in post-devolution Wales caused some disquiet, as did the potential conflict of responsibilities between MPs and AMs and the likely curtailment of the Welsh Secretary’s powers. Donald Anderson feared that Labour’s political opponents would “press to have the number of Welsh MPs reduced to the party’s disadvantage”. Leo Abse felt a (likely) reduction in the number of Welsh MPs could “lead to a situation where a Labour government could never get a majority in the House of Commons”.

Even Labour supporters of devolution shared these concerns. The late Emrys Jones was secretary of the Welsh Labour Party, architect of Labour’s pro-devolution strategy, and according to many contemporaries someone ‘obsessed’ by devolution. Yet he threatened to withdraw Welsh Labour support for devolution if the settlement reduced the number of Welsh MPs. As ‘all laws’ and ‘the money for the assembly’ would continue to be controlled centrally, full Welsh representation at Westminster



No Campaign poster in 1979.

was ‘essential’. Such was the continued power and importance of Westminster that in 1979, some senior members of Plaid Cymru suggested that preserving the party’s seats at Westminster was as important as supporting the form of devolution offered in the referendum.

The potential impact of devolution on the north/south divide within Wales was also noted. Supporters of devolution saw it as a means of constructing a ‘civic’ Wales – and of establishing Cardiff as its dynamic capital. For others, this same process was a danger, the replication of a north/south British divide through which power and influence had become focused in London.

The overwhelming defeat of the devolution proposals in March 1979 suggests that the public felt the opponents were right. Opinion had shifted by 1997 and has since become more favourable. This may be because some of the concerns voiced in the 1970s have proved spurious. The ‘domino theory’ provides a good example. Plaid Cymru’s success in the first Assembly election of 1999 lent some credibility to the idea that nationalists would benefit from devolution. However, the subsequent Assembly election of 2003 was a major disappointment, pouring cold water on the idea of an inevitable nationalist advance. On the contrary, it seems devolution has allowed Labour to ‘Cymrucise’ its image, undermining some of Plaid’s propaganda.

Plaid's limited progress has also reopened the devolution/independence debate, splitting the party and giving rise to the emergence of rival nationalist groups. As popular support for independence sits at a mere 14 per cent, this is a major problem for a party that wants to win mass support in Wales – and a big bonus for Welsh Labour.

Circumstances may yet change. The devolved system could provide a mechanism for anti-government protest voting. Plaid may yet convert the people. But to date devolution has not created an upsurge in nationalist support. The opponents of devolution seemed to have got this wrong.

The 'devosceptics' concern that devolution would be a damp squib also seems to have been misjudged. Cardiff has become the dynamic capital of civic Wales. The challenge for architects of devolution is to develop a Welsh policy process. Well-meaning people are doing a careful job of trying to make devolution work, and although there is much to be done that work is proceeding. Although complaints about the alleged preference of public sector organisations for Welsh speakers are common, there is little evidence that less able Welsh speakers are dominating the top political jobs (a fear in the 1970s). Attitudes to the Welsh language – a divisive issue in 1979 – appear to have mellowed.

Opponents were also concerned that further constitutional changes would follow in the wake of devolution. Here predictions have been more accurate. To the dissatisfaction of many, the position of the Secretary of State was 'downsized' in 2003 (as predicted by some opponents of devolution in the 1970s). Further change is possible. In just five years, three different enquiries have focussed on the question of primary legislative powers. The Richard Commission has gathered evidence from numerous bodies and individuals on the merits of extending the powers

afforded to the Assembly. If polls show little support for separatism, they show considerable support for further Assembly powers. This might not be a 'slippery slope to separatism', but some will see it that way.

In other areas, the questions raised in 1979 remain valid. The financing of the Assembly – and its capacity to address Welsh problems – are proving as difficult as sceptics predicted. Finding a suitable formula has not been easy. As one enquiry in 2002 highlighted, the block grant system of finance (condemned by many opponents in 1979) relies far too heavily on mutually sympathetic administrations in Cardiff and London. This luxury has been enjoyed since 1999 but is impossible to guarantee in the longer term. Despite considerable efforts on policy, the nature of financial and legislative resources have inevitably limited or delayed action. Of course, we cannot tell if Wales would have fared better under the old system.

Not all of the problems – or positive outcomes – were predicted. Young people were the most enthusiastic about devolution in the 1970s. However, in 2003 only 16 per cent of 18-24 year olds voted in the Assembly elections.

Neither supporters nor opponents of devolution in the male-dominated political jungle of the 1970s saw devolution as a means of altering that domination. Yet this has been one of its greatest successes.

There have been numerous other positive outcomes, not least the attempt by some elements of the Welsh Conservative party to engage with the devolution process and construct an agenda with a distinctively Welsh flavour for the first time in fifty years.

Are the old debates now dead? Some of those who opposed a Welsh Assembly in 1979 were converted to the cause during the tumultuous

Thatcherite 1980s. Others did not voice their opposition in 1997 to avoid undermining the first Labour government for twenty years. People now feel more Welsh. They do not want to go back. But the cynics and critics still exist. Opinion polls suggest people think the Assembly has made little impact. There are doubts in the north about an emphasis on the south. Reaction to the Richard Commission shows continued doubts about expanded powers.

The dissenting voices that were so powerful in 1979 are weaker than in 1979, more sober, less willing to rock the boat, less representative of public opinion – but they are still there. They still voice real concerns which could attract popular support. We need to face the realities of the past and of the present, to engage with and address such concerns, rather than drown the debate over devolution in the rhetoric of conflict.

- Professor Duncan Tanner is Director of the Welsh Institute for Social and Cultural Affairs at the University of Wales, Bangor, which is overseeing an ESRC-funded project on the history of Welsh devolution on which this article is based. Dr Andrew Edwards, Research Officer with this project, teaches Welsh History at the University of Wales Bangor.

dafydd glyn jones **proposes a second chamber for the national assembly**

senedd 04

Over the years Machynlleth, venue of the 1404 parliament, has witnessed many a rally in support of home rule. "Senedd 04", founded this year to mark the 600th anniversary of the parliament, goes to Machynlleth with a somewhat different intent. It does not call on anyone to grant Wales more self-rule. Rather, it seeks to establish whether we can reopen the Machynlleth parliament as a permanent democratic forum.

There is no historical, legal or constitutional objection to this being done. Each of us is at liberty to understand it as we choose: either as the true continuation of an institution which, as far as we know, was never abolished; or, more prosaically perhaps, as a new initiative on an old historic precedent. Whatever reading we take, there are questions we must answer.

What will the Machynlleth parliament do in a Wales which already has a National

Assembly? To this question there are many positive answers. It will be a think-tank, but democratically elected. If we called it a second chamber we would not be far wrong. In some respects it may well have the function of an opposition. It will be an alternative political focus for communities which, for whatever reason, have not found it easy to identify with the Assembly. It can be something of an X-factor, an unknown, and can thereby make Welsh politics more interesting and more creative.



Glyndŵr's Parliament House at Machynlleth.

It will have the very important psychological effect of reminding ourselves that devolution does not constitute the whole of self-government. It can affect the devolution "Process", but it will have started from the other end, with the notion of Welsh sovereignty. It can usefully interact with the National Assembly without being subject to it. It can address issues which the Assembly, because of party-political considerations, has not been able to address. It can consider the constitutional future of Wales in a way that the Assembly, for the same reason, can not.

Can it be set up on a valid electoral basis? The answer must be, why not? We sometimes hear the suggestion that there might be some value in a 'symbolic' parliament, or alternatively in a 'corporate' parliament in which various interests and organizations are represented. Both these notions have to be rejected. How many seats would we allow to the Fire Brigades Union, and how many to the National Eisteddfod Court? There is no answer to the question. And what about all those people who do not belong to any organization? The basis must be demographic, democratic and objective. There is no alternative to counting heads.

What do we do when heads refuse to be counted? In an age of low polls, can we countenance another one? It is this consideration which has led Senedd 04 to propose two possible elements in the making of the Machynlleth parliament. Seats would be reserved for all Assembly Members, and the parliament would meet, for a day at a time, when the Assembly was not in session. Other representatives, up to an agreed number and elected according to an agreed procedure, could be chosen by the community councils, the level of local government closest to the ground as it were. If there are indications of real interest on the part of the councils, Senedd 04 will



The nearest likeness we are likely to get to Owain Glyndŵr – detail from a painting kept with the Penal letter sent by Glyndŵr to the Charles VI of France in 1404.

probably make this a priority, while accepting that there is nothing wrong in principle with a popular election held on the same day as some other election.

Is this romanticism? Most definitely yes. Nations, or more properly nation-states, live by romanticism, by the selection of significant incidents from the past which are re-enacted in symbolic form, often at very great expense. In an initiative such as this, the romantic bit is to be taken for granted. The weightier question is whether it is romantic enough to succeed.

There is a further, supplementary question. Quite apart from romanticizing about Owain Glyndŵr, are we not in danger of romanticizing about the community councils of Wales? Could they do it? Would they want to? Is this not too remote from their traditional and legitimate everyday concerns? Today they see that the cemetery grass is trimmed, tomorrow they work their way round the backs of the 22 unitary authorities, and round the back of the National

Assembly, and emerge in a parliament at Machynlleth. A bridge too far? The only way of finding out is to ask them.

Let us call what has been outlined above "Plan A". Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that it is not the best plan, or even a good one. The question I now pose, for all the readers of Agenda, for all members of the IWA, for all political analysts and commentators in Wales, for politicians of all parties who wish to see the "Process" continue, for all those who would be happy to see more vigour, creativity and interest in Welsh political life, is a very simple one: what is Plan B?

Senedd 04's programme for the second half of the year must include a membership drive, the creation of a regional structure and the encouragement of open discussion throughout Wales. It must consider setting up a joint working-group with representatives of the community councils, to formulate definite proposals which all the councils can consider. A form of consultation with an inter-party group of Assembly Members is also highly desirable.

A membership of 1,000 would enable most of the necessary paper-work to be done; a membership of 3,000 would make possible the employment of a national organizer or chief executive. The job, if it is to be done at all, will be done in a year or two. Once the parliament is reopened, Senedd 04 can step aside. It would then be over to the new Machynlleth Parliament.

- Dafydd Glyn Jones was formerly a lecturer in Welsh at the University of Wales, Bangor. His recent paper *Senedd Machynlleth: Meddyliau Ochrol a Phapurau Trafod / The Machynlleth Parliament: Lateral Thoughts and Discussion Papers* is available free by sending a stamped addressed envelope to Gwawr Jones, 3 Trem y Fenai, Bangor, Gwynedd. LL57 2HF.

urge to merge

geraint talfan davies unravels why, despite the evidence, Welsh higher education is drawing back from change

Cardiff University – decoupled quietly from the University of Wales at the end of 2003 and merged instead with the University of Wales College of Medicine.



There was something biblical about the way in which the First Minister's latest constitutional idea was based on a text – Richard, 13.2. Though Richard is the new bible of political debate in Wales, and is drafted in the finest plain English, 13.2 does not have quite the ring of, say, Mathew 13.3 and it's doubtful whether any small children will stand up in Soar

chapel to recite it. But I fancy it's going to get quoted to death over the next few months, if not years.

The lingering influence of the Sunday School and the reciting of verses might be thought to be perfect training for campaigning legislators, as they peddle in the currency of numbered clauses. But verses alone are not enough. In Wales the sermon is king, whether heeded or not, and there has been no better place to study the modern sermon and the reactions of the congregation than in the field of higher education in Wales.

But first, a recapitulation for those not engaged in the sector and for those who look in vain for coverage of this issue in any other medium.

The first important sermon was delivered in 1999 by the then Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council, one Professor John Andrews, who suggested that Wales stood no chance of sustaining 13 higher education institutions for long into the 21st century and that six would probably do. Professor Andrews, a wise old bird who didn't relish the prospect of banging his head against a

brick wall for a whole quinquennium, published his paper and, rather astutely, retired.

The University of Wales, convinced that it was collectively much wiser than Professor Andrews, paid little attention. The first rushing wind of nemesis came in the shape of a second, considerably longer, sermon – *The Policy Review of Higher Education* – produced in January 2002 by the Assembly's Education Committee under the chairmanship of Cynog Dafis AM – the man who brought us ELWa.

As the committee beavered away I remember receiving – as a UWIC Governor – a large ring binder with the response of my own institution (UWIC), as well as responses from the Cardiff Quartet (Cardiff University, the College of Medicine, UWIC and the Welsh College of Music and Drama – will this group ever get back together?), the University of Wales, Higher Education Wales and separately, for some reason, the chairs of Higher Education Wales. The content of these responses – predominantly defensive – was less material than their number, which seemed to prove Professor Andrews' point.

The facts were compelling, and though the figures have changed marginally since, the fundamentals have not. At the time of the Education Committee's review the 13 HE institutions in Wales had about 93,000 students – the biggest, Cardiff, with 18,000 and the smallest, the college of Music and Drama, with 551. Only three of the 13 had more than 10,000 students; six had less than 5,000 students. The sector as a whole recorded a surplus of only £3.7 million on a turnover of £641 million, with six institutions recording a deficit.

Beyond Wales money was and is drifting towards the biggest and best at one end and very small and highly specialised institutions at the other. Even before the prospect of top up fees, the people in the middle were going to find it very hard indeed. And that's where most of the Welsh colleges find themselves.

The whole issue has been bedevilled by two factors: the lack of legal clarity about the location of the strategic planning function for HE in Wales and a sector that, with some notable exceptions, has been more concerned with the autonomy of its institutions than with solving the problem of structural change. This explains why most sermons on the theme have to be couched in terms that allow the congregation to nod wisely at the message, safe in the knowledge that it can continue in its sinning ways. Hence the emphasis on 'rationalisation', 'collaboration', 'strategic alliances', 'clusters' and 'reconfiguration', and the studious avoidance of the dreaded word 'merger'.

For instance, the Education Committee proposed that "HEFCW should be given a more strategic planning role" and that it "should identify the scope for a rationalisation of provision", but added, rather confusingly, that in 'rationalising provision' it should also "preserve the diversity of the sector and ensure that all subject disciplines are available in all parts of Wales and

that "expensive duplication is avoided". So that's clear, adopt the strategy but avoid the consequences.

That said, it did want to see a revised structure for HE in Wales "based on the cluster model" and urged that Cardiff University and the College of Medicine "should be encouraged to merge in the long term". All this was too much for our national university. The very fact of the review propelled it into its most familiar and comfortable position – onto the back foot. Worried by leaks of the report's content, it didn't even wait for publication, but sent out a printed appeal for people to come to its aid.

Sermon number three – the policy statement *Reaching Higher*, by the Education Minister, Jane Davidson – was true to form in the sense that it shied away from any sharp categorisation of sin, or even a precise description of what should constitute purity of conduct. However, it did insist on improvement ("reconfiguration and collaboration"), and since, in this context, she was not only the Minister



Entrance to the University of Glamorgan at Treforest – but no route through to a union with UWIC.

but also the Chancellor of the Exchequer, more money would be a matter of salvation by works rather than by faith, prayer and meditation ("measured outcomes" and "something for something".) As I argued at the time it was the iron fist in the velvet glove.

Not surprisingly, events since then have served only to increase the frustration of both the Minister and the Funding Council. The only major exception was in Cardiff where the University and the College of Medicine merged quickly and announced that they were leaving to join a more global church. If this were Scotland the remainder of the University of Wales would be called the "wee frees". The decision to leave was taken by the Council of Cardiff University last December and, given its impact on the University of Wales, it is rather remarkable that it received no public attention in any medium for almost six months. The dream of University of Wales leadership for "One Nation, One University" – persuading Cardiff not to leave and persuading the University of Glamorgan to join – has proved to be just that, a dream.

It was Professor Sir David Williams QC, in his report on the structures of the University of Wales – commissioned by the University in a rush after the *Reaching Higher* pronouncement – who said: "It is also highly desirable, if not essential, that Cardiff University should remain as a member of the University of Wales: its high reputation is crucial to the reputation of the federal university and to the University's authority in demonstrating its views on matters of concern".

But it is not just the clout of the biggest member that will be walking out of the door. Without its biggest component – in terms of student numbers, research ratings and income, and contribution to the funding of the central apparatus – the University of Wales looks like a

broken reed, which the new Pro-Chancellor, Dafydd Wigley, is now being asked to stiffen anew. A significant horticultural challenge. The University's poor rating from the QAA for its quality assurance processes only adds to the problem.

The record of attempted mergers and alliances in Wales is not good. There was never much sense in the discussions between Lampeter and Newport – other than a lifeline for Lampeter. They collapsed some years ago. Discussions between Aberystwyth and Trinity also foundered. Attempts to bring together Bangor and NEWI in Wrexham into something resembling a real University of North Wales collapsed, partly because of staff resistance in Bangor. Some, like Newport have tried to dodge the central message and tried for mergers across the HE/FE divide, with Coleg Gwent – an attempt that has been vetoed by HEFCW as a diversion.

Meanwhile, that other dream of pulling the University of Glamorgan into the University of Wales has also vanished with the collapse of the merger discussions between it and UWIC in circumstances so acrimonious that HEFCW immediately ordered an audit of the process to ensure that lessons are learnt. The results of that audit are awaited with some trepidation by all parties.

The reasons for all this are clear. There is just too much resistance to change within a national university that, without Cardiff, can no longer be called a fully national university. Most players have gone into the merger game reluctantly. Some principals can't carry their staff, and some staff can't carry their principals. Talks have foundered, variously, over geography, educational snobbery, rivalry at the top, and process.

Add to this that the University of Wales has failed to resolve in its own mind the issue of where strategic planning



responsibility should lie. It doesn't like the idea of it residing in the Assembly Government or with HEFCW (although, currently, neither has full legal powers to carry out such a role). It has never been able to sell to its own constituent organisations the idea of a fully federal institution and has missed the moment for considering a proper confederal arrangement. By definition 13 institutions (or even 10) cannot do the task themselves.

Small wonder then that sermon number four – delivered by the Minister in Assembly plenary session on 9 June – is rather more blunt. The understandable impatience is palpable: "Too much is happening for institutions to bury their heads in the sand. The time to act is now. We don't want to see mergers of struggling institutions down the line. We want collaborations between strong institutions now." But in a nod to the limitation on her own powers she added, "I do not propose to tell institutions with whom they should collaborate – rather I expect them to see the merit of building well-founded,

powerful collaborative arrangements. The onus will remain firmly on the sector." Perhaps toughest of all is the threat that "these principles will also be embedded in the distribution of the supplementary income in lieu of variable fees.

There is a clear intent to use the power of the purse vigorously. The sector may be screaming for extra funding. However, it is not unreasonable for the Minister and the funding council to be asking whether this is the shape of HE sector into which to pump desperately scarce resources without an indication that the money is going to produce a more effective and sustainable structure rather than a temporary and unsustainable stabilisation of the status quo.

It is a sign of the distance between the parties that at the very time this statement was being made, Higher Education Wales was lobbying members of the House of Lords against clauses in the Higher Education Bill that might, just conceivably, have given the Assembly a right to impinge on the autonomy of higher education. HEW's concerns were not strong enough to win the day.

The case of higher education is not a happy tale. It raises questions applicable to all structures in Wales – local government, health, business support, even the arts: appropriate scale and effectiveness, matching structures to available money and available managerial capacity, competitiveness in the outside world, the appetite for change and the need for strategic leadership. The fight over HE is one that Jane Davidson deserves to win. The shame for Wales is that it has had to be a fight at all.

- Geraint Talfan Davies is Chairman of the IWA and a Governor of UWIC.

self help



huw lewis reports on his review of the communities first initiative

tackling poverty and social disadvantage through the Communities First programme is at the core of the Assembly Government's agenda. We want to see our least well-off communities empowered to help themselves, drawing on their tradition of strong community identity and self-help. Our experience is that there is tremendous untapped potential in our communities, which can help in their regeneration. Communities First aims to bring together public, voluntary and private sector representatives with the people who are experiencing poverty.

A good start has been made, with 121 partnerships established thus far, and £30 million committed. However, this is only the beginning of what is bound to be a long and difficult process that will require patience and persistence. There will be many difficulties along the way.

I was asked by the Minister for Social Justice Edwina Hart to review the progress of the programme and help draw out the lessons to be learned. An initiative as important and complex as

Communities First requires close monitoring and adaptation as necessary. My report contains 13 recommendations covering funding, organisation, communications and issues of equality and diversity.

My review was informed by interviews with local partnership members, co-ordinators, local authority members and officers across Wales. I also visited the Scottish Executive to see how their anti poverty programme was working. I found great enthusiasm for Communities First as a policy. The underlying aims and objectives, as well as the determination to involve local communities through maximising their capacity, is well supported.

At the end of the I recommended that all partners should be issued with strengthened guidance emphasising that fundamental activities are the key reference points for building Community Action Plans. Officials are currently revising the Communities First Guidance and my recommendations are being taken into account in the revision.

A major finding was that the Communities First Trust Fund – which provides grants to small community and voluntary organisations operating in Communities First areas – has been a success. I recommended that the Fund should be extended for a further year, with consideration being given to further extension or permanent inclusion in the programme. I concluded that the Fund should continue to be managed, at this stage, by the Communities First Support Network (CFSN) and administered by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action. Edwina Hart has gone beyond this recommendation and extended the Trust Fund for a further 3

communities first

The Assembly Government's major programme for disadvantaged communities, it is involving £83 million spending over the first three years (2002-05). It aims to regenerate 132 of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales, largely concentrated in the Objective 1 west Wales and the Valleys region. It is a community-driven and takes an integrated and multi-agency approach to addressing poverty. Other features include:

- A lifespan of at least ten years.
- Local people themselves decide what is needed and are helped to make it happen.
- Most Communities First areas are based on single electoral wards or groups of wards, while a small number are 'communities of interest' spread over wider geographical areas.
- A Partnership is being established in each Communities First area, employing a Co-ordinator and drawing up a Community Action Plan for regeneration activities.

years. This is excellent news for small community groups operating in Communities First areas. Also, we are designing a process of consultation which means that the issues that caused concern in the first year's operation of the Fund will be addressed.

During the interviews I found that some Partnerships felt isolated, and that they were not getting appropriate support from the CFSN and other organisations. However, there were also areas where the CFSN had done good work. In view of this, I recommended that programme support continues to be provided by the CFSN from April 2004. However, I also recommended that their role be renegotiated to emphasise the need for a more coherent service which provides equality of access to support across all areas of Wales. These arrangements should be reviewed after one year. Assembly officials have been in detailed discussions with the CFSN to deliver this, and the CFSN's targets have been revised to ensure that more of their time and resources are focused on supporting the needs of Communities First Partnerships and co-ordinators.

One of the keys to the success of the programme is the "bending" of other policies and programmes towards Communities First areas. It is important that we harness mainstream budgets, not just regeneration funding, and that policy is focused to reflect the needs of disadvantaged areas. There are already examples of this beginning to happen in the piloting of best practice in Communities First areas prior to 'rolling out' to the wider community. For example, water coolers were located in schools in the most deprived Communities First wards and the School Breakfast Initiative is being piloted in Communities First area schools. In order that the possibilities are maximised, the Assembly has now established an officials group to look at cross cutting policies that impact on social justice. This comprises heads of all relevant



Education Minister Jane Davidson, shares a healthy (free) breakfast with pupils at Victoria Road Junior School, Wrexham.

divisions and is chaired by the Director for Social Justice and Regeneration.

During my review, concern was expressed by a number of people about the risk of bureaucracy around Communities First. As a result, I suggested that a 'running costs' spending cap should be negotiated. This should be similar in its conception to the cap imposed on bodies such as the WDA, to ensure that the overwhelming percentage of funding over the lifetime of the scheme is invested in project delivery rather than bureaucracy.

I recognise that each area will vary in its needs for administrative support, and set up costs mean that this early stage will involve greater investment in administrative capacity. However, an administrative cap should be introduced to ensure that over the medium and long term the maximum resource possible reaches the local community. Officials are currently analysing the way that the programme is set up in each area so we can see how progress can be made on this issue.

To the best of my knowledge this is the first time that a government in Western Europe has sought to run such a programme. It will work best when everyone – the statutory, voluntary, and business sectors, and especially the people in the local communities feel that the programme belongs to them. We in the Assembly Government are continually striving to improve the programme in light of lessons learned.

Tackling poverty and disadvantage is, inevitably, a long-term business, but one to which we are determined to devote the necessary time, energy and resources in order to tap the same resourcefulness and energy which we know to be characteristic of Communities First areas themselves.

- *Huw Lewis is Deputy Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration in the Welsh Assembly Government. Copies of his Review can be obtained from the Communities First Unit at the Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff or by e-mailing communities.first@wales.gsi.gov.uk*

linking space with people and politics

kevin bishop puts the Wales spatial plan under the microscope

The Assembly Government's spatial plan for Wales *People, Places Futures* attempts to set out a 'direction of travel' to shape the way Wales works, plays and looks in 20 years time.

A document that will have statutory force, it seeks to ensure that future development is sustainable. Yet in many respects the exercise so far lacks clarity and understanding. The Spatial Plan aims to:

- Help integrate the policies and actions of the Assembly Government and others to achieve our vision of a sustainable Wales;
- Establish an integrated framework for the social, economic and environmental development of Wales;
- Provide a context for guiding public and private investment decisions; and
- Promote debate on the future role of places and regions within Wales.

However, there is a lack of clarity on how these uncontroversial aims will be achieved. For example, what does 'provide a context for guiding public and private investment decisions' mean in practice?

The first edition of the Plan should focus more clearly on the role of the Assembly Government and the levers it has to promote its vision of a sustainable country. For example, a key lever could be the location of the Assembly civil service and related infrastructure. Yet there is little discussion of how the proposed location strategy might assist with the aims of the Spatial Plan.

Money is another tool. There should be further analysis of public sector expenditure and how this could be used to achieve the objectives laid out in the plan. Given the significance of the 'public pound' to the Welsh economy it would seem that there is an opportunity to use this spending power to 'buy into sustainable development'. In the future we need to focus not just on the amount being spent in different policy areas but also where the money is being spent and its multiplier effect. Yet the role of the Spatial Plan in guiding resource distribution is unclear.

The links between the Spatial Plan and the Assembly Government's other policy statements, such as *Wales: A Better Country* and its Sustainable Development Scheme are not clear. The vision, aims and objectives set out in each are different. *Wales: A Better Country* should set out a vision for Wales, the Sustainable Development Scheme should show the Assembly Government will promote the vision, and the Spatial Plan should identify what the vision means for different parts of Wales.

A central challenge for the Spatial Plan is how it will relate to the 22 emerging Community Strategies. Evidence from the Netherlands would suggest that spatial planning is most effective when it is 'bottom-up' rather than attempting to impose a 'top down' view of how an area should develop. In Wales, this 'bottom-up' approach could be facilitated by ensuring a close link between the Spatial Plan and the Community Strategies.



The Spatial Plan needs to include further analysis of the relationships between Wales as a 'region' and the rest of the UK, EU and the world. Critical questions such as Wales' strategic location between Ireland and the rest of the EU, our relationship with Westminster and Whitehall and the south east of England, and for border areas with their related English regions need to be examined in detail.

An important role for the Spatial Plan must be to exert influence over Westminster and Whitehall in terms of non-devolved matters. The draft plan does not include any analysis of this issue or the potential impact on Wales of different UK public policy and expenditure scenarios. Yet our economic future is still influenced by the actions of the UK Government. More could be done to look at how an active 'regional policy' within a UK context could assist sustainable development in Wales. For example, what is the Assembly Government doing in response to the review of civil service location being conducted by Sir Michael Lyons? If the Assembly Government was successful in attracting the First Minister's target of 10,000 civil service jobs where would they be located?

There should be more detail on how the Spatial Plan will assist with policy integration. One option would be to explore the extent to which the Spatial Plan can become an interactive tool for policy development – more of a 'virtual' than a real plan. The CD Rom that accompanied the draft plan contains a lot of information but it would be more useful if this data was stored within a geographical information system (GIS) that facilitated spatial analysis and enabled the implications of potential development scenarios to be considered.

Such a tool would ensure that all levels of government had access to consistent data. There would also be

steps towards the wales spatial plan

- 1999 – Agreement on the European Spatial Development Perspective by informal Council of Ministers responsible for spatial planning, Potsdam.
- 1999 – Workshop convened by Sue Essex AM to discuss spatial planning in the Welsh context.
- 2000 – Assembly Government commission research into comparative spatial planning methodologies.
- 2001 – Assembly Government consultation on the scope of the plan.
- 2003 – People, Places, Futures: The Wales Spatial Plan draft published for consultation.
- 2004 – Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act introduces statutory requirement for the National Assembly to prepare and publish a spatial plan.
- 2004 – First edition of the Wales Spatial Plan due for publication late 2004

potential benefits for the private sector. Technological advances should help us with policy integration by allowing spatial consequences of particular options to be identified. One of the great difficulties in joining-up government is determining the potential impacts of different policy scenarios: the social, economic and environmental impacts in a spatial context. An interactive Spatial Plan would assist in this. It could also assist with the implementation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Water Framework Directives.

As well as greater clarity on the role of the Spatial Plan the draft plan lacked important detail on some key issues, including consideration of the marine dimension despite its obvious relevance to Wales. The Spatial Plan

should build on the concept of Integrated Coastal Zone Management. The draft is also weak in looking at the detail of environmental issues. It should include further analysis of:

- Climate change and its potential impact on Wales – including the obvious impacts of flooding, and changes to habitats as well as mitigation measures and the spatial impact. What is the role of the Assembly's forest estate in this respect?
- Biodiversity – it would be useful to have further details of Natura 2000 within Wales and identification of key ecological corridors and areas for ecological restoration.
- Protected areas – there is little recognition of the high density of protected areas within Wales compared to most other European countries. The fact that over 50 per cent of the land surface of Wales is protected because of its landscape, biodiversity and/or cultural value is highly significant. Whilst many would seem to view this as a constraint on development the Spatial Plan should see this as an opportunity. For example, we have a network of National Parks and World Heritage Sites that would be the envy of many other countries. The Spatial Plan should look at how we maximise the economic opportunities of these designations.

Although there is a brief discussion of energy issues in the context of managing carbon dioxide emissions there is little analysis of how future energy trends might influence Wales. What are the implications of pursuing a low carbon or hydrogen economy? Which areas might be suitable for different forms of renewable energy production? What will be the impact of increased reliance on gas when Wales will be at the end of a small number of pipelines from countries such as Norway and the former Soviet Republics? Does the predicted shortage of energy supply within the UK provide a sustainable development opportunity for Wales?

There is very little consideration of market issues and the role of the private sector. There needs to be further analysis of where the public sector can help to correct market failure. The consultation draft seems to focus on looking back and taking stock and does not contain sufficient detail on where next. If the Spatial Plan is to achieve its stated aims of guiding public and private investment decisions and providing a framework for integrated policy making then it must contain more detail on future work to address the challenges identified. This is an important area of potential

collaboration between the Spatial Plan and Community Strategies: they must dovetail. The Spatial Plan is also weak on the issue of de-coupling traffic growth from economic growth yet this is a key issue in terms of 'leading' or 'following'.

Health and welfare issues raise particular spatial challenges that are not addressed in sufficient detail within the consultation draft. For example, older people (often as a result of migration on retirement) tend to cluster in remote rural areas, or the coastal belt, resulting in problems when ill

health and care needs occur. Scarcity of domiciliary care workers in rural areas makes it impossible for many disabled older people to get the care they need even if they can afford to pay for it. There is also the issue of health provision in the border areas of Wales where different policies in England and Wales are leading to particular spatial challenges.

If the Spatial Plan is to provide a context for guiding public and private investment decisions then it should include an assessment of the state of Welsh infrastructure (transport, water, wastewater, flood management, energy networks). There is little evidence of joined-up thinking in terms of infrastructure investment. The Spatial Plan could build upon the asset management work of local authorities to provide an evidence base for more informed funding decisions.

The Spatial Plan divides Wales into zones: the north east and south east urban areas, maritime locations of the north west and south west, coastal and border zones in mid Wales with the remainder in between – at one level an obvious division, but not corresponding to previously understood socio-economic regions.



It is easy to criticise the detail of the draft Wales Spatial Plan and the process of spatial planning but the concept of trying to influence what should happen where lies at the heart of government and is central to the concept of sustainable development. If one was writing an end of term report on the Wales Spatial Plan it would probably contain such phrases as: "Shows great potential but needs to be more focused.... Has good ideas but needs more clarity in thought and communication... Generally respected by its peers but not always understood".

The challenge for the first edition of the Wales Spatial Plan due later this year is to provide a framework for action and collaboration, together with a useful tool for policy integration. The trick will be to provide these without being too prescriptive or embedding the Welsh planning system in a straight jacket.

- Dr Kevin Bishop is Head of Environment and Regeneration at the Welsh Local Government Association. This article does not necessarily reflect the views of WLGA.

a two-legged stool

gordon james questions the assembly government's commitment to sustainable development



In March 2004 the authoritative Environmental Data Services Report judged that “one needs only scratch a Welsh politician and the sustainable development sheen proves to be just a shallow surface deposit with old attitudes well and truly entrenched beneath”. In support the report cited the reaction of a number of Assembly Members to the Environment Agency Wales’ refusal to permit dredging of the Dee estuary to allow the shipment of giant airbus wings from the Broughton factory for assembly in France.

Calling for the dredging to be given the go-ahead, the AMs failed to appreciate the ecological importance and legal status of the estuary as a Ramsar site, a Special Protection Area and a candidate Special Area of Conservation. They also seemed ignorant of the legal obligation to consider viable alternatives, such as shipment at high tide, the use of barges to take the wings to the Port of Liverpool or airships to transport them to Toulouse. To his credit, First Minister Rhodri Morgan demonstrated more mature judgement as he recognised that all alternatives needed to be considered, rather than damaging this “exceptionally important estuary of huge environmental importance.”

It seems that little has changed for some AMs since our capital city’s most important wildlife site, the Cardiff Bay SSSI, was destroyed by a state-sponsored act of vandalism in order to create a lake to act as a backdrop for the new Assembly building. Bizarrely,

the creation of a nature reserve on the Gwent Levels as some form of compensation for the destruction in Cardiff Bay is flagged up in the Assembly brochure, *Planning: Delivering for Wales*, as a good example of its planning system, at the heart of which is meant to be “a commitment to promoting sustainable development”.

It is a commitment in which the environmental leg of the three-legged sustainable development stool is too readily kicked off as the Assembly faces competing economic, environmental and social demands in the policy making process. Progress to date reflects a failure to fully recognise both the economic and social benefits of good environmental practice and the limits that are now imposed by environmental constraints, such as climate change and habitat loss.

Quite rightly, the Assembly Government received acclaim during the first term for setting out, a detailed programme in its Sustainable Development Scheme and Action Plan. However, there remains a poor understanding of the concept amongst the general public and the actions of organisations and individuals have changed very little as a result of the Assembly’s remit. Much of this can be attributed to the failure of the Assembly Government to translate policies into actions and of the Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies and local authorities to mainstream sustainable development into their activities. This can be well illustrated by looking at a number of controversial planning applications that have taken place in recent years.

The planning system regulates the development and use of land, supposedly, in the public interest. It is an important remit of local government and has a significant influence on the economic, social and environmental characteristics of a locality. According to the 'Agreement on Planning Principles Between the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and Local Planning Authorities in Wales', *"planning is a key component in delivering sustainable development in Wales"*.

However, delivery faces formidable obstacles. Conflicts of interest exist when a local authority is able to raise substantial revenues from developments on their holdings and when the Assembly Government acts as both an agent for change and as the ultimate planning authority in Wales. Criticism has also been made of the close relationship that exists between the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and local authorities.

Mike Jacob, a former senior local government officer who now leads the Torfaen Fight the Plan Group, argues, for instance, that "the National Assembly is loth to see itself as a superior level of government", while a University of Glamorgan report, 'A New Partnership: *The National Assembly for Wales and Local Government* (Laffin, Taylor and Thomas, 2002), concludes that "local government remained untouched by devolution" mainly as a result of "the immediate and pressing need at the time of devolution to get local government, specifically Labour local government, support for devolution".

For instance, a proposal by Torfaen County Borough Council to build 1,200 homes on a greenfield site that lies between South Sebastopol, Pontypool and Pontnewydd, Cwmbran has aroused fierce opposition. The site is regarded as a valuable community amenity with a density of public footpaths, cycleways and varied wildlife. Local residents and special

interest groups formed a consortium to fight the plan claiming that it conflicts with planning policy that stresses the importance of parks and open spaces. They proposed an alternative plan that would have allowed the phased building of houses in four discrete areas while preserving much of the 'green wedge'. The Environment Agency added its support stating, *"a stock of green wedge must be maintained"*. All this has been to no avail and Torfaen CBC remains determined to proceed. Mike Jacob has calculated that the Council would earn £7 million in capital income and £1,222,000 in annual revenue income from the development. The Welsh Assembly Government has refused to intervene.

The proposal for a WRU rugby academy, 210 houses, a hotel and business park at Island Farm, Bridgend was opposed by over 5,000 people, the Assembly's Agriculture Department, AMs from the four political parties and environmental organisations. Objections were based on the loss of the "green wedge" separating three villages, the destruction of important wildlife habitats, the loss of Grade 2 agricultural land and the availability of an alternative site at Pencoed. Despite these objections, along with strong reservations being expressed by a planning inspector and a former planning minister, First Minister Rhodri Morgan rejected a request to call in the application. Peter Black AM responded by claiming that the Welsh Assembly Government's "commitment to sustainable development is now non-existent".

Transport proposals also demonstrate the Assembly Government's unwillingness to stand up to local authorities that demonstrate a woeful understanding of, if not contempt for, sustainable development.

In 2001, Gwynedd County Council applied to grant itself planning permission to build a new road to replace part of a coastal road, near Rhiv on the Llyn Peninsula, which had had to be closed because of a landslide. Although a consultant concluded that it

was feasible to rebuild the existing road by anchoring it to the bedrock, Gwynedd County Council opted for a new road that would cut through ancient woodland and the garden of a Grade II listed building that had been the home of one of Wales' most distinguished poets, RS Thomas. The planning officers had recommended a deferment, pointing out that the application was contrary to a number of policies in the Dwyfor Local Plan, the Gwynedd Structure Plan and Planning Policy Wales. The Council's decision was described as "an act of cultural and environmental vandalism" by R.S. Thomas' son, Gwydion, and was opposed by a coalition of eight leading environmental organisations. Nevertheless, a request to the Assembly Government's Planning Minister to call in the application was rejected.

The Bargoed by-pass was planned in the mid 1980s to relieve congestion and promote regeneration in the town centre. By the time that Caerphilly County Borough Council submitted a planning application, the simultaneous creation of a plateau for retail development, principally a supermarket, was also regarded as a crucial aspect of the regeneration plan. Opponents produced evidence to show that edge-of-town supermarkets harm existing shops and cost jobs. Objections were raised about building the bypass through the newly created Bargoed Country Park. Conflicts with the Council's Unitary Development Plan and Planning Policy Wales were pointed out. The most damning criticism, though, came from transport expert, Professor John Whitelegg of Liverpool University. As he said:

"I have been looking at road proposals for over 25 years and have looked at literally hundreds of schemes across the UK. I have never seen anything this poor before. Never. It's a dreadful scheme, a dog's dinner. All I can say is that there must be something very strange going on in that part of the world."



Site of the proposed concrete bridge over the river Rhydney, which is home to otters.

In January 2002, the Assembly's Environment Minister, Sue Essex, committed £17 million of Assembly funding for the proposal and, in June 2003, Caerphilly CBC granted itself planning permission.

Perhaps the Assembly Government's most outrageous failure has been its support of the Bluestone Leisure Park in Pembrokeshire. This proposal to build a self-contained holiday complex would include the construction of 340 timber lodges, imported from Estonia, within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. The Park's planning officers recommended refusal as the application was contrary to numerous policies in the Dyfed Structure Plan, the National Park Local Plan and Planning Policy Wales. It was also contrary to Section 61 of the 1995 Environment Act 1995. A major concern was that giving Bluestone the go-ahead would set a precedent for similar developments in National Parks throughout the UK.

The Assembly Government made its position clear early on when it promised a £16 million support

package for the £45 million project, prompting complaints that this placed unacceptable pressure on the Park's planning officers. In December 2003, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Planning Committee rejected their officer's recommendations and voted to approve the application. Even though Planning Policy Wales states that applications which "are in conflict with national planning policies" and "could have wide effects beyond their immediate locality" should qualify to be called in by the Assembly Government, Planning Minister Carwyn Jones refused to do so. As a consequence, the Council for the National Parks has been forced to take costly legal action to take the decision to judicial review.

One key recommendation of the Friends Of the Earth Cymru 'Sustaining Spin' report is for the introduction, in specific circumstances, of a third party right of appeal in the planning system. This would enable communities to play a more effective role in a process that would balance their rights with the rights of developers and would help to

prevent the environmentally and socially harmful practices that have been identified in the case studies.

The difficulties of translating policies on sustainable development into actions should not be underestimated. Yet, the Welsh Assembly Government's rejection of reasonable requests to call in planning applications that are clearly in breach of planning policy and the principles of sustainable development is a missed opportunity. It has caused real anger in a number of communities and seriously undermines its sustainable development credentials. It gives the impression that its commitment to sustainability is merely superficial.

- *Gordon James is Assembly Campaigner with Friends of the Earth Cymru. This article is based on his 2004 FoE Cymru report Sustaining Spin, a critical examination of the mainstreaming of sustainable development by the Assembly Government and Welsh local authorities.*

roadmap



peter sainley berry
offers a guide to the
new european
constitution

a long time ago, working in what was then the Welsh Office, I turned up at what used to be known as the booking office on Cardiff Station to obtain a ticket to London. "Roll on devolution", said the clerk wistfully as he looked at my warrant, "and then my rates will go down". As I said, it was a very long time ago; and sometime before the elephant arrived unexpectedly on Welsh doorsteps in March 1979.

The clerk's confusion struck me as typical of the British public's typically low level of understanding of the way government operates, and indeed of political issues generally. And nowhere is the public's confusion greater than in the marshland of our relations with our European neighbours. And yet it is on this boggy and cratered ground, as slippery as a Portuguese penalty spot, that Welsh voters will be going to the polls, probably in the spring of 2006, to vote on whether Britain should ratify the European Constitutional Treaty.

In the interests of filling a few craters and of making the battleground less marshy, what can we say about this constitutional treaty that European leaders agreed in Brussels on 18 June? First we are not starting from scratch. The existing European Union is the product of almost fifty years of growth and development. It is the largest trading bloc in the world with enormous influence on world trade. It has its own currency – the Euro. It participates, in its own right, in international peacekeeping initiatives such as the Middle East 'roadmap'. With its member states it is responsible for more overseas aid than the USA and Japan combined.

None of this has been achieved without detailed rules and regulations. These currently are set out in a number of

intergovernmental treaties, which, for want of a better phrase, we might call the EU's existing constitution. There is therefore no blank sheet of paper on which a whole institutional structure can be sketched in a few elegant phrases. Structures are already in place, procedures already documented. The challenge is to make them more efficient, and more relevant to a 21st century Europe.

The new treaty builds on these past treaties, frequently incorporating their provisions lock, stock and barrel. The bulk of the new Constitution is simply the existing constitution in a different format. But where possible the new treaty simplifies and clarifies existing arrangements. It makes explicit certain assumptions that hitherto have been implicit – such as the primacy of European law – and fills in gaps left by previous texts.

It also makes some, mostly modest, new provisions. Certainly, the implications for Wales of the Single Market or the Single Currency were far greater than anything in this new treaty.

Nevertheless it does break new ground in pursuit of making the Union a more effective vehicle through which member states can express and achieve their common interest. The focus is on efficiency and transparency of decision making, greater democracy, improved constitutional safeguards and giving the Union a more effective voice on the world stage. At the same time, through the new Constitution the member states have asserted that they are the masters and the Union their servant. Its powers derive from them. They are in charge.

The EU's founding fathers may have had a vision of "an ever closer union"



Balloons in Brussels celebrating the enlargement of the European Union to 25 member states on May 30th 2004.

of countries and peoples. That phrase found its way into successive treaties to the consternation of those who foresaw in such an aim a single European 'superstate'. However, the phrase has been removed in the present treaty.

There is still an important vision. The new treaty speaks of a "common future" for the citizens and states of Europe; and of a Union founded on respect for

"human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights." Its aim is to "promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples". It will work, says the treaty, "for the sustainable development of Europe ... aiming at full employment and social progress" while safeguarding Europe's diverse cultural and linguistic heritage. In the wider world it will "contribute to peace, security and the sustainable development of the earth

and observe the principles of the United Nations Charter".

The new Constitution simplifies the Union's machinery. At present work is sub-divided between three organisational 'pillars', two of which (including Foreign and Security policy) are outside the European Commission. The new treaty scraps this arrangement: all the Union's policies and procedures will be handled in



First group photograph with the Heads of the 25 EU member states and candidate countries, taken at the Dublin Summit in June 2004.

broadly the same institutional way, that is through the European Commission.

To give the EU a more powerful voice in world affairs appropriate to its interests in peacekeeping, international development, humanitarian affairs and the management of conflict situations has become a necessity. Present arrangements regulating the EU's relations with the wider world are messy. In the Commission there is a Commissioner responsible for External Relations; outside the Commission there is a 'High Representative' for Foreign and Security Policy who reports to the Council of Ministers.

The new Constitution combines these roles, in the newly-created person of 'Foreign Minister' who will sit in the Commission as one of its vice-Presidents, although taking instructions primarily from the European Council – that is from the member states. The Foreign Minister will also chair all Council of Ministers meetings devoted to external relations thus providing a coherent policy thread. The Union also acquires a legal personality with which to sign treaties on behalf of member states.

The new Constitution also makes considerable advances in the fields of democracy and human rights. First, a Charter of Fundamental Rights is incorporated in the text. Europeans now have their rights enshrined in law which future European legislation will have to respect. A provision in the new Constitution additionally allows a million citizens to petition the Commission directly for a change in European law.

Secondly, the European Parliament's legislative role will increase dramatically. Its ability to veto proposals for membership of the European Commission, including its President, and to veto the European Union's budget, are enshrined in the new Constitution. The Parliament will now be a body with real power.

Thirdly, the Commission will have to consult national parliaments during the drafting of legislation. If they don't like the proposals – particularly if they don't think an issue should be handled at the European level at all – they can force the Commission to rethink.

Finally, the European Council has been justly criticised for passing legislation

behind closed doors. Under the new Constitution the Council will sit in public when legislating. Decisions will be more transparent, members of the Council more accountable.

The EU's basic institutional structure – the Commission, the Parliament, the Council, the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee – will, with the exception of the Council, not be changed appreciably. The Commission will still act executively in administering European law. It will continue – with advice from the two Committees – to propose legislation for the Council and Parliament to consider.

Limited changes are proposed to the European Commission to improve its efficiency and to stop it from becoming unwieldy. Each country will send one Commissioner to Brussels until 2014, after which the size of the Commission will reduce to two thirds the number of member states.

Greater changes are envisaged for the Council of Ministers, the current body

that brings together the member states. The Constitution provides for Heads of Government to meet in their own distinct institution – the *European Council*. Their job will be to set the strategic foreign and domestic political framework of the Union, keeping it in member state hands. And they will meet now under the chairmanship of a permanent President .

Otherwise the Council of Ministers will continue as now at Ministerial level with meetings being chaired by the appropriate Minister from whichever country is holding the current six monthly rotating Presidency. The system of rotation will continue.

The new Constitution simplifies the European legislative process. Virtually all decisions will be made jointly by the European (Heads of Government) Council and the European Parliament. At present only about half are. The change standardises legislative procedure and makes it more democratic.

Currently a great many decisions have to be taken by unanimity – any one country can veto what is being proposed. But taking decisions on a unanimous basis clearly gets slower and harder as the number of states involved increases. With the accession of ten new member states in May 2004 (and with still more arrivals in the pipeline) a move away from unanimity became imperative.

As a result, under the new Constitution decisions in some forty additional policy areas will be taken by majority vote although key issues, including taxation and foreign policy, will continue to require a unanimous vote.

Much of the debate and argument over the new Constitution concerned the definition of 'majority.' What combination of states, big and small, should be held to constitute a sufficient or 'qualified' majority to take legislative decisions?

Until the Constitution comes into force majority decisions will continue to be made on the basis of a number of votes allocated to each state by the Treaty of Nice, signed in 2000. This treaty was the result of an unsatisfactory compromise and the allocation of votes therein is neither transparent nor logical.

The new treaty proposes instead a clearer 'double majority' system. Decisions will require a majority of states *and* a majority of the Union's population. In future a normal qualified majority will consist of at least 55 per cent of states in the Union – currently 14 states out of the 25 – provided these also represent 65 per cent of the EU's population. However, decisions can be blocked if four member states object. Higher thresholds apply in a few particularly sensitive areas.

In the European Parliament – the other half of the legislative engine – decisions have merely to command a simple majority.

The treaty allows member states – acting unanimously – to extend the scope of majority voting but otherwise the Constitution cannot be amended unless all member states agree. However, if some states want to work together more closely, then they can, as certain have done to embrace the Euro, the Schengen free-travel zone, or to co-operate on defence.

The Constitutional treaty can only come into force if it is ratified by all 25 member states. Each country is free to ratify in its own way and has two years or so to do this. Some, including Britain, will ratify by referendum, probably in the Spring of 2006; others will approve the Constitution on a Parliamentary vote. But because this is an intergovernmental treaty it can only enter force if all governments agree. What then if one government says 'no?'

Here we are in the land of speculation. But it seems improbable that the

immense amount of work involved thus far will simply be thrown away, especially given the popularity of the Constitution – as measured by opinion polls – among the majority of EU citizens. More likely countries saying 'yes' would go ahead, negotiating some semi-detached status with the outsider.

The treaty itself gives no special status to the nations and regions that constitute the member states. These continue to be recognised through the Committee of Regions to which the Constitution gives greater powers on subsidiarity. But the real importance of the treaty to Wales lies principally in how it will affect the EU's development and policies and the relationship between the Britain and her EU partners.

The treaty envisages a Union in which member states will be dominant. This could result in pressure to repatriate elements of European regional and social policy, especially given the budgetary pressures arising from enlargement and the desire of several states to cap the EU budget at 1 per cent of GNP. But such pressure exists already and the value of the Union to Wales has traditionally been perceived in the trading opportunities offered by the Single Market and the inward investment that has flowed in its wake. The new Constitution is designed to ensure that such advantages continue.

- *Peter Sain ley Berry chaired the European Movement in Wales from 1996 to 2000 when he founded the internet webzine 'EuropaWorld' that reports on Europe's contribution to development and humanitarian affairs.*

small battalions



christopher harvie
revisits the theory of
european regionalism
he promulgated in the
early 1990s

In *The Rise of Regional Europe* (Routledge, 1993) I argued that we were seeing a shift of power from the traditional nation-state to smaller regional or cultural-national identities, highly-technologised, environmentally-aware, steered by politicians who linked their local with a European identity

At the time I broadly followed the argument that growing European integration would make for a 'Europe of the Regions' allowing an autonomous Scotland and Wales to slip many of their British moorings without awakening the traumas of D.I.V.O.R.C.E. Their prime socio-economic alignment seemed to be within the European 'core' and in particular alongside the 'bourgeois regions' – roughly the representatives of 'Rhenish welfare-capitalism'. These were blurring the frontiers between traditional nation-states at the same time as renewing technical and social structures in a sustainable way. *Länder* like Baden-Württemberg had a lot to their credit: comprehensive transport, power and recycling policies, combined with imaginative urban re-planning schemes. Compare Strasbourg and Freiburg with a couple of British towns like Bristol and Southampton or, alas, with anywhere in Scotland or Wales. QED.

In the next two years the imponderables multiplied and now we have to look at continental developments through the war-shattered prism of a pillaged East, Euro-American diplomatic breakdown and Anglo-American addiction to big stick politics. True, Scotland and Wales got partial autonomy, and Northern Ireland got a very complex settlement, in 1997-8. Yet, were these real concessions by a traditionally

overmighty centralist state? Did Britain advance at all towards co-operative federalism? Or, far from central politics being pacific, why did one military mobilisation after another distinguish Blair's Britain – often when a crisis within devolved politics loomed? More ominously, was the European reaction to the growing instability of the Balkans and the slapdash interventions of Anglo-America, a less-presentable conservatism, living off economic downturn and anti-refugee emotions, shifting governments of the centre-right to the right-right?

One full term of the National Assembly and Scottish Parliament has also been a sobering experience. While far from being a failure (certainly in comparison with Westminster), difficulties of operating within existing party, industrial and administrative structures have overshadowed many positive outcomes, certainly so far as the media are concerned.

Europe has changed profoundly in 2004. The EU now has 25 nation states, many smaller and poorer than Scotland or Wales. Yet it has drifted far from the Europe of the Regions-friendly paradigm of 1988-92, and perhaps from the Treaty of Rome ethos to something closer to the Locarno pact of the inter-war years: an alliance with the small democracies which are the buffer-zone between the West European 'core', with or without Britain, and ever-problematic Russia.

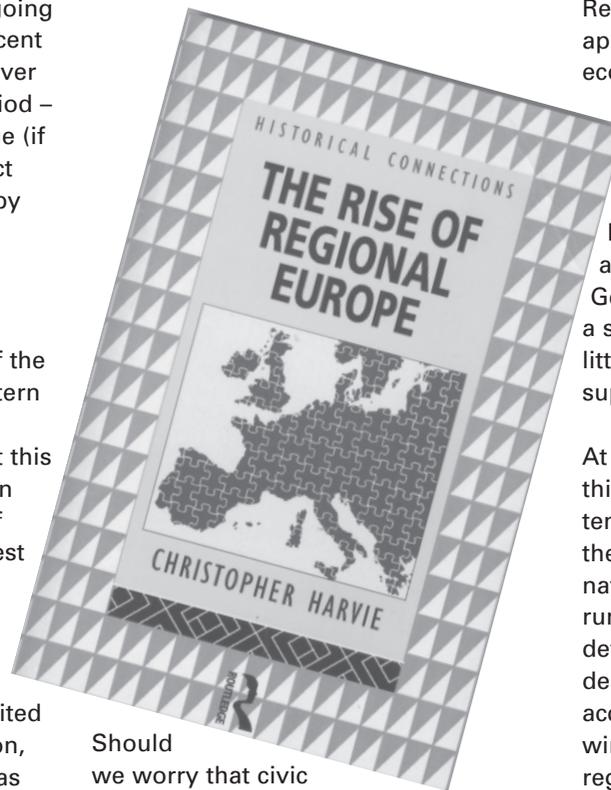
The record of the small EU members has been good compared with the UK: 35 per cent richer, enjoying 64 per cent faster growth, smaller deficits and lower unemployment. Since 1988 'Celtic Tiger' Ireland has been there to encourage, if not exactly to be understood. However, many of the pro-

regional arguments we deployed in the 1980s have been overtaken by events. What use now are the Common Agricultural and Fisheries policies to Scotland while the Structural Funds have thus far not improved the relative GDP of west Wales and the Valleys? Those pressing the regionalist case wanted Wales and Scotland to play like Ireland, combining participation in Council of Ministers and Commission with national enterprise. And, of course in the years from the late 1980s the Irish economy did surge forward, going in twelve years from under 60 per cent of British GDP to near parity. However the Irish conditions during that period – a favourable demography, and huge (if generally under-remembered) direct American investment encouraged by low corporation tax are unlikely to recur and cannot be replicated by either Wales or Scotland.

I still stick with my 1988 analysis of the socio-economic substructures. Eastern central planning was doomed after Chernobyl and the oil price fall, but this took with it, as well as the Comecon market, the huge black economy of East German manufacturing for West German concerns. My 'Privileg' washing machine and spin dryer, and many Ikea goods, were actually 'Ossi': a low wage input into a high-tech economy. If the united Germany stalled after reconstruction, about 1995, this really was what was wrong with it. The ground has mostly been made up: biotech has flourished, along with computerised engineering, environmental engineering; the 'A-class' and 'Smart', the supertrams and ICE trains doing their stuff for not-so-traditional metal-bashing. When Britain's 'incapacitated' (three times the German level) are counted in, unemployment is no worse. But the hiatus has disadvantaged the 'story' of Rhenish capitalism against its 'Anglo-Saxon' competitor.

The battle of images means the future is obscure. Will there be a reversion towards a regionalised 'core' Europe

with strong democratic institutions and civil society, deployed against American globalisation? Or will there be something more fraught? The notion that global US capitalism was benign, and that regionalism could piggy-back on it, looks remote after the Enron and World Com scandals. But if globalism has called time on Britain, what future for Scotland or Wales? Was the restoration of our 'covenanted sovereignty' an antiquarian enterprise in a post-modern world?



Should we worry that civic nationalism, if divorced from actual power, will develop into populist xenophobia? For example, there are, as any Glasgow Saturday will demonstrate, enough sour old grievances powered by underemployed, drunk young men, to fuel this. This is the product of a specifically British dysfunction, though one with roots in ambiguous Scots and Welsh loyalties.

Gordon Brown's high-street-led economic growth, touted around Europe as a success, took little notice of a burgeoning trade deficit, a collapsing stock market carrying with it

the pensions industry, chaotic financing of the formerly state-run public utilities, and unsustainable household debt. The challenge to the small states is to re-balance the situation by a three-pronged strategy of:

- Increasing their socio-economic synergy.
- Co-operating to act as a counter to multinational concerns.
- Playing cultural hardball with 'American' hegemony.

Relying on local loyalties such approaches can regenerate the economy as well as sustaining civil society. There is evidence that, deploying these strategies, some of the stronger regions of 'Old Europe' have done better than Britain infrastructurally, industrially and socially. Baden-Württemberg and Germany have since 1989 coped with a substantial population increase with little political upheaval or growth in support for the far right.

At the same time, on the wider map this has been accompanied by political tendencies which have (with the end of the Cold War and the 're-nationalisation' of fiscal policy in the run-up to the Euro) frustrated and deflected regionalism. With the destabilisation of the Balkans and the accompanying refugee crisis, right-wingers (more nationalist than regional) – Haider in Austria, Bossi in North Italy, Blocher in Switzerland, Le Pen in France, the Vlaamse Blok in Flanders, Pim Fortuyn in Holland, the Still-Partei in Hamburg – have been given a boost.

If the smaller European states and the regions remain isolated, then can we expect more of this, coupled with the criminalising of large tracts of society as their civic resilience is stripped away? In 1988 this wasn't something I took seriously. For instance, the microstates were unknown to theory until Tom Nairn's 'The Abbot of Unreason and the Lord of Misrule', in Neil Evans and Eberhard Bort,



Europes Regions: a patchwork of nascent political expression – l'Europe aux Cent Drapeaux.

Networking Europe (Liverpool University Press, 1999), in which he identified them – Andorra, Monaco, Gibraltar, the Channel Islands, the Cayman Islands, etc. They act as the ball-bearings on which international capitalism rolls, and maintains contacts with its unrepresentable face, a potential linkage between the definitely criminal element and the huge rewards accruing to the chief executive level of international business. British banking's record in operations such as money-laundering is a very dubious one. And of course big businesses which are out to expand – by quite legitimate means – smoking, drinking, gambling and pornography, have knock-on effects on public expenditure. Providing high-cost remedies in health and education increases the returns to PFI concerns.

Old Europe is circumspect, not unenterprising: the success of its policies can't simply be read off graphs of growth. A society which recycles 50 per cent of its rubbish, repairs footwear and electrics instead of junking them, walks and cycles or goes by bus and train will probably register less in the growth stakes than one which shops its head off, fly-tips its waste, and drives everywhere. In this sense the 'Rhenish' regions still provide a sober model. Technology and administrative adaptation take priority because they provide an immediate rationale, and they seem capable of mobilising support in such a way that interest-

groups can be isolated and combated. The coincidence that Wales and Scotland as well as Europe need to get their 'machinery of government' straight could prove a useful opportunity for synergy.

Such remedies ought to be in the first line about human rights, infrastructural and environmental policy and, bluntly, ought to be grounded in the Old Europe of pre-1989. Only if this core is functioning efficiently, will it win the confidence of the accession states. Under Blair and Brown, and facing economic breakdown, Britain is at best semi-detached. Wales and Scotland could play some useful cards to get taken on board.

If there is a growing-together of the major west European nations their own internal regionalism will gain, under the umbrella of general loyalties to European institutions, though the Committee of the Regions has been, alas, a talking shop which inhibits any real regional challenge. However in France since the Mitterrand reforms of 1981 (something in which the present French premier Jean-Pierre Raffarin was closely involved) regional power has been growing and smaller nation-states may be merging together in a more effective intermediate European authority.

A central factor here is the growing discord within the Scoto-British

constitutional settlement. The use of Welsh and Scottish MPs to support unpopular government policies, plus internal dissidence, has made for party egoism, bureaucratisation and policy stasis.

A Scots or Welsh initiative ought to concentrate on co-operation between Europe's smaller states, both in economic policies – and, I would particularly stress, combination against monopoly intentions of the great multinationals, by using investor power and selective boycott – and in seeing that Europe's infrastructural net, of education, communications, banking and transport, is dense and co-terminous with its frontiers. A clash between this and the current Atlanticist policy of the British government is pre-programmed.

- *Christopher Harvie is Professor of British Studies at the University of Tübingen, and Honorary Professor of Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. During 2004-06 he will be engaged in the Institute of Welsh Politics' 'Wales in a Regional Europe' project.*

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summer reading



peter stead

Literary Prizes are much in vogue and creative writing is threatening to become a sustainable career option. There has been a warm response to the announcement that there is a new prize in Wales to be called the *Books You Will Enjoy Award*. Both the Welsh Arts Council and Yr Academi praised the thinking behind the award. At the launch, held in Cardiff's Old Arcade, the following longlist of potential winners was announced:

- **Mario Basini**, *Forged Identity*. The nation's No. 1 journalist explains how he was born Dai Thomas in Bargoed and only later claimed to be a Merthyr Italian in order to be made editor of an undergraduate magazine.
- **Carolyn Hitt**, *Winning Rugby*. Often described as Welsh rugby's most original thinker, the author discusses in detail the tactics that will bring success in the next World Cup.
- **Martin Shipton**, *Rhodri; The Sunday School Years*. In the third of his ten-volume biography of Rhodri Morgan, the Western Mail's political reporter argues that it was in Sunday School that the First Minister learnt his political ethics and public speaking skills.
- **Karl Francis**, *Armageddon; The Screenplay*. The full text of this director's long-awaited, BAFTA prize-winning film of *The Book of Revelations* that was filmed over ten years on location near Tregaron, in the Rhondda and on the Galapagos Islands.
- **John Davies**, *The Dumbing Down Myth*. The nation's favourite TV don passionately and convincingly denies that there has been a lowering of intellectual standards in the media's telling of Welsh History.
- **Roy Noble**, *The Great Welsh Jokes*. A convenient compendium of all 25 Welsh jokes arranged in preferential order with full attributions of when they were first told. This is familiar material but No. 22 (the brilliant one about the orgy in Lampeter) was new to me.
- **Dai Smith**, *Idwal Pugh*. Our leading literary critic is in brilliant form as he discusses the life and work of the Gelli novelist who was a friend of Lenin and who famously went fishing with Hemingway in Cuba before becoming a Hollywood producer.
- **Meic Stephens**, *The Art of Welsh Dying*. The acknowledged expert examines how Welsh writers and artists have died. Not surprisingly 90 per cent died in bed, but of that number only a half were in bed on their own.
- **Russell Goodway**, *Ely; A Walking Tour*. This is a charming and informal guide to the Cardiff suburb that the former mayor knows so well. Lots of surprises here, not least in its explanation of the area's accessibility.
- **Dave Phillips**, *Crypto-Fascism*. The Swansea Labour councillor exhaustively analyses the political doctrine that in his mind allowed the Lib Dems to come to the fore in the recent elections.
- **David Parry-Jones**, *Commentating For Wales*. The veteran broadcaster argues that the principality is now capable of fielding the strongest team of rugby pundits in the world.
- **Sam Hammam**, *Nothing Common At Leckwith*. A tantalising account of what premiership football will entail for traffic congestion in Sloper Road. Never have the implications and complexity of football big business been so thoroughly analysed.
- **John May**, *Losing It*. The experienced chronicler analyses how and where leading Welsh personalities lost their virginity. The biggest surprise is that 58 per cent of respondents confess that it happened at Llangrannog. Barry Island was second and the Chapel Vestry third. For an amazing 115 personalities the question did not apply.
- **Trevor Fishlock**, *High Noon at Efail Wen*. A vivid account of the remarkable day when completely by chance Fishlock, John Davies, Sara Edwards, Ray Gravelle, Rupert Moon and Jamie Owen all turned up with separate crews to record programmes in Efail Wen. This is a hilarious account of traffic congestion, electricity failure and mayhem in the dining room. The essential character of Welsh broadcasting is beautifully conveyed.
- **Neil Kinnock**, *Confessions*. The former Party Leader admits that if he had his time over he would rather have been a rock star or a Cardiff City centre-forward. Movingly he recalls how he first fell in love with Europe on a school trip to Calais in 1947.
- **Dafydd Elis-Thomas**, *The Canterbury Dialogue*. The text of the debate between the Presiding Officer and the Archbishop of Canterbury in which the latter makes clear his debt to the former.
- **Rhodri Morgan**, *A Good Spoiling Game*. The First Minister's guide to the golf courses of Wales with full details on the hazards likely to be encountered at each hole.