

# agenda

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# agenda

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## reaching higher

**W**as the deal reached in the National Assembly in June on University top-up fees an attempt to produce a sustainable, holistic approach to higher education funding? Or was it an opportunity seized by the Opposition parties to ambush Rhodri Morgan's minority government? The analysis on pages 32-34 by Professor Teresa Rees, chair of the Assembly Government's Review group on Higher Education Funding and Student Support, suggests that it was a bit of both.

There are some good things in the package. In future fees will only be payable after students have graduated and can afford to pay, at about £8 a week on a £20,000-a-year income. However, as Professor Rees argues, the real barrier to students entering higher education is the large debts they incur in paying their maintenance costs. The introduction of a Welsh bursary scheme, to be targeted at the less well-off students, is a welcome, partial response to this problem.

On the face of it the deal also addressed the chronic under funding that is threatening to destabilise Welsh higher education. It is estimated that there is a £100 million-a-year gap between higher education spending in Wales and the rest of the UK. The Assembly Government has undertaken to examine this problem before the end of the current budget round. But from where is the extra money to be found? It is widely acknowledged that a thriving university sector is essential if we are to build the much sought after knowledge-based economy in Wales.

The Assembly's decision that Welsh domiciled students will be eligible for a £1,800 grant to offset the rise in fees from the present £1,200 to £3,000 a year will only exacerbate this general funding problem. Undoubtedly the move will encourage Welsh- students to study in Wales and thereby promote retention of more of our graduates. However, the estimated cost will be £32 million in the first year in 2006-07, rising to £50 million in the second. These are estimates since the grant will also have to be given to students within the EU outside the rest of the UK and no-one knows how many more will study in Wales as a result. Moreover, beyond 2010 the £3,000 cap on student fees in England will be lifted and most observers believe they will then rise substantially.

The Assembly has decided to underwrite top-up fees for Welsh students and to demand that an extra £100 million be found for the higher education. However, it has made no accompanying recommendation on where the money is to be found. The worry is that some other part of Assembly Government's education budget will be raided. Can it be justified to reduce spending on early years, primary or secondary education in order to fund deferred top-up fees for largely middle class university students who can afford to pay?



## upfront

### 4 destination unknown

In the wake of France and Holland's rejection of the Union's forward march, **chris harvie** asks: whatever happened to regional Europe?

## 10 news



### 35 geography of opportunity

**bruce katz** describes the evolution of American neighbourhood policy and what it could mean for Wales

### 37 gwynfor

**dafydd wigley** looks at the career of 'the greatest Welsh statesman of the 20th century'



## politics & policy

### 25 virtual parliament

**john osmond** unpacks the recent White Paper extending the Assembly's powers

### 29 the new centralism

**kevin morgan** and **stevie upton** query whether merging the Quangos into the Assembly Government will achieve the desired results

### 32 reality cheque

**teresa rees** argues that an evidence base should inform student funding decisions

## economy

### 39 buzz factor

**yvette vaughan jones** says culture is the driver of the new economy



### 42 labour flexibility

**eurfyl ap gwilym** examines the case for and against regional pay differentials

## social policy

### 46 out of reach

**nic wheeler** offers policy options to deal with the crisis of housing affordability in the National Parks.

### 50 learning how to learn

**shan richards** outlines the main features of the new Foundation Phase early years curriculum being developed for Welsh schools



COVER STORY  
Dyfodol yr iaith / Future of the Language

### 12 welsh in the family

**elaine davies** describes the work of Twf in building a bilingual Wales

### 15 conversing with english

**margaret deuchar** argues that we have every reason to be confident about the co-existence of Welsh with its dominant neighbour

### 17 welsh art

**ivor davies** weighs in on the debate over a National Gallery

### 21 venetian odyssey

**wiard sterk** reports on a visit to the 2005 Biennale

## coming up...

- **IWA National Eisteddfod Lecture 2005.** Cyfansoddi Ewrop: Heaethu Ffiniau (Creating a New Europe: Enlarging Our Borders), Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, National Eisteddfod at Y Faenol, near Caernarfon, Tuesday 3 August, in Y Stiwdio at 12 noon. Lecture to be delivered in Welsh with simultaneous translation. For other Creu Cyfle-Cultural Explosion events at the Eisteddfod see page 10
- **Gwent Branch Day Conference and Lunch** The Hidden Economy of Rural Wales. 29 September 2005 Coleg Gwent, Usk Keynote speaker: Professor Terry Marsden, Cardiff University. £50 for Conference and lunch
- **Cardiff Lunch.** Social Innovation and Change with guest speaker Geoff Mulgan, Director of the Young Foundation and former policy adviser at No 10. Thistle Hotel, Cardiff. Friday 30 September. £30 (£27.50 for IWA members)
- **West Wales Branch Dinner**, with guest speaker Adam Price MP for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, Haliwell Centre, Trinity College, Carmarthen. Friday 7th October 7.00pm

## just published...

- **Wales on the Web** Gregynog Paper by Andrew Green, National Librarian of Wales, £7.99

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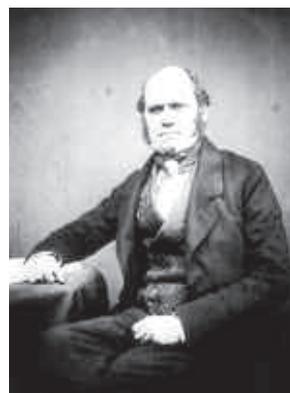
## environment

### 53 climate change

Faced with crushing global threats **paul flynn** says we need a paradigm shift to change the way we run our economy

### 55 cherished heartland

**peter midmore** on a search for a vision for the future of upland Wales



### 61 blue sky research

**marc clement** explains how Swansea University is getting to grips with Life Science, the most fertile source of technology transfer in the world

## the last word

### 64 peter stead



## science

### 57 when sugar is not so sweet

**Anthony Campbell** and **Stephanie Matthews** reveal the startling discoveries they have made about lactose intolerance

# destination unknown

In the wake of France and Holland's rejection of the Union's forward march, **chris harvie** asks: whatever happened to regional Europe?



**"The sub-nationalisms which flourish in Catalonia, Scotland and some German Lander relate to the wider crises of identity which have affected all member states ... the last time this happened on so wide a scale was in 1917-22." This was Keith Middlemass writing in 1995, and seeing – fairly positively – a possible counterweight to recrudescing national tensions in the regions of Europe. Not much of the vision was perceptible in June 2005. Not only was the European Constitution killed by the French and Dutch referenda, but the Anglo-Europe clash at Brussels over the budget meant that regions like Wales, hoping to retain structural funding, would struggle for its continuation, let alone for increases in resources. A shattering case of hubris, after a decade in which in geographical extent, the European Union had changed out of all recognition**

**a**s the begetter of *The Rise of Regional Europe*, published by Routledge twelve years ago, do I owe an explanation? Regionalism wasn't an event or a process, but a history of people and issues, with all history's unpredictability. Extending my 'take' on 1989-91 to 2005 would show the continuing uniqueness of events. So, too, was a sequence of short-term, short-sighted decisions which resulted in a disabling unification, rather than the remaking of East Germany, the former DDR, as a mediating economy

between the West and the former Comecon. Then the financial preparations for the Euro in 2000 repatriated power from the regions to the nation-states.

The period 1989-91 also coincided with a series of ideological and technological changes which went far beyond those of 1917-21. Some re-awoke deep strategic issues, others challenged social doctrine. On the whole regionalism – as evidenced by the successful 'Rhenish' (that is, social-market) capitalism model that flourished for a nanosecond in Britain in 1994 as 'stakeholding' – has coped pretty well. The problem has lain with the national and supra-national level, with gung-ho militarists and fiddled facts, an over-mighty media, and oligarchies more responsive to plutocratic interests than to pressure from below.

## national life and character

In 1893 an Oxford don turned Australian politician, Charles Henry Pearson, produced a book that caused a furore then, and seems an uncannily accurate forecast now. *National Life and Character* argued, against the imperialism of the time, that the era of European expansion and of global free trade was reaching its limits. The white races would find much of the tropical world uninhabitable; they would stick to temperate areas and consolidate through state-run social welfare and economic protection. The 'lower races' – Pearson was unapologetically of his time – having no individualist tradition, would adapt successfully to the organisation of factory industry. And – in a forecast resembling Werner Sombart's 'Asiatic Mode of Production' in his *Modern Capitalism* of 1902 – he saw China and Japan becoming the manufacturing centre of the world. Pearson's book was enthusiastically praised by leading Liberal internationalists, such as Professor James Bryce, author of *The Holy Roman Empire* (1867) and *The American Commonwealth* (1889), as well as social-imperialists like the future American president Theodore Roosevelt. In Australia it underlaid the 'white Australia' policies demanded by organised labour, and the ethos in which the Murdoch family shifted from Free Kirk to yellow press.

Of course, behind the current crisis is a concatenation of short-term changes, but certain of our responses are also programmed by a longer term historical memory, reinforced by ideological debate and by historical adaptation. This is particularly important in understanding why the creation of a relatively modest and pacific European civic order, geared to sustainable development, has been overtaken by the recrudescence of ways of thinking that seem to belong to a hundred years ago.

This problem divides into four main areas: first: the global nature of the post-1989 crisis, and the extent to which it conformed to Pearson's paradigm; second: the more intimate relations of the European states, their populaces and programmes; third: the politics of the 'region-as-arena' ranging from family to continent. However, all of these were subordinated to changes in the fourth: the technostructure.

But first a word of caution about the instruments of research that have sought to enhance our understanding of regional issues and dynamics. The 1990s saw the rapid development, often with European funds, of 'regionalistic' bodies which were essentially affirmative – the European Centre for Federalism Research at Tübingen, sponsored by Land Baden-Württemberg, the politics programme at the European University Institute, Florence, the Institute of Welsh Politics at Aberystwyth, the Constitution Unit at University College, London and the Institute of Governance in Edinburgh. The number of 'regional' hits on the British Library of Political Science catalogue, that prefaced *The Rise of Regional Europe* in 1992, had risen by 2005 from 150 to 3,317, and been enormously enhanced by information available over the internet.

The political culture of regionalism, moreover, extended far beyond politics, a factor neglected by orthodox political scientists. It embraced economics, art and architectural history, transport, historical geography, folk custom, dialect, religion and cooking. Such trace-elements irrupted in occasions like the North East referendum, which showed that local patterns of retailing and football enthusiasm simply didn't transfer into political regionalism: indeed they may, at least psychologically, have replaced it. Only by returning to this broad spectrum – and recognising that Pat Kane's *The Play Ethic* or Joanna Blythman's *Shopped* may count for as much as a volume of the Constitution Unit's *The State of the Nations* – can we salvage this deal.

## technostructure

My first edition was drafted in 1992 on a 'green screen' computer using WordPerfect, for mere academics a speedier and more reliable text programme than Word! Even so, an ordinary PCU had more capacity than 'Mother' the original room-sized valve-driven computer that Phil Williams

remembered at Manchester in the 1950s. Only in 1996 did my office get e-mail and only in 1999 did I become a regular user of reliable search engines. Measured in equipment and computing capacity this revolution – driven by ever more capacious semi-conductors – is still underway. At some point in the later 1990s it became possible to send complex three-dimensional plans by computer and use these to programme mass-production manufacturing equipment which could be operated – or more properly supplied and emptied – by low-skill labour. All other things being equal 'real time' meant the choice would go to the lowest cost site, in one industrial Gulag or another.

Such output still came to a smallish proportion of international trade and it didn't affect the installation and operation of complex service systems such as railways or corporate computers. Moreover, it interfered with 'sinister interests' at its peril. 'Expert systems' could be used to simplify and rationalise professional occupations, with a greater or lesser degree of 'programmed' human input. But this was moderated by the resistance both of qualified workforces and of elites who saw themselves (and their allies, salaries and families) as indispensable and did not wish to be disadvantaged. Global finance did not require Londons, Frankfurts or New Yorks, but the people who ran it did!

Equally, computer-driven manufacturing systems could not work on their own. They required modernised transport and (again through the agency of computers) they soon got it. In the hands of international logistics firms computers could control the accessibility and marshalling of containers, and find them paths by lorry, freight-train and superfreighter. Air freight could develop to fill surplus capacity created by the growth in international tourism. The rub was that many of the factors that influenced this trade might not be legal, socially stable, or ecologically tolerable. Leaving the ecology aside, containers (less than 1 per cent of which are checked) are already a means of transit for drugs, terrorists and maybe bombs; the ease of road communications via the Trans-Africa Highway caused the continent's disastrous AIDS epidemic. 'Step on a plane like a bus' demonstrated its risks in 9/11; it could yet deliver an even greater disaster in the shape of Asian bird-flu.

The problem was that (a) private capital didn't fancy paying environmental costs; and (b) the social disruptions produced by a continually-altering technostructure demanded defensive solutions. The first put pressure on the region, the second reinforced the nation-state. Redundancies through global competition bore heavily on social insurance and unemployment benefits, traditionally national responsibilities. Migration remained substantially under national control. The rapidity with which drugs and crime moved in on areas stricken by industrial decline caused an appeal to national politicians to 'do something

about'...immigrants, usually. The region remained where geotechnology was possible, where the footprint of carbon-burning excess could be diminished, and where worthwhile jobs could be created to rectify ecological damage.

## macropolitics

Pearson's *National Life and Character* came out at a time of mega-theorising about international relations. Not just the development of international law but the more sinister, force-based mechanisms of military and naval conquest. Within four years Count Schlieffen of the German General Staff would start planning the next European land war. The American Admiral A.T. Mahan had already, in his *Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (1890) argued for naval dominance. In a riposte to this in 1904, the British liberal imperialist geographer Halford Mackinder argued in *The Geographical Pivot of History* for a land-based 'geopolitics' dominated by the Eurasian world island, the key to whose control lay in the area from the Carpathians to the Black and Caspian seas and the Caucasus. In a rubric whose rhythm came from Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, he wrote:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland.  
Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island  
Who rules the World Island commands the World.

Mackinder, a conservative democrat, drew from his speculations more constructive lessons about the inner government of the core nations, in his case Britain, which would become a regional federation of the nationalities plus three English regions. As far as the admirals and generals themselves were concerned the nations were the source of taxation revenue, and that was that.

As *The Rise of Regional Europe* made clear, this war-driven economy and intellect endured until the 1980s, ending (or appearing to end) only with the collapse of the Cold War. Rationalisations, like those of Francis Fukuyama, who claimed that the historical dialectic was at an end, proved not just premature but absurd. By 2001 it was apparent that hostilities had merely altered, not ceased, and that the new, and even more fanatical enemy, was infinitely more difficult to deal with than the Soviet Union had been in an old Great Game with a straightforward rule book. Nor was that enemy necessarily represented by Muslim fundamentalism; as in the United States the reaction to instability took the form of a return to theological primitivism and anti-scientific ideology.

The 'neo-liberalism' which had been the saddle with President Reagan had essentially been agnostic and scientific (if he ever bothered to notice it). In a practical sense it was a form of 'competitive federalism': strongly reliant on the regional development of the 'sunbelt states',

mainly Texas and the Silicon Valley of California, coupled with inner-city reconstruction (aka the pink dollar) in the North-East. Neo-conservatism, under George Walker Bush, styled itself as rural rather than urban, nationalistic, religious, and defensive of American 'traditional' rights such as guns and big cars. Economic rationality continued to expand, with the further exporting of manufacturing industry to the far east, and the drastic rationalisation of domestic retailing, through concerns such as Wal-Mart which extracted 'synergies' (cost-and wage-savings) by squeezing out the middlemen, and a teen culture of bling-bling and hip-hop totally free of any troublesome notions of ecology and citizenship. Under neo-Conservatism, the resulting problems would be combated (or, rather, pace G W Bush, dried out) by invocations of patriotism, faith and doctrine, and of course the struggle – conveniently remote from Peoria – for Mackinder's Heartland and all that oil under its arid surface.

What America did was significant for Europe. In 1889 James Bryce had, in *The American Commonwealth*, seen federalism sustained by conventions which were not printed as part of the Constitution: the party organisations, the progressive movement, the liberal religious establishment and the more elevated part of the press. He regarded these as having functions similar to the political culture of Great Britain – Bagehot's *English Constitution* (1867), Trollope's novels, nonconformity, etc. – and its 'flexibility'. Contemporary European jurists such as Judge David Edward of the Supreme Court in Luxembourg regarded such conventions as a critical element in creating common political practices, an effective fraternité – and the growth of regionalism, both within states and across borders, could be numbered with them. In the 1990s, however, these conventions in Europe would be put under immense strain by their breakdown in the USA.

## inflating the union

'What has become of the barbarians?' wrote the Alexandrian poet Constantine Cavafy way back before 1914: 'They were a kind of solution.' The implications of the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite states took several years to work out. Not least the realisation that social structures within the former USSR's former nations varied enormously, with the most westernised regions such as the Baltic states experiencing a West European rate of net population decline, and the Moslem republics of central Asia registering staggering levels of population increase.

It was the instability in the Russian-led legacy group, the Commonwealth of Independent States, which made it necessary for the EU to come rapidly to terms with the former Comecon countries closer to the west. They had been subject to typical Communist rule – nominal parliaments which vested authority in Central Committees



"Just when France and Holland rejected the European Constitution, France and Germany signed an accord on building a network of high-speed rail routes between Paris, Strasbourg, Stuttgart and Frankfurt".

of the party. Mistakes were made. For example the original proposals made by Helmut Kohl for a period of *zusammenwachsen* (growing together) during which time the former DDR would retain its separate currency would probably have been optimal for Eastern Europe, as well as the two Germanies. The DDR could have retained most of its industrial investment while loan finance from former West Germany could have continued to keep markets in the east open.

This didn't happen, partly through the delusion of DDR burghers that the conversion to the Deutschmark would bring wealth, rather than the collapse of their robust, low-cost industries, something which weakened constitutional East Europe. In the mid-1990s there was a disturbing to-ing-and-fro-ing of power in the new democracies – from right to left to right again – plus premature disillusion and the revival of the old communist parties. What then happened

was a dash to incorporate within the Western liberal order such East European states as could function as a buffer against an increasingly incalculable Russia. Most of these had been at least nominal democracies in the Versailles settlement and even under the Soviets had had qualified elements of political pluralism. Ironically it was the DDR which was the most Stalinist, persisting in a ritualised communism which had in the 1960s vanished from almost everywhere else.

By the late 1990s, with relapses into authoritarianism in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine – and the persistence of bizarre (but to the CIA tolerable) Stalinist cults in the central Asian republics, it must have seemed that the manoeuvre had succeeded. Yet Russia, under the increasingly authoritarian Vladimir Putin, could only be contained by promising allied status to the 'Succession States' aka 'New Europe'. Yet where was this to stop? The alternative to negotiations was

the catastrophic breakdown of multi-ethnicity in Yugoslavia, and that was only the tip of a succession of complex national, religious and ethnic clashes in the Balkans, where such disputes gradually melded with those which dominated the Middle East.

Mackinder's geopolitical arena was back (it had never altogether disappeared from American military philosophy), and in its wake it dragged in the philosophy that order be imposed by military force rather than the encouragement of civil society. The regional idea was new in the former Soviet Union where Stalin's subordinate nationalities had been ethnic Potemkin-villages run by nominated Central Committees. Gorbachev's Perestroika didn't envisage giving them real powers, but they got them all the same when central authority broke down. They became important to the West, firstly because the oil wealth of the Caucasus, and secondly because their usually corrupt governments offered protection and concessions to multinational firms. Putin responded by replacing regional democracy within Russia by appointed governors.

The problem with all this was the scope that it gave for the wealthy, mischievous and malicious to interfere, and such groups were particularly prominent in big business and the media after the end of the Cold War. Free enterprise had delivered to them the first fruits of the new technology; it had also established significant strategic and cultural relations through the microstates of West Europe, in particular those belonging to Britain (Gibraltar, Jersey, Guernsey, the Isle of Man and – why not? – the City of London). These were already accomplished in doing this by the way in which they had 'recycled' Arab oil loot in the 1970s. Such owners of vast wealth had exactly the same interest in avoiding governmental control as the motives which the Euro-enthusiasts had for imposing it. Moreover they were able to draw on the ability of the post-Soviet oligarchs to transform themselves into secular millionaires, able to use the new technology to

confederate wealth among the multinational companies, and to use the specialised skills of accountancy firms, mass entertainment and sports companies, international consultants and banks. Finance capital became critical not because of its utility in stimulating national development, but because of the autonomy it offered to the possessors – whether legal or illegal – of vast wealth and few responsibilities.

This had always been in industrially-overspecialised regions – such as Scotland – a means of wealth getting away from perilously international market-dependent industry. Now great and footloose wealth became a region of its own, capable of challenging existing civic and political regions and confederations of regions, and of defeating them.

## these islands

The British experience illustrated how far and fast quasi-global capitalism had run away with the situation. Aided by real time communications and political clout, its mega-firms had far more manoeuvrability and resilience than either central governments or regional authorities. This was not accompanied by any equivalent social responsibility: the Fordist ideal of corporate welfare was replaced by highly personal forms of individual and family dominance, coupled with tax avoidance through transfer pricing, and political pressure exercised at the highest political level.

Even so, small nationalism seemed unhelpfully successful. Statist Norway controlled its oil and held on to 11 billion barrels when Britain, having sold much of the stuff off at the bottom of the market, was down to 4.7 billion. After 1986 Ireland, which had lagged British growth by nearly 45 per cent since the 1940s, made a determined spurt for development, utilising to the full its full membership of the EU (in which it became a virtuoso at grants applications),

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pharmaceuticals and software development, and besides this a status sometimes described as that of the Fifty-first state of the USA. This was patently far more than other small UN member states were capable of, let alone the regions of the United Kingdom. Although it still left Ireland a country of repatriated profits and deep social divisions, it appealed a lot to the semi-autonomous administrations in Scotland and Wales.

In September 1997 devolution was endorsed enthusiastically by the Scots and only just by the Welsh. Yet the National Assembly, with no legislative power and little clout with Westminster – only 4 Welsh acts were passed, compared with 57 in the Scottish Parliament – disrupted Blairite centralisation more than the Scots MSPs (who seemed content to keep house for Labour's London oligarchy) as did the London Assembly, a body elected by the same hybrid electoral system under Ken Livingstone, who though he lost the battle for a publicly-owned London Underground, successfully combated increasing car numbers through a city-centre congestion charge. In Northern Ireland the intensely complex system set up to conciliate the sectarian communities, functioned only long enough to entrench them. Its paralysis has frozen what federal potential there might have been in the British system.

## confederating europe

If Britain, with sovereign power, couldn't get very far along the federal route, what price Europe? The Committee of the Regions announced at Maastricht found its (purely consultative) power diminished from the start by lack of definition of what regions were. Subsidiarity went as far as the Member-States. RegLeg, supposed to organise regions with legislatures, got nowhere despite (because of?) having Scottish First Minister Jack McConnell as its chair in 2003-4. The outcome was that instead of the new constitution being a from-the-ground-up construct, the re-inflated nation launched a 'great power' ethos which seemed to many to combine the bureaucratic arrogance already found in Brussels with a neo-liberal obsession with markets, which so far had only enriched the sort of entrepreneurs who could exert pressure at the centre. A regionalism based on the goal of ecological stability was and is an important propellant within Europe, but the public justifiably resented sustaining a bureaucracy whose aim was not to interfere with market forces.

This often cut across the green goals of localism and regionalism. For example, many German towns have publicly-owned Stadtwerke which combine running public transport, providing electricity and disposing of waste. The threat that this coordination be put out to tender on purely cost grounds, benefiting large international concerns which

have permanent representation in Brussels and access to oligarchies, has come to be abhorred – largely through the British experience – and rightly so.

Just when France and Holland rejected the Constitution, France and Germany signed an accord on building a network of high-speed rail routes between Paris, Strasbourg, Stuttgart and Frankfurt, and their remarkable public transport systems: about the only type of transport structure that will survive the throttling of the car, on grounds of fuel cost as well as climate change. A week later the Swiss, in a referendum, signed up to the Schengen agreement. In this they were following the logic of the wise old man of Rhenish capitalism, Lothar Späth, former Minister-President of Baden-Württemberg, who still sees no limits to the expansion of an eco-hi-tech inter-regional European core.

The roots of effective European co-ordination must be environmental and cultural. The instruments which will enable us to cope with the coming ecological crisis can only be in a limited sense provided by the market. The quality of public transport, the level of cultural and health service provision, and the revival of small and medium-sized industry: these goals require above all planning, citizenship and the 'gift relationship', and an ability to make alliances with regions similarly minded beyond its bounds. Judging by the number of bright students turning up in Tübingen from Poland, Hungary, Greece, Russia, and stimulating the locals – so different from what colleagues experience at British universities – this might be where our little platoons can, with some shrewd alliances, show the way. If necessary, without Britain, Blair and Brown.

- *Chris Harvie is Professor of British Studies and Director of the Welsh Studies Centre at the University of Tübingen. This article is based on a new concluding chapter of The Rise Of Regional Europe, to be published by the University of Wales Press in its second edition at the end of 2005.*

## creu cyfle at the eisteddfod

**Creu Cyfle, the IWA-led project promoting exchanges in the cultural industries between Wales and the ten new accession countries to the EU, has a major presence in this year's National Eisteddfod at Y Faenol, near Caernarfon. Catrin Finch will hold a music workshop for children from the William Mathias Music Centre on the first Saturday afternoon, 30 July, at the IWA / Creu Cyfle stand. At 4pm the same afternoon the artist Osi Rhys Osmond will deliver a lecture, *From Poland to Ystradgynlais: Josef Herman's Carboniferous Collision*, on the work of the Polish painter Josef Herman who made his home in Ystradgynlais in the 1940s and early 1950s.**

On Monday afternoon S4C, one of the project partners will premier five video shorts that have been made by five young Welsh filmmakers on themes connected with the ten new EU member states. These films, made by Daf Palfrey, Siwan Haf, Huw Derfel, Heledd Lewis, and Llinos Griffin, will be broadcast by S4C in October to coincide with the European Youth Summit being held that month in Cardiff.

On Tuesday, at 12 noon in Y Stiwdio, this year's IWA Eisteddfod lecture will be delivered by the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly, Lord Dafydd Elis-

Thomas, on the theme *Cyfansoddi Ewrop: Heaethu Ffiniau* (Creating a New Europe: Enlarging Our Borders).

At 4pm on Wednesday another project partner, Academi, will launch a schools writing competition at the IWA/Creu Cyfle stand with readings by the judges, Mererid Hopwood, Gillian Clarke, Iwan Llwyd, and Malachy Doyle. On Thursday the William Mathias Music Centre will be organising performance on the Maes. On Friday the week's events will culminate in a European debate on the IWA/Creu Cyfle stand at 4pm followed by a reception.



Creu Cyfle – Cultural Explosion – patron Catrin Finch accompanies school children from Caernarfon as they rehearsed 'The Enlargement Song' at the launch of the project. The event took place on 1st July at the Galleri, Caernarfon, to mark the opening of the UK presidency of the European Union.

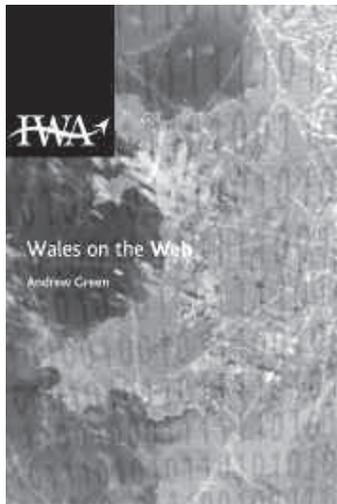
The Creu Cyfle-Cultural explosion project is aiming to:

- Raise awareness in Wales of the cultures of the ten latest countries to join the EU – Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Czech republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus and Malta
- Facilitate opportunities for the creative industries in Wales and the ten new member states to establish trans-national partnerships.

The project will culminate in a major gala concert and conference at the Galleri, Caernarfon on 19 and 20 February 2006.

- More information and how to register cultural industry initiatives as part of the project can be found on [www.culturalexpllosion.net](http://www.culturalexpllosion.net)

## wales on the web



**Anthony Barnett, Editor-in-Chief of openDemocracy.net, the online global magazine of politics and culture, is the guest lunchtime speaker at a conference on Wales on the Web, being organised by the IWA at the Thistle Hotel in Cardiff on 5 October. The keynote speaker at the conference will be Andrew Green, the National Librarian and author of *Wales on the Web*, the latest Gregynog Paper published by the IWA earlier this year.**

The conference will address how Wales appears in the online universe, and what the World Wide Web can offer the Welsh people. It will focus on the fundamental issue of content rather than technical aspects of the Internet. Speakers will propose practical solutions on how Wales can improve its presence on the World Wide Web, including the notion of establishing a Welsh 'virtual embassy'.

openDemocracy.net came into its own in the wake of 9/11 in 2001, and since has acted as a forum for expert changes of views on pressing global concerns, including terrorism, climate change and relations between North and South. Since the late 1990s it has accumulated an index of more than 1,500 articles which can be accessed by subscribers.

- For further information e-mail us on [wales@iwa.org.uk](mailto:wales@iwa.org.uk)

## getting to grips with PFI

**Wales has taken a distinctive approach to Private Finance Initiative projects, neither wholly embracing the concept nor rejecting it, but limiting its use to large schemes clearly within the public interest. The reasons are partly ideological - an antipathy towards the private sector - and partly practical - a belief that over time PFI, where a private sector consortium builds an asset and maintains it for 25 to 30 years, will be seen not to have been good value.**

However, opponents of the current approach argue that whether or not this latter view proves to be true over the long term, Wales is missing out on worthwhile infrastructure, health and education projects now when they are needed. The UK government is

committed to spending £110 billion between 2004 and 2029 on PFI but past experience suggests Wales will account for a smaller proportion of the total than its share of population - and its requirement to renew worn-out facilities - would suggest. It is feared by some that England and Scotland, in both of which PFI and PPP are being used more extensively, will pull away from Wales in improving the public environment for their citizens.

Many of the arguments centre around the returns the PFI contractors have been able to make for their work on public infrastructure projects. In some cases where contractors have entered markets with which they were unfamiliar they have been brought close to bankruptcy. Others, benefiting from more accurate pricing, have found it a route to substantial profits. Trade unions are also

concerned that PFI contractors impinge on rights workers hold as public sector employees, and that in the drive for profits working conditions and salaries will come under pressure.

To discuss the arguments the IWA, in association with Morgan Cole, solicitors, and Grant Thornton, accountants, will be holding a one-day conference at the Thistle Hotel in Cardiff on 23 November. Speakers include Economic Development Minister Andrew Davies, who will talk about the Welsh Assembly Government's approach; and Owain Ellis, a senior official within Partnerships UK, the Government body that advises and assists with PFI projects, who has special responsibility for Wales. Other speakers will talk about PFI in the health, education, transport and other sectors and there will also be contributions from

experts in banking, project management, law and contracting.

The conference will be of relevance to a wide range of individuals involved in delivering public sector projects. This includes officials and policy makers in government at the Welsh level and at local authority level, together with managers working in health, housing, transport, education, and infrastructure. It will also be relevant to businesses involved in tendering for public service projects in these fields, or providing consultancy or other services, and to others with an academic or general interest in public private partnerships.

- For further details and to register your interest please call 029 2066 6606 or e-mail us on [wales@iwa.org.uk](mailto:wales@iwa.org.uk)

# welsh in the family



elaine davies  
describes the work of  
Twf in building a  
bilingual Wales

**t**he Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to the creation of a bilingual Wales, as outlined in its 2003 policy document *laith Pawb* identifies language transmission within families as the critical concern:

"We see family language transfer as a key element of our language strategy. So many parents who are fluent in Welsh do not pass on the language to their children ... the Welsh Language Board has developed a successful pioneering project to stimulate and support Language Transmission in the Family, now branded Twf."

Analysis of the 1991 Census had confirmed the vital role of the family in language reproduction. Of the 22.8 per cent of families where one or both parents were Welsh speakers, and so had the potential to reproduce the language in the next generation, it was found that only in 16.5 per cent of the families did transmission occur. As a result the Welsh language was being lost in roughly a quarter of households where either one or both parents had the capacity to pass it on.

In response to these findings, the Welsh Language Board established what was to be the nucleus of the Twf project in Carmarthenshire. In 1999, they appointed a project worker to liaise with midwives and health visitors, to enable them to filter information to parents about the advantages of raising children bilingually.

The success of this pilot project resulted in a similar appointment in Conwy and Denbigh in 2001. In the same year the *laith Cyf.* was appointed as agent for the project

whose coverage was extended into much of north and west Wales, areas with the highest densities of Welsh speakers. The organisation Twf: Magu plant yn ddwyieithog (Growth: Raising Children bilingually) was launched in early 2002. The team has now grown to over 20 and the project operates across most of Wales. But the aim and focus of Twf remain unchanged, to:

- Raise awareness amongst parents and prospective parents of the advantages of early years' bilingualism.
- Bring this message into the mainstream practice of midwives and health visitors and, most importantly,
- Influence the linguistic choice and behaviour of the project's target group, namely mixed language families. The earlier census analysis had offered very clear evidence of the fragility of the language in these families and of their importance in any attempt to revitalise the Welsh language within the private domain.

Today, the drive and energy of the project spring from three main sources. First is the strategic commitment of the Welsh Assembly Government to the creation of a bilingual Wales as outlined in *laith Pawb*. Secondly, the project is fuelled by an increasing body of research evidence in support of early years' bilingualism. Many of the central research findings regarding, for example, the cognitive, curricular and cultural advantages of bilingualism have been distilled to their simplest, most direct level and shared with parents in publications such as a booklet outlining *6 Good Reasons* for giving children two languages and the twice yearly. The twice yearly Twf bulletin also offers a variety of role models and practical tips.

Taking much of its inspiration from the work of Professor Colin Baker, of the University of Wales, Bangor, Twf has consistently adopted the principle of sharing with parents robust information which then empowers them to make informed choices and decisions. Words such as persuasion and influence, although often used to describe the process of Twf's work with parents, have no place in the team's professional rationale. Parental self-determination is paramount.

Yet, the message is up-beat. And there is no shortage of evidence. Through recent research by people such as Ellen Bialystok in Canada and Andrea Mechelli in London, we are getting to know more and more about the way in which babies and very young children are finely tuned neurologically to acquire languages with amazing ease and competence. This is the kind of research which leads Professor Baker to argue that:

"Children are born ready to become bilinguals and multilinguals. Too many are restricted to becoming monolinguals. No caring teacher or parent denies children the chance to develop physically, socially, educationally or emotionally. Yet, we deny many children the chance to develop bilingually and multilingually"  
*A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism*  
Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2000

Twf's challenge is to translate this to parents in a way which is palatable and non-threatening.

The third of Twf's drives comes from the experience of parents themselves. Increasingly, through meeting parents in local clinics and playgroups, through talking with them in festivals and events across Wales, and inviting features for the Twf bulletin, we learn more and more about the practical strategies adopted by mixed language families and the deep satisfaction they

derive from their children's bilingualism. What then happens is that families act as role models for one another, sharing ideas and instilling confidence.

A parent quoted in an early edition of the Twf bulletin spoke of her mixed language family and of her two young children, aged 3 and 4, in the following terms:



Mixed language families that are passing on the language from the left Julie Anthony with 2 year old daughter Gwen from Cardiff; husband Steve is learning Welsh. Rhian Green and her 18 month old son Gruffydd from Radyr; husband Joel is also learning Welsh. And Becky Dow with baby son Ifan from Abercych near Cardigan; husband Peter is learning Welsh as well. The three women were in school together in north Pembrokeshire. All chose non-Welsh speaking partners but are bringing their children bi-lingually.

"It's fantastic, the way they're able to switch from one language to another. It happens naturally, no problem at all and they love it."

Twf project workers therefore have the task of harnessing these three sources of energy, making sense of them and using them to inform parents. If you were to shadow a project worker in any part of Wales you would find yourself on a round of visits, discussions, presentations, question and answer sessions, informal chats. Everything done by the worker is underpinned by his or her ability to communicate. The aim is to inspire without being

evangelical, sharing information and yet creating space to listen to parents' questions and worries.

In an antenatal clinic a midwife may already have shared some of Twf's materials with parents and then invited the project worker to talk with parents about the advantages of introducing Welsh at home. Themes include what we know about the way in which young

children acquire language in the early years; the importance, if possible, of starting from day one; the local support available to parents through Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and a whole range of Welsh medium and bilingual resources.

Off then to meet parents in a local Sure Start programme, to read a story, to sing a few songs to engage parents and children before allowing time to answer parents' questions and concerns about bilingualism. Do children get confused? Isn't it better to leave it all to school? What about helping with homework later on if you don't speak Welsh yourself?

As the project has gained momentum over the past four years, local and national networks have grown and the value of partnerships and open, inclusive ways of working have become apparent. When a language, or indeed any social institution is under threat, there is a real temptation to raise the drawbridge, create a fortress, look inwards. But from the outset, Twf has learned that to stand any chance of fulfilling its three aims of raising parental awareness; influencing professional practice and changing linguistic behaviour, it has to practise in a way which welcomes new and often unlikely partners. We have learnt to be sensitive to the fears and anxieties of those who do not see themselves as part of the language community.

So what of Twf's record to date? An evaluation by Professor Viv Edwards and her team at Reading University in the Autumn of 2003 concluded that Twf was already making significant strides towards meeting its aim of helping health care professionals integrate information about bilingualism into their day to day work with parents. Despite the real difficulty of asking midwives and health visitors, already heavily weighed down by work commitments, to take on board yet another issue, there is tangible evidence of their readiness to do so.

Alongside this focus on local practice, Twf is invited to take part in pre-qualifying training for midwives and health visitors in Wales. This serves to flag up awareness of the project and its underpinning knowledge base during professional training. Work on a policy level runs alongside this, in an effort to bring together different strands of Welsh Assembly Government thinking in relation to language and health. In this respect, Twf offers a good example of the challenge of implementing different aspects of Assembly Government policy in a holistic and meaningful way, ensuring that the cross-cutting thrust of *laith Pawb* is put into practice.

The second aim, that of raising awareness of the value of bilingualism, undertaken through direct work with parents and partners, through branding and marketing and through promotional events, such as the annual road show with S4C's *Planed Plant Bach*, was also acknowledged positively in Professor Edwards' evaluation.



However, it is the third plank of Twf's strategic aims, that of changing the linguistic behaviour of target families, which is by far the most challenging and the most difficult to evaluate. It has been recognised that isolating, or concentrating solely on mixed language families is both impossible and no doubt undesirable. To do so would risk narrowing and marginalising the remit and activity of the project as a whole. Far better, it could be argued, to share an up-beat message about the value of the Welsh language and bilingualism with as wide a group of parents as possible.

Hopefully this makes it possible for the Welsh speaking family to be armed with positive information to share with neighbours or in-migrants. It should

also help us view our use of Welsh and our bilingualism with greater confidence and esteem. Ditching a targeted approach in favour of a more blanket method of work also enables Twf to engage with non-Welsh speaking parents, some of whom may go on to learn Welsh as adults or ensure Welsh medium education for their children.

So, targeting raises problems and is impracticable. Evaluating the part Twf plays in influencing parental decision making is not without its problems either. *Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg* has recently commissioned a team from the University of Wales, Bangor to address this question over the course of the next three years. Time will tell whether those mixed language families studied will be able to isolate and identify Twf's influence on their decision to transmit the language to their children.

Our choices and decisions seldom follow a neat, tidy sequence of cause and effect. More often, we are influenced by a plethora of things, some conscious and others unconscious. The same may well be true of our decisions about language use. And this current study may teach us as much about the influence of factors such as language status; personal perceptions and community language use as about Twf itself.

Yet, regardless of the complex interplay of influences currently effecting parental choice in Wales, there is no doubt that Twf has a vital contribution to make in terms of promoting a positive and inclusive image of the Welsh language, offering equality of access and opportunity to children and families and making the *laith Pawb* vision of a bilingual Wales just a little more attainable.

- Elaine Davies is a consultant working with the Twf project: [www.cwmni-iaith.com](http://www.cwmni-iaith.com)

# conversing with english



margaret deuchar on  
how Welsh lives  
alongside its dominant  
neighbour

**m**any Welsh speakers use English words in informal conversations, even though they are basically speaking Welsh. This is called code-switching by linguists, and is a common phenomenon in communities of bilinguals, including for example those who speak Turkish and Dutch in the Netherlands, or Spanish and English in the USA. Code-switching has even found its way into popular songs, as illustrated by the title of the Ricky Martin song *Living la vida loca*. Here are some examples of code-switching by Welsh speakers:

- Oedd o'n hollol ridiculous yn doedd? (It was completely ridiculous wasn't it?)
- O'n i'm yn gwybod am y thing 'ma (I didn't know about this thing.)
- Mae o'n standing joke. (It's a standing joke.)
- Oedd o'n awful. (It was awful.)

- Oedden nhw mor desperate though. (They were so desperate though.)
- Dw i'n love-io soaps. (I love soaps.)

What all these examples have in common is that they include some English words although they are basically in Welsh. Welsh speakers who admit to including some English words in their speech are sometimes apologetic about what they consider to be a 'mixture' of English and Welsh. And Welsh language teachers tend to discourage speakers from using any English words, particularly in formal contexts such as the classroom. Using some English while speaking Welsh is often considered to be sloppy or lazy, or indicative of a poor command of Welsh.

Yet, rather than code-switching being an indication of poor proficiency in one of the languages concerned, a number of studies have shown that it is sometimes the more fluent rather than the less fluent speakers who do the most code-switching, especially within sentences. One explanation for this is that code-switching within sentences involves a kind of temporary 'matching' of two languages, which often have very different grammatical constructions and word order. It seems that only very fluent speakers have a sufficient knowledge of the grammars of the two languages to match them up in the same sentence.

How is this achieved? One way of describing how this works is by means of a theoretical model called the Matrix Language Frame model. According to this, bilingual speech can usually be identified as involving one 'matrix' or main language which provides the grammatical frame of the sentence. Code-switching then involves inserting words from a secondary language into this frame. This is considered to be the 'classic' type of code-switching. The words that are most

commonly inserted into the matrix language frame are nouns or noun phrases, as in thing or standing joke in the examples above. However, the examples above also include adjectives (ridiculous, desperate, awful) and a verb, love.

The code-switching of English verbs into Welsh is a particularly good demonstration of the way in which English words are made to fit into Welsh grammar. In the example *Dw i'n love-io soaps*, the English verb *love* has a Welsh ending added to it, *-io*. This *-io* ending is already available in Welsh grammar to derive Welsh verbs from Welsh nouns, as in the verb *pleidleisio*, 'to vote', as derived from the noun *pleidlais* 'vote'. Here is another example of an English verb with a similar ending:

- Mi wnes i batter-o fo . (I battered him.)

In this example the English verb *batter* has a Welsh *-o* ending added and is used in a 'periphrastic' (or long) construction with a past tense form of the Welsh verb *gwneud* 'do'. This construction is also found with Welsh verbs, usually in informal contexts, as the following example shows:

- Mi wnaeth y dyn agor y drws (The man opened the door.)

A question not yet addressed is how we identify which is the matrix language in bilingual speech and which is the secondary language. According to the Matrix Language Frame model, the matrix language can be identified according to two criteria, the word order of the sentence and verb inflections or endings. Welsh and English sentences normally show different word order, in that the verb usually comes before the subject in Welsh, but after the subject in English. Even in long constructions like *Mi wnaeth y dyn agor y drws*, discussed above, the auxiliary verb *wnaeth* appears before the subject *y dyn* even though the main verb

agor appears after the subject. On the other hand, in English auxiliary verbs only appear before the subject in special constructions like questions, as in *Are you coming?*, where *are* is the auxiliary verb. However, the normal order in English is Subject-Verb-Object, with both the auxiliary and main verbs appearing after the subject, as in *You are coming*.

If we look again at the Welsh-English code-switching examples at the beginning of this article, we can see that all of them begin with a verb, and that the subject occurs later. However, in all the English translations which follow the examples in brackets, it is the subject which comes first. So the examples with code-switching all seem to follow the word order of Welsh.

Now for the second criterion, that of verb inflections. The inflecting verbs in the examples all have the appropriate form: those in our early examples are all appropriate forms of the irregular verb 'to be', *bod*. We do not find, for example:

- *Bod-s o'n* standing joke

where the verb *bod* has had added to it an English-style third-person singular ending. So at least with reference to the examples we have looked at so far, we can say that they have both Welsh word order and Welsh verb endings. This means that Welsh is the matrix language according to the Matrix Language Frame model.

We might wonder whether Welsh is always the matrix language in code-switched speech produced by Welsh-English bilinguals. In fact it is not, as the following example shows:

- *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, 'ng was i* (*Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, my dear*)

In this example the word order is English because the subject *Beauty* appears before the verb *is* and the verb ending *is* is English in that the verb is the appropriate third person singular form of the irregular English verb 'to be'. However, in the conversations by Welsh-English bilinguals analysed so far, English is very

rarely the matrix language, and occurs as such mostly in idiomatic expressions or sayings of this kind.

As indicated earlier, many people worry about the prevalence of code-switching in the speech of Welsh-English bilinguals.



Some think that it is a sign that Welsh is giving way to English, and may eventually disappear. There might be some grounds for this worry if most examples of code-switching showed English as the matrix language and hence providing the grammatical frame. However, this is rare. In fact, in a recent quantitative analysis of a small sample of conversation, only four out of 163 bilingual clauses (sentence-like units) had English as matrix language, or fewer than 3 per cent. The vast majority of the sentences had Welsh as matrix language. I interpret this as suggesting that the position of Welsh is in fact stronger than that of English in bilingual conversations because it is Welsh, not English, which so often provides the grammatical framework into which some English words may be inserted. These English insertions can be seen as relatively superficial aspects of the language which simply show the wide range of resources which bilinguals have to draw on. Since bilinguals in Wales are almost always speaking to other bilinguals, there is no reason for them to restrict their repertoire to only Welsh words.

Of course, this argument applies specifically to informal conversations where there is no reason to restrict the use of the bilingual's repertoire to Welsh only. In more formal settings, such as *Eisteddfod* speeches for example, it is usually

appropriate to avoid code-switching, arguably in order to emphasize the cultural nature of the event. And in an educational setting such as Welsh-medium schooling, it may be considered appropriate to avoid code-switching in order to maximise the amount of Welsh language input received by pupils. There is some evidence, however, that bilinguals have to make an effort to 'suppress' one of their languages in such situations, which may be why they do not make this effort in more informal, relaxed settings, but instead make free use of both their languages.

The Matrix Language Frame model works quite well for Welsh-English code-switching. The model was in fact designed to apply particularly to situations of stable bilingualism, where speakers are proficient enough in one of their two languages to use it as a matrix language. We have seen that speakers are proficient enough in Welsh to use it as their matrix language, and have suggested that this should inspire confidence in the future of Welsh. We might also argue that there is increasing evidence for stable bilingualism in Wales. We could point to the fact that the recent Census results indicate a small rise in the numbers speaking Welsh, and that Welsh has recently achieved enhanced legal status.

Code-switching by Welsh-English bilinguals demonstrates their proficiency in Welsh along with their ability to use the full range of linguistic resources available to them. In this they compare well with members of other stable bilingual communities around the world, and we have every reason to be confident about the future co-existence of the Welsh language alongside English.

- *Margaret Deuchar is a lecturer in linguistics at the University of Wales, Bangor.*

# welsh art

## ivor davies weighs in on the debate over a National Gallery



**S**hould Wales should have a museum of modern Welsh art, a museum of international modern art with Welsh art set within this context, or a museum of Welsh art on historical principles? All these are different from a Gallery of changing exhibitions, though they are not mutually exclusive. All are desirable, not all are practical or popular, but a choice will have to be made.

It would be interesting to see if the recent extensive alterations at Belfast Museum have changed the outlook of the permanent collection. A few years ago a visit was revealing, if perhaps disappointing. Almost the entire display could have been any provincial English museum oblation. This was only emphasised by the presence of a touring exhibition from Dublin of 'Irish Art', mostly nineteenth and twentieth-century paintings and sculpture. Even

where the artists were linked to Ulster in some way their position was within a foreign exhibition.

In the Ulster context this could be attributable to the self-loathing of a minority population. However, in reality it was even more complex reaction to the unspoken pressure on provincial museums to reflect or conform to the centralised expedient of the United Kingdom. This is a pressure which is quietly respected by those wishing to progress on the career ladder for promotion from one institution to another. Only a very few daring curators in the USA have kicked over the tracery.

To see the paintings and drawings of Paul Klee at Berne has always been a great pleasure. Recently a major new museum, devoted to his work, was opened. It cost CH Fr 110m, about £50 million, and was financed by family, private and industrial funds. The undulating steel and glass building holds about 4,000 works, 40 per cent of his oeuvre and was designed by Renzo Piano. At one time to visit Berne, not only allowed the sight of the finest works of Paul Klee but also many examples of certain painted compositions of strange expressionistic figures unique to later mediaeval Switzerland and South Germany. Klee had some of this kind of painting in his early work. By the 1980s they had been put away in favour of more conventionally acceptable examples of international museology.

Fashionable phrases of the 1980s and 1990s, such as 'internationalism', 'policing the world', 'new world order' and 'imposing democracy' go with

cultural colonialism spread with imperative beyond the Anglo-American speaking areas. The centre of artistic and political capital has changed since 1945 and the Cold War, with a peculiarly American succession of movements, many subtly imperialistic in subject matter. It was a new revival of an avant-garde supported by American money and politics.

Paris was the art capital of Europe 150 years earlier, putting into the hands of the state a powerful image of itself, as well as the seizure of foreign antiquities. As the Louvre became congested, after 1800 masterpieces were distributed to provincial city museums for the 'formation of students'. In museums all over Europe art treasures were made available to the masses rather than to a small elite. As well as the growing number of museums, from then until 1914 collectors and amateurs bought works of art.

Like the ideal of the avant-garde in the early nineteenth century, museums were closely connected with politics and influence on public opinion. Works of art are embodiments of an idea. Often the idea represents a community of feeling held by all in common, even a body of people organised loosely in a political or social unit. Without realising it an artist depends on where he thinks he belongs in spirit or place.

Artists usually conform to prevailing centres of capital or the expression of a moral sensibility, part of a particular group outlook which could sometimes be described as political. Art is political, even 'art for art's sake'. We do not live in a vacuum immune from the state, censorship, self-censorship, subversion.



Artist and cultural entrepreneur William Wilkins holds forth at an IWA debate on a National Gallery of Modern Art for Wales, held at the Glyn Vivian Gallery in Swansea in June. Sitting alongside him are Ifor Davies, Peter Stead, who chaired the debate, and David Clarke of the DCA arts consultancy.

Inevitably, we belong to a 'group' even if it is a 'global village'. Even when trying to 'be himself or herself', without painting for an audience, the artist is a 'spokesman of his community, the secrets he must utter are theirs.'

Like archaeology art is recognised as a weapon of education and propaganda especially in the hands of the state. There has been a consistent policy of refusing to recognise what the state wishes did not exist.

Another fashionable phrase was 'standards of excellence' which seemed to suggest a new kind of academy and to marginalise native art and other forms which did not conform to this intangible ideal. However, many natives have regained their identity and reclaimed the appropriate culture through art, especially in Latin America since the 1930s and Russia before 1900. By the 1960s counter groups, black, feminist and others expressed an alternative internationalism. A more liberal fashion, almost missionary, has allowed us glances of Latin America, Africa and China and a few exotic artists have been celebrated.

After travelling to see the major centres of new art forms all over the world in the 1970s, Peter Davies, the founder of Beca, the most radical movement in recent art, came to see that Welsh subjects were stigmatised or disregarded in England

and Wales. Unwittingly conventional and academic, British art schools were feeding established art galleries with a safe modernism. He declared that this type of style snobbery could be discerned only by those who had been abroad.

Beca was the result of Davies's travels and observations. It was both parochial and international. One museum shelved an exhibition which included this work, on political grounds, and, individual works by his brother, co-founder Paul Davies and others were also censored, works which by now appear to be a part of history. The stigmatic use of the word 'nationalistic' became and continues to be an effective method of control and self-censorship in small communities.

Works by Welsh artists were scattered amongst European collections or kept in storage by the keeper Timothy Stevens at the National Museum of Wales during the early 1990s. He claimed that the "history of art in Wales will be set within its European and wider international context." In reality purchases of more contemporary art exhibited in the new galleries were mostly lesser works by safe English artists from London galleries and not truly international. However, the atmosphere is much better now.

In recent years historians have been revealing a visual culture with

characteristics unique to Wales. Peter Lord argued that in order to do this properly works need to be seen in the perspective of the wider history of Wales rather than in relation to academic or fashionable English art.

Most directors and keepers up to the mid 1990s were not interested in the purpose of the Museum or in Welsh culture. Instead, it was a stepping stone in their career. The fault also lay with the system of appointments and the career ladder which inhibits commitment and dedication.

Of course all history is subjective, political and propagandist. We still live in the shadow of the history of the kings and queens of England and the trappings of two investitures take up valuable space in our Museum. Meanwhile, there is no course on Celtic art in a Welsh university or art college. Of 3,000 years of art people only know about the Book of Kells.

There is very little scholarly research into art in Wales at universities and colleges, and no course in the Welsh language. Unlike even the poorest Eastern European country there is no national gallery or permanent museum dedicated to show modern and contemporary Welsh art and its history.

Archaeology has gradually become separated from art at universities as

interests have become more sociological but the collection at the Museum could allow great interpenetration of subjects and many archaeological specimens may again be recorded as works of art.

The largest piece of gold work, found in Britain in the 1830s, the 'Mold cape', is in the British Museum collection. It belongs to the late Bronze Age, about 1500 BC, and is an impressive work of repoussé, made out of one ingot. It was loaned to the National Museum of Wales once, but with the trend for reclaiming cultural heritage it should be returned in order to take its place among the earlier works in a National Gallery of Welsh art. The term 'Welsh art' disturbs certain people, for mainly political reasons. The attributes 'in Wales', 'of Wales' or 'for Wales' are preferred, as for example are found in 'The National Assembly for Wales' or the 'Church in Wales'.

There may be a nervous interlocution: 'Is there such a thing as Welsh art?' or 'What is Welsh culture?' It seeks definitions, limitations, some monolithic style frozen in time and space, stereotyped in the Ealing Comedy tradition. Welsh art is what each of us happens to have been doing whatever languages we speak or use visually, but it is also partly a personal choice of name and identity. There is a difference between 'art in Wales' done by artists who happen to be 'Welsh-based' and the 'art of Wales' which is native, committed or partisan.

The collective whole of Welsh art is not to be defined or confined but seen as individual experiences which overlap, coincide and change continuously. The long history of absorbing, selecting and adapting ideas from all over the world as well as from Welsh consciousness, has only recently been admitted as an unimitative (and independent) Welsh art.

People have been asking for a National Gallery of Welsh art for at least 150 years and others for greater representation abroad – the converse of a national gallery of international art. Thomas E. Ellis MP

visited the World Exhibition of 1889 in Paris and was struck by the fact that small countries, Denmark, Finland, Serbia and Greece had separate art rooms, while Wales did not. The observation was naïve. Those countries were independent states with their own embassies and institutions, whereas Wales's position was as a province whose wealth and resources

were developed or exploited mainly for the benefit of the capital of what was then still a major imperial power.

The infrastructure for Welsh artists had to be elsewhere, though tourists would paint Welsh landscapes in a different context. Without the support of a serious national gallery of Welsh art



Paul Davies' *Wales in Chains*.

little will have changed at home. However, Wales has now shown its second official exhibition at the Venice Bienale with the support of the National Assembly, the Arts Council of Wales, and various other institutions and industries. Such an event should strengthen confidence in our ability to establish a national gallery of Welsh art. Moreover, there has also been tense debate about the four countries of the UK taking their turn at the British pavilion, with opposition from certain members of the British committee.

To place Welsh art in the context of European or international examples in a museum, would be to repeat something we have already had and would be a piece of superficial art history. If such a comparison were to be made it should be precise, for example that an artist in Wales had worked with someone in France or seen a particular work. Such an analysis would be made better with the use of photographs and text. The art needs to be seen from a Welsh perspective rather than a vague sense of contemporaneous comparison. A national gallery of international or European art would necessarily be provincial because it would collect minor examples of art, the only ones we could afford. It would take a long time to have a collection as good as a provincial English gallery. Established works are the great investments of world collections and continue to increase in value and cost. What curator would have the courage to buy works which had not reached that point of value, or, which were from Latin America, Asia, Africa or lesser known parts of Europe?

All too often collections are a little of everything rather than building to develop treasures in the collection. The habit has been the same in many museums. In the north of England, one of this courageous minority, Helen Kapp, was sacked for her forward thinking and wise purchases of modern works before they were recognised.

This attitude led to a number of unfortunate acquisitions by Timothy Stevens such as the excellent seascape by Van de Capelle which does not relate in any way to the Cardiff collection. Alas, too often the tendency was to buy one example of each artist who is well known with the result that the examples are mediocre as the best cannot be afforded.

Such expensive purchases would have been more appropriate if they supported the Davies' sisters bequest of French Impressionist paintings with other French pictures which related to them in order to enhance the specialty of the museum. Another form of British parochialism of some institutions and trusts, has been to buy work which is not international but fashionable London gallery art, at a price that has risen to a peak.

At least discussion has preceded the vainglorious architecture which so often starts with the look of the building rather than what it is for. Though it is an important political question as to where it is to be built, the main question is how?

Landslides from the Lottery funds lead to a form of panic in building and maladministration, with no regular revenue fund to follow it. The most successful institutions have begun as small organisations, for example the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, and the Arnolfini in Bristol.

Small central projects need to be considered before the megaliths. The type of collecting for instance is a decision to make well in advance. There are already buildings which could be adapted to satisfy regulations for security and against fire. The Ffotogallery has done it at Margam, and Tinopolis survives in a former supermarket at Llanelli.

Delusions about major exhibitions of the Matisse-Picasso level reaching the imaginary gallery would depend on

reciprocal loans to the originator of the exhibition. Wales would have to have Matisse and Picasso pictures of the same quality.

The taste for collecting goes back to the origins of the Chinese empire, corresponding to that veneration of the past peculiar to the Heavenly Beings for whom what has been is proof of what is and what shall be. They had a cult for the great men of the past, the legendary emperors who had established the foundations of civilisation. Summarising the origins of accumulating art objects, Germain Bazin showed how the Chinese looked for the direction to the past; it was the model to follow; the past and their ancestors were important.

From the Han Dynasty 206 BC – 220 AD scholars venerated the past and assembled collections of antiquities. Emperor Wu founded an imperial academy and Hien Ti (190-220) a national collection. From the Han Dynasty onward extensive archaeological excavations were carried out and the Emperor Hui Tsung owned 10,000 archaeological pieces and 6,396 paintings. An illustrated catalogue with printed reproductions was brought out at the time. Parts of the collection are now divided between Taipei and Peking.

No culture could match China. It would be pointless to imitate its achievements, or even the collections of lesser cultures. More realistic and adventurous is to do something unique to Wales, something of our own production.

- *Ivor Davies is an artist and art historian from Penarth. This article is based on his contribution to the IWA's Swansea Bay Branch debate on 'A National Gallery of Modern Art', held at the Glynn Vivian Gallery in June.*

# venetian odyssey



wiard sterk reports on  
a visit to the 2005  
Biennale

**O**n approach to Marco Polo airport Venice, your first impression may jar somewhat with notions of a magical and fabled city, as you fly in over the industrial port and chemical works of Mestre. These have far more in common with Barry Docks than with gondolas on the Canal Grande. From there you can take a bus or taxi to traverse the 20th century causeway which connects the city in the lagoon to the rest of the world. However, leaving most wheeled transport behind and taking a 15 minute water taxi ride from Marco Polo Airport is a highly recommended antidote and worth every one of the 80 euro fare.

Wheels now become the reserve of the pushed or pulled trolleys used to take goods to and from canal boats. This is also a great leveller. Stripped of their protective entourage and limousines, you will bump into celebrities at every narrow street corner during the Biennale preview days. Anyone who is – or who aspires to be – anyone is here at what remains, after more than a century, the world's most prestigious contemporary art festival. Venice, despite its renaissance fabric and constant reminders of the republic's grand history, is 'so contemporary'. Little did I know how that phrase would resonate throughout my visit to the 51st Venice Biennale.

Venice is a massive open air museum. Its architectural fabric largely preserved, the city attracts visitors from far and wide and where once it was on the crossroads of the silk and spice routes, it is now a tourist mecca. Yet the vast tourist footfall fails to disturb the residents or the everyday commerce of this thriving city. It goes about its daily business unbothered by pedestrians jostling in the streets or

boat traffic stacking up on the Canal Grande. Gondoliers communicate by mobile phone while ferrying American and Japanese tourists or providing that essential romantic backdrop to the latest couple to be married at San Marco. Visitors are allowed to touch Venice and Venice allows itself to be touched by progress. That makes Venice contemporary.

Entering the Giardini, the gardens created by Napoleon and, since 1895, the setting for this International Art Exhibition, you are obliged to give way to a truly rarefied atmosphere. Of the 73 nations represented at the Biennale, 30 have their pavilions in the Giardini and, with the exception perhaps of Egypt (besides Morocco the only African nation with a presence), these almost exclusively represent the mainstream of the Western world, including Australia and former East European countries such as Russia, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics.

International in this context then, is still perhaps a limited concept. In itself this is becoming a curatorial issue and the exhibition in the old rope works of the nearby Arsenale, the former (and partly still operational) naval yard, curated by one of the two Spanish guest curators, Rosa Martinez, makes a serious attempt to compensate. Its title, *Always a Little Further*, is derived from one of Hugo Pratt's books on the adventures of Corto Maltese, referenced by the curator as a romantic source of inspiration.

On entry to the Arsenale a disembodied voice announces a continuous series of critical facts about the Venice Biennale – the absence of African Countries; the cost of tickets; the limited number of women artists

and curators throughout its history. A few steps further and the billboard size posters of the Guerrilla Girls enforce the barrage of sound with equally confrontational imagery. Spanning 20 years of this anonymous group of female artists' interventions, highlighting the under representation of female artists and artists of color (sic), in major collections and international awards, they are punctuated by an enormous sparkling chandelier by the Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos, made entirely of unused tampons.

It strikes me how condescending is the phrase 'artists of color' and how much an afterthought. Although accurate this somehow serves to backfire on the

the gender and ethnic origin of their creators. Instead, other issues come to the fore.

The diversity of work in this exhibition is as varied as its quality. Artes Mundi shortlisted artists Berni Searle and Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba are included. There is an invitation by Olaf Nicolai to watch the *Tears of St Lawrence*, an annual shower of falling stars visible between 8 and 13 August. An installation by Indian artist Subodh Gupta, entitled *Curry*, is a brilliant array of silenced, sparkling stainless steel kitchen utensils, with no ingredients in sight. I once read a remark by a foreign exchange student in a newspaper, who proclaimed that she loved British food because at home she could not get a

Rodero, in a series entitled *Heaven and Earth*, each present a similar composition in religious and erotic contexts – pilgrim and lap dancer, both on bare knees; black dressed and veiled women in procession; and a parade of leather clad gays. Stephen Dean's looped videos of three different crowds – a football match, a Latin American Carnival and a festival in India. Korean artist Kimsooja's videos, collectively titled *Needle Woman*, in which we see the artist from behind, standing in the crowded streets of cities such as Delhi, Havana, Lagos, Cairo and Mexico City. Her static figure in the foreshortened image sharply contrasts the surging mass around her making her the ultimate focus of our attention.

The cavernous space of the Arsenale in some ways reflects the hollowness of other works and the lack of cohesion between selected works. There is a sense that the desire to be inclusive has overridden clarity in the curatorial concept. This feels like a carnival of art, a random gathering where focus is lost through sensory overload. We should, however, recognise the inherent difficulties of curating for a space like the Arsenale and acknowledge the festival nature of an event like the Biennale.

Back at the Giardini successive press calls ensure a swarm at the pavilions especially as Gilbert and George hold court in person, almost outshining their pristine and luminous homage to London street life. At the French pavilion Annette Messager's installation *Casino*, this year's winner of the *Lion d'Or*, attracts massive attention and huge queues of people who have an average wait of an hour and a half to view the installation.

The capacity for contemporary art to attract such populist appeal means restricted entry and limited viewing times and plays havoc with a busy schedule and orderly progress. Nevertheless I catch Ricky Swallow's brilliant show in the Australian pavilion. *This Time, Another Year* is a



Stano Filko, Jan Mancuska, Boris Ondreicka, Marek Pokorny. Sketch of Model sveta – *Qudrophonia / Model of World - Quadrophonia*.

Girls and add to the dated feel of the presentation and its limited impact. Nevertheless, for a while I check the plaques of works for name and origin of the artist, to see whether this exhibition genuinely redresses the balance, but I lose count and interest. I have come to see the works, not verify

good curry. She was right, of course. Curry, as a collective noun for a spicy onion and gravy based rice dish, is a British cultural appropriation.

Several works stand out in the exhibition. Monochrome prints by Spanish photographer Cristina Garcia



Kimsooja. *A Needle Woman-Patan, Nepal, 2005*. Part of the four channel video projection, silent. Videography by Mahendra Maskey Courtesy of Kewenig Gallery, Cologne.



Ricky Swallow. *Killing Time* (detail), 2003-2004. Art Gallery of New South Wales Collection Photo: Karl Schwerdtfeger.

display of full scale carvings in wood of everyday objects, all extremely intricate and with the compositional quality and macabre symbolism of still life. *Come Together* is a bean bag with a skull embedded in a deep indentation, as if it has landed with some force. *Killing Time* is a table with a display of freshly caught fish and other seafood, carved in great detail. All act perhaps as memento mori and therefore the fragility of life – a life size human skeleton has the title *The Exact Dimensions of Staying Behind*.

Whilst recognising its technical mastery it is also impossible to remain unmoved by Miyako Ishiuchi's elegant installation in the Japanese pavilion. The show's understated yet emotionally charged photo works, each entitled *Mother's* followed by a numerical classification, echo symphonies in a composer's oeuvre. The large scale and mostly monochrome images detail the artist's mother's attributes, including ominously scarred skin, recorded in the year preceding her death at age 84. They are accompanied by various items such as lipsticks, silk underwear, elegant shoes and an array of dentures, each reflecting her complex, challenging and untraditional life as a contemporary and independently minded woman in post-war Japan.

In contrast, thankfully, there is plenty of humour and irony in this Biennale. The Czech and Slovak Republics still jointly programme the pavilion they once built as a single state. One of the invited artists has filled the room with large steel ball bearings, rolling freely over the terrazzo floor, inviting the light hearted intervention of visitors by skating on or kicking the balls across the floor and watching them regroup in endlessly diverse form as they ricochet off the skirting and each other. However, for the four artists who have created this installation there is a more profound process in motion and, perhaps unwittingly, visitors contribute to a chain of events, forming and reforming a model of the world, in a cycle of perpetual decomposition and reconstitution.

So on to Germany, where the door of the imposing pavilion is ajar. I enter cautiously and am immediately accosted by the dancing attendants, singing the refrain "This is so contemporary, contemporary, contemporary. This is sooo contemporary!". They act out a work by Tino Sehgal which accompanies a basic and crude sculptural installation by Thomas Scheibnitz. It is the emergence of artistic expression, rather than the resultant object that fascinates these artists. For instance, Sehgal refuses to have his work (the

performance by intermediaries) recorded or photographed. Nevertheless, his words stay with me and form the ultimate counterpoint to the canon presented in the adjacent British pavilion. And it's genuinely and disarmingly funny.

Since Giardini space is limited and the cost of building and maintaining pavilions is high, many nations have opted for renting spaces throughout Venice. The Celtic nations realised some time ago that the 'single artist/lifetime achievement' approach to the programming of the pavilion by the British Council would not provide its artists much opportunity to make their presence felt in this most prestigious of international art shows. Instead, they have established their own exhibition spaces elsewhere in Venice and are included in the catalogue under "Collateral Events".

So where is Wales in all this and how has it followed its triumphant first in 2003? This is the visual art equivalent of the music industry's difficult second album. Can we cut it? On the whole the answer has to be yes, but we would say that wouldn't we. Although there were some critical voices who pointed out how the technical demands of Cerith Wyn Evans' light beam undermined the work for the post-party duration of the

festival in 2003, and some argued that first show was uneven in quality.

This year Wales is represented by four artists in a show curated by Karen McKinnon. The Welsh Pavilion occupies an old brewery on the Giudecca, a slither of an island a short vaporetta ride from the main events. Appropriately, *Somewhere else: Artists from Wales* is housed not in a new, purpose built pavilion but in an adapted former industrial building – something that may just provide a focus for a future presence from Wales at the Architecture Biennale? Next year, perhaps?

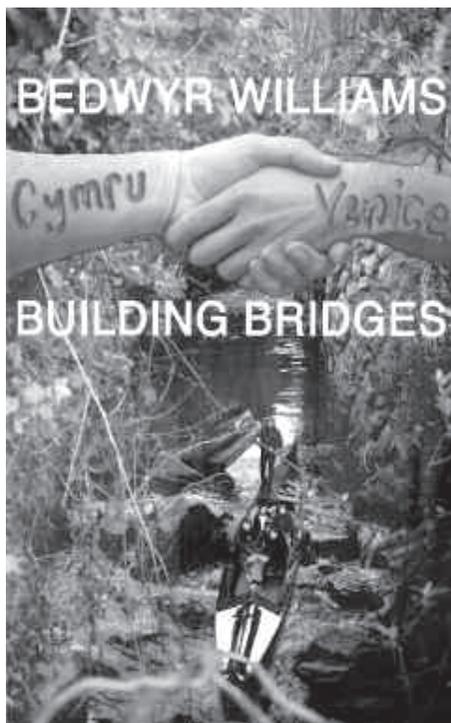
The popular stars of the show are Paul Granjon's "robots" that roam aimlessly in their "Robotarium". Prisoners to their artist-imposed programme, they clumsily encounter their environment issuing bilingual expletives (French and English). Eventually they achieve mechanical copulation without hope of procreation in a kind of Duchampian "bride stripped bare revisited", perhaps infusing the term artificial intelligence with new meaning.

Laura Ford's life size "soft" sculptures are created from scrap materials, sacking, old blankets and duffel bags. Menacing as their mass and blank expression seems at first encounter, they are also intimate and strangely comforting. I can imagine engaging each in conversation. They appear as characters in a Brechtian drama, caught in a desperate cycle of events, trying to make sense of their identity and purpose. Traces of national costume merge with other visual indicators of their way of life and all hint at a complex series of events and circumstances that brought them together in this show, where they stay, for now, until new events drive them on. They are simultaneously rooted and nomadic, homesick yet in exile.

In Peter Finnemore's characters there is humour but always the smile is a wry one barely concealing the caveat of the menace of dispute. Menace is a word

that also comes to mind when considering Bedwyr Williams' residency – perhaps more accurately described as a Venetian odyssey. By his own admission, Williams delights in "keeping a record of ... stupid things people say and do" and during several months living on the Giudecca he has recorded these moments on his digital camera and electronically reworked them. Through this subtle appropriation and occasional "Welshification" of Venetian life he seems to have created a small and temporary one man colony, a subtle subversion of the society of the Island – harmless, perhaps, but nevertheless significant.

The fringe activity extends further to include more of a Welsh presence at this 51st Biennale, since Marc Rees, André Stitt and Eddie Ladd were all invited by Arturo Urbano to take part in *Reaction*, two performance events in public squares during the preview days. Rees and Ladd were invited following their acclaimed performances at ARCO in Madrid earlier this year, evidencing the increased exposure and success the visual arts from Wales now enjoy on the international stage. The performances I



witnessed on the Campo Santo Stefano drew large crowds and each gave recognition to their Italian hosts in several artful references to mafioso film culture and gender stereotype.

The Venice Biennale team from Wales mounted a strong exhibition, showcasing the work of four of Wales' most intriguing artist and at the same time three others were independently selected by a curator of no mean reputation. Karen McKinnon is herself an intelligent and gifted curator whose own humour prevented a po-faced show which could so easily have been "sooo contemporary!"

Not wishing to be outdone by Jarvis Cocker on the decks at the Frieze party, Wales brought it's very own Super Furry Animal and Gruff Rhys helped launch a preview party to more than match the others – even residents from the nearby apartments joined the fun – mingling with Artes Mundi selectors, commissioners and staff from many of Wales' national, cultural organisations as well as very welcome gatecrashers from the Scottish and Northern Irish contingent. We certainly know how to be inclusive.

It is no longer questioned whether Wales can create a notable presence. And the lack of UK national press coverage this time simply indicates how quickly we have become an established contributor. If anyone is still worried about our place in print – take a look at the catalogue where you'll find Joanne Tatham and Tom O'Sullivan, two of the four artists showing in the Scottish pavilion, listed with their work *Think Thingamajig and other Things*, commissioned in Wales and showcased in Cardiff in 2004 as part of the Urban Legacies conference and city wide installation, *Ain't no love in the heart of the city...*

- Wiard Sterk is Director of CBAT, the Arts and Regeneration Agency.

# virtual parliament



## john osmond unpacks the recent White Paper extending the Assembly's powers

**t**raditionally White Papers were sober, black and white affairs, issued by Royal Command, with the imprint of Crown Copyright. The latest Welsh White Paper on *Better Governance for Wales*, published in June, certainly emanates from Whitehall but with the hand of the Secretary of State for Wales, Peter Hain more clearly pronounced. Perhaps in keeping it is a rather gaudy affair. On its cover Y Ddraig Goch is surrounded by four forward looking images of Wales: the victorious Grand Slam rugby team, a wing from the European Airbus being manufactured at Broughton, the Millennium Centre in Cardiff Bay, and an architect's impression of Richard Rogers' Platonic-looking Assembly Chamber.

The White Paper contains no explanation why these images have been chosen to represent the Wales of the future. Doubtless, however, they are intended to convey a subliminal message of success, progress and modernity. And in many ways the White Paper's contents measure up to these attributes.

Despite its shortcomings, due in large measure to the apparatus it was given at the start, the National Assembly has achieved a great deal in establishing itself as a Parliament in all but name. In five short years it has left behind the corporate body local government style ethos legislated for in the Government of Wales Act 1998. Instead it has created the Welsh Assembly Government on the one hand, and the independent Presiding Office with its parliamentary service on the other, thereby separating the executive from the legislature. It has also begun the process of creating a legal personality for Wales, generating a greater range of Welsh-specific legislation than in any other equivalent period, while at the same time demonstrating its inherent weaknesses in both initiation and scrutiny. Most importantly it spawned the cross-party Richard Commission which, after great deliberation, recommended a coherent way forward for the Assembly to become a fully-fledged Parliament.

In large measure the White Paper agrees with these changes, and acts so to speak to make them legal. Thus, it says a new Wales Bill will be brought forward in the current session to formally constitute the Assembly Government, putting on a statutory footing the terms First Minister, Assembly Ministers, and moreover Deputy Ministers who simply appeared a few years ago as if on Rhodri Morgan's whim. Equally important, and

generally unexpected, it resurrects the title of Counsel General, a position that had been thought of as defunct following the spat between the First Minister and the Presiding Office over the failure to appoint a successor to the inaugural holder of the office, Winston Roddick QC. As the White Paper has it:

"The new status of Welsh Assembly Ministers as Ministers of the Crown, and the developing role of devolved government in Wales, now makes it appropriate to make more formal provision. A new statutory post of Counsel General to the Assembly Government will therefore be created."

This position will be directly equivalent to the Lord Advocate in Scotland. The Counsel General will be a member of the Cabinet, able to address the Assembly and answer AMs' questions, but need not necessarily be an Assembly Member. He or she will also have the power, as do UK Law Officers, to refer to the courts if there is doubt whether the Assembly, acting as a legislature, or the Assembly Government are acting within their legal powers.

At the same time the White Paper formalises the split between the executive and legislative sides of the Assembly. In future civil servants will act exclusively in support of Assembly Ministers. Meanwhile, staff supporting the Assembly itself, via the Presiding Office, will have an independent status, like the clerks to the UK and Scottish Parliaments.

Assembly Ministers will no longer participate directly as members of the Assembly committees. The White Paper says it agrees with the Richard Commission's analysis that, as it puts it, "Ministers' membership of the subject committees had inhibited the

exercise of an effective scrutiny function, and that a culture of scrutiny on traditional parliamentary lines had failed to develop". Henceforth, the committee structure in the Assembly will not be dealt with in legislation, as in the 1998 Act which prescribed the committees that would be established. Instead, the Assembly itself will be able to establish committees as it sees fit, in accordance with Standing Orders.

It is at this point that the White Paper starts to go wrong. It was prompted by the Richard Commission recommendations and central to these is that the Assembly should become a fully-fledged Parliament, with primary law-making powers. The White Paper acknowledges the force of the Richard Commission argument. Essentially this is that the Assembly cannot be compared with a Whitehall department in competing for legislative time at Westminster for the measures it wishes to enact. Peter Hain had attempted to argue the point in the evidence he himself gave to the Commission. He told them there were a lot of frustrated Ministers in the UK Cabinet who could not get their bills into the Queens Speech:

"There is always a big negotiation as to what goes in and what there is legislative time for and so far we have a pretty good track record of Welsh legislation, Welsh-only legislation and Welsh clauses in legislation. It does not follow that because you cannot get everything tomorrow, the fundamental settlement has to be altered in a substantial fashion."

The Commission dismissed this argument in one cogent sentence:

"This views the Assembly as the counterpart of an individual UK Department, rather than the democratically elected body for the whole of Wales with responsibility for a broad range of policy matters."

Now the White Paper accepts the force of this position. As it puts it:

"Once executive powers are conferred directly on Welsh Assembly Ministers rather than on the Assembly as a corporate body, they will also be able to exercise many of the Assembly's existing powers to make secondary legislation. ... Even so, these powers will not give the Assembly the ability significantly to influence the legislative framework within which the Assembly Government will operate. The Government

believes that the Assembly should have this function."

The question is: how? The most obvious answer is to follow the Richard Commission recommendation and straightforwardly give the Assembly primary powers. However, this option is not open to Peter Hain, since he is constrained by the Labour Party's determination to have a referendum before this can be allowed, and particularly following the experience of the recent referendum in North East England, the Westminster Government is not minded to follow this course in a hurry. Welsh Labour MPs at Westminster are not in a hurry either, since they are acutely conscious of the Richard Commission's side recommendation that primary powers should be accompanied by an increase in Assembly Members (from 60 to 80) and an implied decrease in Westminster MPs representing Wales. Peter Hain rationalises these realities by saying that a referendum, if held now, could not be won.

In these circumstances he has come up with a remarkably inventive middle way through the obstacles, so to say. This is to enable the National Assembly to exercise primary powers in all but name, though not for any entire subject field listed in Schedule 2 of the Government of Wales Act. The proposal is as follows:

- i) Following passage of the Bill in 2006, and in the wake of the 2007 Assembly election, the Assembly of the day will be able to signal to the Secretary of State such enabling legislative powers as it wishes to see conferred on it to enable it to legislate on specific matters or defined areas of policy where it has responsibility;





Peter Hain sides with the law on a visit to north Wales.

- ii) Assuming there was agreement that Wales should follow an initiative, the Secretary of State would frame an Order in Council giving “the Assembly powers, in specified areas of policy, to modify - i.e., amend, repeal or extend - the provisions of Acts of Parliament in their application to Wales, or **to make new provision**” (White Paper, para. 3.16, my emphasis);
- iii) Such Orders in Council would have to be approved by both Houses of Parliament in short debates, after committee consideration; and
- iv) The Assembly Government’s parliamentary draftsmen would then proceed to draw up the required legislation which would be considered by the Assembly and its appropriate standing committees before passing into law, presumably following the Presiding Officer’s signature.

Such is Peter Hain’s ingenious device for giving the National Assembly primary powers through the back door. The main area of uncertainty surrounds point (ii) in the above list. How detailed will Orders

in Council have to be? Could they simply be, for example, the equivalent of a one-line title to a Bill? Or, more likely, would the Assembly have to indicate in more detail the areas it wanted to legislate for and the reasons why? If it is the latter, how much detail will be required? It will be interesting to see the extent to which the *Better Governance for Wales Bill*, due to be published in December, is specific on these questions.

What seems to be clear, however, is that once an Order in Council in relation to a policy area has been approved for some specific purpose, the Assembly will be free to make use of it at later stages, for other purposes within the same policy area. Consequently, over time, the Assembly has the potential to build up considerable legislative competence across wide ranging policy areas. And certainly, this is the positive interpretation that has been placed on the White Paper by some experts. For example, in their written evidence to the Presiding Officer’s cross-party committee that has been examining the proposals, Marie Navarro and David Lambert, of Cardiff Law School, conclude:

“This is an infinitely flexible settlement proposed for the Assembly. The only difference between the scheme and general legislative competence is that the general legislative competence of the body is set out initially in an Act in relation to subject areas with stated restrictions. The Assembly’s powers to make law are not set out in an Act of Parliament but in a series of Orders in Council. While no individual Order in Council could give a total subject area competency to the Assembly, in time a series of policy areas Orders in Council can add up to a subject area. In our opinion this is a very efficient way of giving over time to the Assembly all the powers it needs to implement the policies it intends to carry out. In the future this may obviate the need for the Assembly to have general primary legislative powers as it would in due course receive all the powers it needs in relation to Wales to implement its policies.”

Quite apart from this, perhaps over-optimistic reading, Peter Hain’s proposal does have at least three advantages. First, it has the potential for breaking the present Westminster logjam, providing the Assembly Government much more freedom of manoeuvre to pursue its own agenda without having to ask for the enactment of Wales-only bills. Secondly, the process will prove a useful learning curve for the Assembly, putting into place over time the procedures and expertise that are necessary to enact primary legislation. Finally, it moves the Assembly on in the direction of primary powers without having to traverse any political obstacles such as a referendum.

On the other hand, there are substantial drawbacks to the scheme. In the first place, Orders in Council for Wales still require the consent of the Westminster government of the day and both Houses of Parliament. This may work well enough while Labour continues to rule in both London and Cardiff, but

such conditions inevitably change, even perhaps by the time these provisions come into force. Secondly, although the legislation that will be available to the Assembly under these terms will be potentially far reaching, it will still be secondary and not primary legislation. The importance of this is not the necessary distinction between the two - and it has to be conceded that the boundaries between primary and secondary legislation are increasingly becoming blurred - but the fact that secondary legislation is subject to judicial review for exceeding the limits of the power granted. It is only UK primary legislation which is generally immune from such challenge.

Both the Orders in Council and the legislation made under them will have to be drafted very carefully indeed. The Assembly itself will have to be highly conscious of the potential of litigation, if the role of the lawyers in Wales is not to be inflated. We might now see the reasoning behind the resurrection of the position of Counsel General.

A more philosophical objection to Peter Hain's compromise is that it greatly increases the complexity of the National Assembly's operation. Indeed, it follows the incremental pragmatic mechanisms of change instigated by the 1998 Act, giving the

The White Paper contains a further, far reaching proposal for a referendum at some future unspecified time, that if successful, would result in the transfer of full primary powers. Such a referendum would be triggered if two-thirds of the Assembly voted in favour. It is a somewhat innovative proposal in constitutional terms since it is designed to avoid the need to seek further legislation from a successor Parliament. As the White Paper puts it:

"The Government has no current plans for such a referendum but, in order to avoid the necessity of a third Government of Wales Bill, it proposes to provide for the possibility in this legislation."

However, it is difficult to envisage circumstances in which such a process could be gone through without there being pressure for additional legislation. For instance, the Richard Commission made a powerful case that gaining primary powers should also entail an increase in AMs together with a more proportional electoral system, steps that the White Paper rules out.

Despite all these caveats, the White Paper probably represents the best that we could hope for in present circumstances. Certainly they testify to Peter Hain's brilliance in negotiating some pretty difficult rapids between the high ground of the Richard Commission and the lower reaches of his own backbenches. It may be a clever political fix, but a fix it remains. It is unlikely to last very long unless a steady stream of Orders in Council empowers the Assembly to make distinctive Welsh law and in the process build up a wide-ranging legislative competence. How likely is that?

- *John Osmond is Director of the Institute of Welsh Affairs. A more detailed analysis of the White Paper can be found on the IWA website: [www.iwa.org.uk](http://www.iwa.org.uk)*

### box 1: sources of welsh-related legislation

Disregarding legislation in non-devolved fields and instruments that are not general subordinate legislation, at present there are six main sources of legislation affecting Wales, as follows:

1. Wales-only Acts.
2. Provisions of Acts applying to Wales specifically.
3. Acts applying to England and Wales as a single jurisdiction.
4. General subordinate legislation made by the Assembly under Acts or exceptionally under Whitehall subordinate legislation.
5. Subordinate legislation made by Whitehall specifically for Wales.
6. Subordinate legislation made by Whitehall for England and Wales as a single jurisdiction.

Under the Government's *Better Government for Wales* White Paper proposals, we are likely to have three further sources:

1. Measures made by the Assembly under Orders in Council modifying or supplementing existing legislation.
2. General subordinate legislation made by the Assembly Government under provisions of Acts.
3. General subordinate legislation made by the Assembly Government as delegated under Assembly Measures made under Orders in Council.

Orders in Council will typically lay down the parameters within which the Assembly can amend existing or enact new legislation in general terms. The Assembly will then proceed to legislate in the necessary detail within the provisions of the Order. Differences in interpretation between the two processes open up scope for aggrieved parties to have recourse to the courts to question whether the legislation is within the terms of the power granted.

impression of a continued crab-like shuffle towards Welsh domestic autonomy, rather than the confident step contained in the Scotland Act of that year. We already have six sources of Welsh-related legislation (see Box 1). This adds another three and is not designed to aid the understanding or involvement of the citizens of Wales who are already less than enthusiastic about becoming involved.

# the new centralism

kevin morgan and  
stevie upton query  
whether merging the  
Quangos into the  
Assembly  
Government will  
achieve the desired  
results

It is a comment on the somewhat infantile state of political debate in Wales that we need to be reminded of the virtues of the quangos. These are public bodies that are used extensively in all OECD countries by governments of every political persuasion. Their main rationale is that they afford governments a degree of flexibility that they would not otherwise enjoy in the design and delivery of public policies. In other words, the arm's-length relationship with government means that such public bodies are able to operate in a more agile manner compared to a government department, not least because the latter is obliged to operate within a very onerous compliance culture that makes it more risk-averse than an arm's-length public body or a private sector organisation.

But this is where real agreement seems to end, at least in Wales, where it is virtually impossible to have a dispassionate public debate about the pros and cons of quangos. Indeed, some sections of the Labour Party have effectively declared war on the

quangos, raising the witch-hunting spectre of 17th-century New England rather than a pluralistic 21st-century country. These profound anti-quango sentiments have their origins in the crises and scandals that characterised Quangoland in the 1990s, when some quangos behaved as if they were a law unto themselves. But these anti-quango sentiments linger on, making a genuine debate difficult even now.

In January 2005 the Assembly Government published a consultation document on its merger with the Welsh Development Agency, the Wales Tourist Board, and Education and Learning Wales (ELWa), outlining six benefits (see Box 1). Here, the drive for more democratic accountability is the main rationale. However, when he first made the announcement, in July 2004, First Minister Rhodri Morgan gave more emphasis to making the Assembly Government more 'governmental' in character. The aim was to reduce the distinction between policy creation and implementation, thus increasing the ability of the Assembly to "generate distinctive Wales-oriented policies."

This announcement made only passing reference to the need for improved accountability of the quangos. By far the most prominent reason given was that the merger project would bring improvements in terms of the efficiency and responsiveness to user needs of public services. This reasoning ties in closely with Rhodri Morgan's overall vision for the public services. In contrast to the business-style model of public services, which advocates dividing up public sector organisations to make them leaner and more competitive, Morgan's view envisages efficiency

## box 1: claimed benefits of the merger of the WDA, WTB and ELWa into the assembly government

- Accountability – abolishing the quango boards will establish a clear line of accountability to Ministers; external advice will be incorporated into this new structure.
- Improved customer and stakeholder service – linking policy development and delivery within Government will provide a coherent one-stop shop system.
- Demonstrable results and application of best practice – robust performance and benchmarking data will allow progress to be monitored and performance compared nationally and internationally.
- Streamlined delivery – streamlining will be achieved through shortening of the decision-making process and transfer of resources from administration to delivery;
- Opportunities for staff – staff will have access to a wider job range and will progress based on their delivery as much as their policy-making skills.
- Organising to deliver – integration of departments will improve delivery and create savings that over the long term can be invested in front line services.

Source: Welsh Assembly Government, *Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales. A Consultation by the Welsh Assembly Government on the Mergers with ELWa, the WDA and WTB*, January 2005.

gain being achieved through economies of scale. This 'co-operative model' is based on co-ordination and collaboration between public sector agencies.

However, two major questions hover over the changes underway. First, does the Assembly Government have the internal management capacity to digest the quangos and to substantially improve on their performance?

Although civil servant numbers have increased substantially in recent years, largely as a response to the additional functions that the Assembly has assumed since the Welsh Office era, the pressure on the service is greater today than at any time in the past. Civil servant numbers may have increased, but their work load has increased even faster, raising serious concerns about an over-stretched, over-stressed and unsustainable work culture, a problem that is particularly acute at grade five and grade seven, respectively head of division and head of branch levels. It is into this fraught and fragile context that the WDA, WTB and ELWa are being merged, all of them extremely large and complex organisations with very different work cultures. It is a naive and fatal conceit, for example, to imagine that the physical co-location of functions will of itself deliver joined-up policy for either economic development or post-16 education and training.

The new departments that are currently being designed – Economic Development and Transport on the one hand and Education and Lifelong Learning on the other – will be large and unwieldy entities, affording plenty of scope for turf fights and silo working. One thing seems sure: the structures that will be put in place for the official opening in April 2006 are unlikely to be the end of the story of structural change (see Box 2). In Wales we are prone to think that old problems are solved simply by creating new structures – a strategy that clearly hasn't worked in the past, especially in

**box 2: future of education and lifelong learning**

Although the Welsh higher education Quango, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), survived the Quango cull of 2004, the political climate prevailing in the wake of the bonfire is nevertheless having an impact on Welsh higher education.

Tightening of control by the Assembly Government over HEFCW's activities is becoming increasingly apparent. Evidence of this is provided by the current political preoccupation with a reconfiguration and collaboration agenda. At present the only substantial additional funding for Welsh higher education institutions (HEIs) is made available solely for projects deemed to conform to this agenda. By demanding that funds are hypothecated in this way, the Assembly Government is limiting HEFCW's autonomy in the assignment of funds to its HEIs. This shortening of the arms in the HE sector closely mirrors the experiences documented in other delivery agencies. This is of particular concern when one considers the importance of freedom of expression within academe. The academic tradition, stretching back centuries, has clearly outlived myriad government agendas. To subject universities to direct political regulation would be to stifle the independence that fosters this tradition.

The critical importance of the reconfiguration and collaboration agenda to the Assembly Government's vision for higher education not only demonstrates the tightening of control by the Assembly, but also represents a second issue of considerable concern to Welsh HEIs. Financially, the lack of availability of funding for projects not related to reconfiguration or collaboration is less of a problem for larger institutions, of which Cardiff University is the notable example. Excluding income from tuition fees, Cardiff receives only approximately 30-40 per cent of its income from the Assembly. Its ability to call on alternative funding sources should reduce the impact of the Assembly Government policy.

However, for smaller HEIs, HEFCW-administered funds from the Assembly comprise the largest part of their income. The non-availability of funds for projects not involving reconfiguration or collaboration risks limiting the internal development of these institutions. The reconfiguration agenda will also have a direct impact where institutions are encouraged to merge for reasons of academic and economic performance. Already this impact is beginning to be felt. A recent report by independent consultants for HEFCW proposed that the three principal post-1992 HEIs in southeast Wales – the University of Glamorgan, the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, and the University of Wales, Newport – be merged (Bull, J. and R. Cooke. 2005. *Review of 'post-92' higher education in southeast Wales: a report for the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales*. Available at: [www.hefcw.ac.uk](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk)). How this recommendation is met will be critical to future policy determination.

vocational education and training, a sector which has undergone three major structural upheavals since 1999, and as many as five changes in as many years if we include the two debilitating internal changes within ELWa. In spite of these structural changes, we have a skills profile in Wales today that would shame a developing country – with 24 per cent of adults officially classed as functionally illiterate and 53 per cent functionally innumerate.

Structural change induces enormous institutional upheaval and imposes huge hidden costs, not least in terms of the internal networks that are broken up and the external networks that are disrupted, both of which take time to renew. Within this context the staff would be less than human if their first

concerns were not with the security of their jobs and career prospects. This is hardly the environment in which to deliver a 'business as usual' service to clients and customers.

Although the Assembly Government aspires to become a best in class service provider, the question that needs to be asked is how would it know? The truth of the matter is that there is an alarming lack of benchmarking data inside the Assembly Government, and one might have expected this knowledge gap to be filled before the merger not after it. For all these reasons it is difficult to imagine the new departments out-performing the quangos whilst so much of their energy is absorbed in recalibrating their internal affairs (see Box 3).

### box 3: evaluating the new economic development and transport department

Performance indicators are a fundamental way through which the new Economic Development and Transport Department within the Assembly Government can be held accountable. Whatever performance targets are chosen, there is an urgent need to jettison the misleading performance indicators through which the Assembly Government sought to monitor and evaluate the WDA. Conveyed through the annual remit letter from the Minister, these performance indicators were as undemanding as they were unimaginative, a legacy from the Welsh Office era which sadly continues to this day. The key performance indicator was 'number of jobs created or safeguarded', a measure which conceals far more than it reveals, prompting one WDA Board member to say that it was as illuminating as 'smoke and mirrors'. Here, as with so many other indicators, quantity was extolled over quality. This philosophy reached its crudest expression in the targets given to the WDA's North American offices, where each office had to deliver 1,000 jobs apiece regardless of quality or fit.

New performance indicators should cover two main types of performance – service delivery to the customer and the wider contribution to the Welsh economy. In the former, a simple but fundamentally important set of response times should be established. For example: an application for a grant should be acknowledged within a set number of days; a decision should be given within a guaranteed number of weeks; and completion should occur within a defined period. On the wider front the WAG should assess its performance in terms of wage levels and quality jobs, and should refer to the targets in *A Winning Wales* and the *Wales Spatial Plan*, for example improving GDP/GVA levels, reducing economic inactivity, and enhancing the R&D base. The common threads running through all these different indicators should be to render the new Economic Development and Transport Department as accountable to as many stakeholders as possible, and to make outcome rather than process the litmus test of everything it does. Modest as they seem, these two changes amount to nothing less than a cultural revolution for a civil service system in which the principal customer is the Minister and where process is king.

The new performance indicators should set a higher premium on the quality of the project and not on the number of jobs involved, because poor quality jobs tend to be the least secure jobs. To target quality projects the Economic Development and Transport department will have to calibrate its grants to quality-based criteria, like the level of research, design or development spending attached to a project, or the number of apprentices, technicians or technologists generated by the investment in question. These indicators have the merit of helping to build a new trajectory of economic development, one that is oriented to the future rather than tethered to the past, one that is also more consistent with the Assembly Government's stated ambition of creating a more innovative and sustainable model of development in Wales.

The second major question about the quango merger that is underway asks whether Wales will become a less pluralist, more state-centric country in which the political realm embraces ever more aspects of our social and economic life?

The encroachment of the political realm into civil society is being accompanied by a command and control approach, as a result of which politicians are seeking to exert ever-increasing authority. This

approach is characterised by more stringent control over access to information, which in turn limits society's capacity for effective scrutiny of political actions. The Culture Minister's behaviour during the selection of Meri Huws as Chair of the Welsh Language Board bears witness to the type of political mentality that scrutiny exists to keep in check. This mentality is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in documents obtained by the *Western Mail* under the Freedom of Information Act. In September 2004, with funding problems marring the progress of proposals to build an Autotechnium in Llanelli, an Assembly Government official wrote to a colleague, saying:

"With the Wales GB rally only some three months away, there is an urgent need to sound some optimistic notes for public consumption on the Autotechnium developments. We need a positive line for the Minister. I should, therefore, be grateful if you would agree some 'optimistic' 'lines to take' ...that I may convey to the Minister asap'."

The challenge is creating a public service system that is both efficient and accountable. What is more, this must be achieved in the context of political openness to debate. Unfortunately, the secretive manner in which the 'bonfire' process has been conducted has left the

Assembly Government open to the charge that it is not interested in fostering free and frank debate. As the quangos are brought in-house, so public life will increasingly revolve around the Assembly, and secrecy and spin will be more readily rationalised. Already fewer people seem willing to speak openly against this receding pluralism for fear of alienating their patrons in the Assembly. Consequently, the centres of independent thought and research are becoming limited to the media and academia. We cannot be content with this state of affairs.

- Kevin Morgan is Professor of European Regional Development and Stevie Upton a researcher in the School of City and Regional Planning at Cardiff University. This is an edited extract from their recently published *Paper*, *Culling the Quangos: The New Governance and Public Service reform in Wales*.

# reality cheque

teresa rees argues that an evidence base should inform student funding decisions



In the heated Commons debate on the 2004 Higher Education Act just five votes secured ‘top-up fees’ for England. However, a lesser known clause in the Act signalled a significant step forward on the road to devolution. Responsibility for making important decisions about the funding of higher education, including the issue of ‘top up fees’ and the matter of student support in Wales, was passed to the National Assembly.

the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning decided not to follow England in introducing top up fees in 2006-07, but instead to commission an independent review to provide some evidence-based recommendations. The review’s report was published on 26 June 2005. However, two days earlier the Conservative Group in the Assembly tabled a motion instructing the Assembly Government not to introduce ‘top-up fees’ and an alliance of the

opposition parties and independents defeated Labour on this issue by just one vote. This was the first significant vote in the Assembly following the general election, which led to the disappearance of Labour’s slim majority.

There are a number of curiosities about this story. In the first instance, the motion was purportedly about a principle. A previous motion also passed by the Assembly said that it was ‘in principle’ against variable fees. But it is odd, to say the least, to have a motion of principle about a funding regime, and one that is ill-defined at that. After all, most students in Wales already pay variable fees (part time students, overseas students, post graduate students). Variable fees in essence mean that the university can decide what to charge (as opposed to ‘fixed fees’, which are set by the Government). Universities tend to charge non-EU overseas students more than home ones, so that they pay a figure nearer the true cost of their education. Employer sponsored students on MBAs tend to be charged more than disadvantaged part-time students on access courses returning to higher education. And so on.

It is only full-time undergraduate students that do not as yet pay variable fees. The Higher Education Act gives universities permission to set fees for undergraduates too, up to a ceiling of £3,000. In essence then, the Assembly’s first principle appeared to mean that it was in favour of fixed fees, in principle. But whether this was just for full time undergraduates was not clear. And, of course, fixed fees can be increased

above the current level. Indeed, they could be fixed as high as £3,000 a year.

The second motion was about an aversion to ‘top-up fees’. Alas, this is an ill-defined term. Presumably it refers to an increase in fees, whether through fixed or variable arrangements and it presumably was concerned only with full-time undergraduates, who constitute a minority of the student body in Wales, as it is these students whose fees are being increased in England.

The Government was perhaps expecting a market in fees in England when it introduced variable fees, but in fact this has not happened. Only a handful of institutions are charging less than the ceiling of £3,000. Instead, a market has developed in bursaries, scholarships, and other inducements designed to attract students to particular courses and institutions. The Government has insisted that some of the fee income be used to enhance access, that is, to increase the numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Yet, at the same time universities are given a set numbers of students that they can recruit. If they exceed those numbers they are fined. So the inducements are not about growing the market, but ensuring students with some characteristics are recruited rather than others.

Many Assembly Members clearly have a strong antipathy to students paying more in fees. It was a position equally as strongly held by members of the Review Group on Higher Education Funding and Student Support in Wales that I was asked to chair by the Minister when we began our deliberations in July 2004.

However, we committed ourselves to some guiding principles, such as increasing access and participation, and to an evidence-based approach to developing recommendations. We commissioned research, took evidence from stakeholders, conducted analyses and examined international practice. During the course of our deliberations, we came to some hard but clear conclusions. Graduates and society benefit from university education. With participation increasing from the 6 per cent of the 1960s, when no fees were paid by individuals, to the current figure of approaching 50 per cent, we came to the view that the cost should be shared. Crucially, however, students needed to be supported while studying.

This was the conclusion reached by the Dearing Committee in 1997 which was first set up to look into the under funding of higher education. They recommended not that students make a contribution but that graduates should pay, when they are earning a graduate income. In the first

Rees Review' on Student Hardship and Funding in 2001, we came to the same conclusion. It does not make sense to charge students fees when many do not have the money and acquire unacceptable levels of debt. Instead, they can make a contribution when and if they are earning a graduate premium. Moreover, our first report argued, student maintenance grants (scrapped by the Government) should be reintroduced. And so they were in Wales, in 2001, and are now being reintroduced in England too.

Hence, the second 'Rees Review' recommended that the Assembly introduce 'deferred flexible fees' (a clearer and more accurate term than variable fees). Remove the fee until the graduate can afford to pay (at about £8.00 per week on a £20,000-a-year income), and it ceases to be a problem. The evidence of this is clear from other countries. The trick is to get the thresholds right. There is much concern that if wages are lower in Wales, it will be more difficult for graduates here to make that fee

contribution. But of course, if graduates don't reach that threshold, they don't pay. But fees alone will not address the higher education funding gap and the cost of student support. We also recommended the Assembly explore possible responses to the need for a significant investment in higher education. Both these recommendations have been accepted.

But the real issue is student maintenance. This is where the bulk of 'student debt' comes from. Maintenance needs to be provided in the form of loans and means-tested grants. We proposed a means-tested National Bursary Scheme for Welsh domiciled students and all full-time undergraduate students at Welsh universities. This is essential to support students and to maintain the delicate balance of cross border flows.

It is an improvement on the English system where the market in incentives includes bicycles, laptops and remission on accommodation costs.

This, we have learned, is bewildering to potential students, especially those from disadvantaged areas. Our proposal is to put the money straight into the hands of the students, who can then study what they like, where they like, rather than shopping around for a bargain offer. While the risk is removed from the payment of fees through deferred flexible fee arrangement, living costs have to be paid by all students, while they are studying, whether they reach a graduate premium or not. It is here that grants and loans need to be concentrated in order to avoid student debt. Our recommendation for a National Bursary Scheme has been accepted.

Finally, we recommended addressing urgently the needs of part-time students, who were largely ignored in the Higher Education Act. They constitute nearly half all the students in Wales, and under the current system, still have to pay up-front fees. Part time study is the only viable route for returning to education for many who need to combine studying with family responsibilities, or paid work. The

### panel 1: top-up fees deal reached in the national assembly in june

- 1 From 2007-08 Welsh HEIs will be given the flexibility to charge fees of up to £3,000 – £1,800 more than the existing £1,200 fixed fee. This will ensure that institutions operate on a level playing field with England.
- 2 Welsh domiciled HE students studying in Wales will be eligible for a £1,800 fee grant which offsets entirely the additional fees which those students would otherwise be charged. This will be an incentive for Welsh domiciled students to study here and then stay to contribute to the Welsh economy.
- 3 From 2006-07 – once the necessary student finance powers have been devolved – the £1,200 fee contribution which students are currently required to make will be deferred until after students graduate. The loan will be paid back over a period of time.
- 4 When introduced in 2007-08 the new arrangements will apply to second year students who enter university in 2006 as well as those starting in 2007. This will not affect Welsh domiciled students but will affect those applying from elsewhere in the UK.
- 5 A National Bursary Scheme will be introduced and funded from the additional income generated by fees. The intention is that it should be targeted so as to promote greater access to Higher Education. The scheme will be designed by the HE sector.
- 6 The Assembly Government has undertaken to examine the estimated £100 million funding gap between Welsh HEIs and their UK counterparts and report back to the Assembly before the end of the current budget round.
- 7 Further research will be undertaken to determine the scale of any problem where students from Wales pursue courses such as veterinary science which are currently unavailable in Wales. The Assembly Government does not wish to proceed with a scheme which is not within European law.
- 8 Wales has 40 per cent of students studying part-time – a higher percentage than in the rest of the UK and reflects success in widening access to disadvantaged groups. An independent review will be undertaken to examine the needs of part-time students.



Assembly has decided to explore this issue further.

So far, so good. Indeed, members of the review group are delighted that our recommendations have been accepted. However, the minority parties, in keeping with its principles on fees, while supporting these recommendations, insisted upon the Assembly making available a fee grant to Welsh domicile students studying in Wales, equivalent to the difference between the existing fixed fee and the upper limit allowed under variable fees of £3,000 (at a cost of about £32m a year, rising to £50m). This is informed by a concern that 'fees' will act as a deterrent against young people going to university, especially those from disadvantaged areas. Not so,

according to the research we commissioned. A survey of over 1,000 16-year-olds from all over Wales, including the most deprived areas, talk of a distinction in their minds between 'good debt' (a mortgage, university fees) and a bad debt (credit card). The former are seen as an investment in their future.

Research we commissioned shows that unlike England where there is a need to encourage more people from disadvantaged backgrounds who are 'university ready' into higher education, in Wales, most already go. The challenge in Wales is to make more people from disadvantaged backgrounds 'university ready'. This can be done by more investment in early years, access through further

education, earning while learning schemes and part time study opportunities, supported by high standards of accurate information, advice and counselling. But maintenance support is crucial. It would have made more impact than providing financial assistance with fees for graduates who will only have to pay fees when they are on middle and high incomes.

The Review Group did suggest that the Assembly might want to provide some incentive to Welsh domicile students to study in Wales, although there were mixed views on this. Some would argue students should be encouraged to study further afield; moreover some courses are not available in Wales. Others point to graduates often staying in the places they graduate to develop their careers; this would help graduate retention in Wales. By deciding to subsidise Welsh domicile middle and high income graduates who studied full time in Wales, opposition AMs can be seen to be seen to be 'sticking to their principles' on fees. However, if the principles had been about access and participation, that resource could arguably have been much better spent on support for part time students.

- Professor Teresa Rees is Pro Vice Chancellor of Cardiff University and a member of the IWA Board of trustees. For the Review Group's main report see [www.learning.wales.gov.uk/students](http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/students)

## panel 2: members of the rees review group

- Professor David Bell, Stirling University
- Dr Anthony Bruce, Director of Policy Development, Universities UK
- Professor Richard Davies, Vice Chancellor, University of Wales Swansea
- Mr Rob Humphreys\*, Department of Continuing Adult Education, University of Wales, Swansea and Chair of NIACE Dysgu Cymru
- Ms Gerry Jenson, Assistant Principal – Coleg Llandrillo
- Mr Darren McGinley, NUS President, Trinity College Carmarthen
- Professor Teresa Rees\* CBE (Chair)
- Dr Sonia Reynolds\*, Director of Dysg
- Mr Ken Richards\*, University of Wales, Aberystwyth (recently retired)
- Judge Ray Singh\*, CBE, Barrister at Law
- Ms Eileen Smith, Student Finance, Bridgend County Council
- Ms Felicity Williams, General Secretary, Wales TUC
- Dr Maureen Woodhall\*, University of Wales, Aberystwyth (recently retired), Emeritus Reader, Institute of Education, University of London
- Ms Eleri Wynne-Jones, Honorary Fellow, University of Wales Bangor; member of HEFCW

\* An asterisk denotes that the individual was also a member of the Independent Investigation Group on Student Hardship and Funding in Wales, 2000-2001.

# geography of opportunity



## bruce katz describes the evolution of American neighbourhood policy and what it could mean for Wales

Casual visitors to America's great cities are often struck by the vast areas of deprivation that abut vibrant downtowns and once-grand commercial corridors. These communities seem strangely out of place in such a prosperous country – a grim reminder of the racial, ethnic, and class divisions that persist beneath celebrations of the American dream.

Since the 1960s, such rundown neighbourhoods have held a fascination. They have been the laboratories for a plethora of experiments, government demonstrations and federal policies and programmes. And yet, the impact of

these efforts – amounting to tens of billions of dollars over decades – remains mixed.

Some neighbourhoods can point to real improvements. But many initiatives have failed to alleviate, and in some cases have exacerbated, the deteriorating economic and social conditions in inner cities. My thesis is simple: a true rebirth of distressed areas will only occur if we make these places neighbourhoods of choice and connection.

Neighbourhoods of choice are communities in which people of lower incomes can both find a place to start and, as their incomes rise, a place to stay. They are also communities to which people of higher incomes can move, for their distinctiveness or amenities or location. This requires, first and foremost, an acceptance of economic integration as a goal of neighbourhood and housing policy.

Neighbourhoods of connection are communities which link families to opportunity, wherever that opportunity is located. This requires a new, profound, and sustained commitment to improving the 'educational offer' in these communities and the cities in which they are largely located. It also requires a new, mature, and pragmatic vision of the changing 'geography of opportunity', particularly with regard to jobs and other housing choices.

For Britain and America, this thesis fundamentally challenges neighbourhood policies that, under the guise of revitalising communities, reinforce patterns of concentrated poverty – a root cause of neighbourhood distress. It demands that neighbourhoods operate within the broader geography of opportunity, rather than the insular, fixed borders of deprived areas.

At first sight, American neighbourhood experience and policy appear far removed from the realities of Wales. Neighbourhoods in the US seem harsher and more racially divided. The American 'safety net' has frayed, leaving working families incapable of meeting basic needs such as healthcare and childcare. American metropolitan economies are dispersed, leaving inner-city neighbourhoods remote from the locus of economic activity. Central government leaves most urban neighbourhoods (and cities for that matter) to fend for themselves.

Though the more rural nature of concentrated poverty in Wales presents distinct challenges, Wales has much to learn from American communities. Neighbourhood policies in the US are working out the answers to fundamental questions about deprived areas. Can neighbourhoods of high poverty be revitalised if their socio-economic composition, their concentrated levels of poverty, remains the same? What neighbourhood strategies make sense in weak markets of population loss, economic stagnation, low housing demand, and high vacancy rates? What is the role of the private sector in revitalising neighbourhoods and regenerating markets?

In fact, the most advanced American neighbourhood policies are trying to do what Joseph Rowntree intended for his foundations: to "Search out the underlying causes of weakness or evil in the community, rather than . . . (remedy) their most superficial manifestations."

The US, for example, has undertaken a 10-year federal effort to demolish the worst public housing blocks and replace them with housing that is economically integrated, less dense,



Downtown Detroit – decentralised radically, leaving the central city economically devastated and potential inner-city workers spatially isolated from job opportunities in the suburbs.

better designed and integrated into the fabric of local neighbourhoods and city economies. This strategy includes resources to smooth low-income residents' access to opportunity through housing mobility and work support services.

So what specifically do these American efforts teach Britain and Wales?

One lesson is that neighbourhoods (and municipalities for that matter) need to understand their own metropolitan context and their position in the metro area. American metropolitan areas are highly diverse. Some, like Detroit and Philadelphia, have decentralised radically, leaving the central city economically devastated and potential inner-city workers spatially isolated from job opportunities in the suburbs. In other metros, like Denver and Phoenix, the central city continues to thrive economically despite decentralisation, making housing affordability a top concern for inner city residents who live near plentiful city jobs.

In the end, housing and labour markets, governance patterns and transportation connections, employment and educational opportunities vary considerably across neighbourhoods, cities and metropolitan areas. Thus, neighbourhood policies need to be flexible enough to allow local actors to adapt strategies to the distinct market

and spatial realities of their larger communities.

This lesson appears particularly appropriate in Wales. The depth and complexity of deprivation in regions like the south Wales Valleys requires approaches that take into account the fundamental restructuring of the economy and place economic function and sustainability at the centre of revitalisation efforts. In this vein, the housing market renewal pathfinders in northern England have mounted promising market-oriented efforts to tackle deprivation by intervening at the regional level.

Another lesson is local governance. Local authorities in the US have powerful responsibilities – education, law enforcement, land regulation – and the ability to raise local funds (within limitations) to carry them out. This has created an entrepreneurial culture and has led to a natural system for using the fiscal benefits of, say, city centre revival to subsidise revitalisation in other neighbourhoods. Many local governments leverage the federal effort to redevelop public housing by investing their resources in neighbourhood parks, schools and streets.

In Britain, the bulk of tax benefits from city centre revival accrue to the national, rather than local, government, making this local cross-subsidisation difficult to execute. Devolving more powers – including the power to tax – to local entities appears necessary, and would be consistent with

Government's move to offer local governments enhanced flexibility in exchange for high performance.

Still another key lesson is the value of immigration. In the US, immigration is a key component of neighbourhood transformation and a necessity for future economic, fiscal and social health. Increasingly, "weak market cities" like Baltimore and Pittsburgh are experimenting with a range of strategies to attract immigrants to their cities and help recent arrivals negotiate their way through local school systems as well as labour, housing and financial markets. The main point is this: no broad revival of neighbourhoods, cities or even metropolitan areas will likely occur without substantial attention being given to stimulating and leveraging the right demographics.

Most important, neighbourhood policies need to grapple with the negative social and economic implications of concentrated poverty. In the end, concentrated poverty is the "underlying cause of weakness or evil in the community" that Rowntree was so concerned about a century ago. By contrast, the focus of most neighbourhood efforts – dilapidated housing, deteriorating town centres, poor educational performance – remain "superficial manifestations" of these settlement patterns.

It is this basic understanding that needs to energise the neighbourhood policies of both our countries. And that can drive a new, sustainable commitment to "neighbourhoods of choice and connection" and to true opportunity for people and places now left behind.

- Bruce Katz is vice-president of the Brookings Institution in Washington DC and founding director of its Metropolitan Policy Program. This is an edited extract from a paper presented to a Joseph Rowntree Foundation seminar held in the National Assembly earlier this year. [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk) or [www.brookings.edu/metro](http://www.brookings.edu/metro)

# gwynfor



## dafydd wigley looks at the career of 'the greatest Welsh statesman of the 20th century'

**g**wynfor Evans was elected to parliament in 1966, that famous Carmarthen by-election. I was in London and had just helped to set up Plaid Cymru's Research Group with the late Phil Williams, Dafydd Williams and others. I had an opportunity to work with Gwynfor, drawing up parliamentary questions and researching economic statistics for him.

Parliament was a very lonely place for Gwynfor at that time. But within a short period he had helped inspire the Scots to elect Winnie Ewing to join him in the battle. She and Gwynfor shared

those crucial nationhood-clinching years that paved the way for the constitutional journey on which both Scotland and Wales have embarked.

I have no doubt that Gwynfor was the greatest Welsh statesman of the 20th century. It is true that Lloyd George was a great British statesman. The people's budget was revolutionary and 'Lloyd George's money' – the state pension – was an immensely important social provision. But had Lloyd George not been there to accomplish these changes some other politician would have taken the opportunity to fulfill the yearnings of that age.

Likewise with Aneurin Bevan. It is difficult to believe that had Attlee appointed someone else as Minister for Health, we would not have had the fulfillment of the aspiration for a National Health Service, drawing heavily on Beveridge's proposals.

With Gwynfor, it was different. If Gwynfor had not campaigned with such passion, with such unbending determination, and with such incredible perseverance, Wales would not, today,

be what it is. He made us dare to hope. No one else could have achieved this. Our generation could not otherwise have lived through this remarkable chapter in Welsh history which has unfolded over the last half century.

Without Gwynfor's influence we would not have our National Assembly. The Welsh language would not enjoy official status. S4C would not have come into existence. Wales would not be stepping into the 21st century as a recognised national community with the potential to develop into a full member state within the European family of nations. It is thanks to Gwynfor that this has happened.

My period of working with him in Parliament and seeing how he took up the challenge, was a formative experience. Every moment he was there he used to the full; it was as if he was a shepherd for the whole of the small nation – writing countless letters in his own hand, encouraging people to take up the challenge; inspiring new activities of all sorts and thanking even the most junior branch officer for undertaking the most menial tasks. A small part of that



A special train packed with supporters heads for Westminster after Gwynfor Evans' win in Carmarthen in October 1974..



Tuesday 2nd November 1982 – At his Llangadog home, Gwynfor tunes in to the first day of broadcasting by S4C.

enormous flame which burnt in Gwynfor's breast has affected every one of us, both within and outside Plaid Cymru.

The respect shown towards Gwynfor in Parliament was across party boundaries. Michael Foot admired him because of his unceasing commitment to peace. I well remember Leo Abse saying, after the 1979 election when Gwynfor lost Carmarthen, "This is the end of an era. Without people like Gwynfor, Parliament will not be the same place".

A character trait of Gwynfor's was to think the best of everyone. He would meet someone on a train, that person might say a few warm words of tribute towards the work he was doing – and Gwynfor would be immediately convinced that he had discovered another passionate nationalist! I believe Gwynfor had to think the best of everyone: how else could he have battled through the long years in the wilderness? I learnt from him that it is through kindness, not through political hatred, that we win the hearts and minds of people – and through that win our arguments.

This vision was part of Gwynfor's commitment to non-violent politics. This was one of the great contributions which he made to Wales and the world – that it is possible to create a national revolution without resorting to violence.

Many have commented recently about Gwynfor's stand to secure a Welsh television channel. It was his determination that forced the Thatcher government to make its first u-turn and allow the will of the Welsh people to transcend the wishes of the government of the United Kingdom. The implications were far-reaching. It was part of the background which led, a decade later, for both Tony Blair and John Major alike, to recognise that the people of Wales and Scotland have the fundamental right to self determination.

"Freedom for Wales" was Gwynfor's great objective, freedom to allow us to decide things for ourselves; and to take on to our shoulders the responsibility for the future of our country and its people, and to accept our responsibilities towards the rest of humanity. It is that "freedom" which allows us, as a people, to choose the degree of self-government we hold. It is, in fact, a recognition of the sovereignty of the people, and that the people of Wales have the right to exercise such sovereignty on a national level.

I remember, towards the end of the 1980s, considering leaving politics, feeling that I had nothing further to contribute. I called at Talar Wen (his Llangadog home) to explain this to

Gwynfor. He respected my decision and put no unfair pressure on me to reconsider, but there was an obvious sadness in his eyes. As I drove the car for home, I knew in my heart that I couldn't disappoint him. That was the sort of man he was, and that is the sort of effect he had on so many of us.

When I called past Pencarreg to see him very near the end of his life, enjoying an hour's chat over a splendid tea, Gwynfor was as alert as ever to the political needs of Wales. He discussed in detail how it might be that the Richard Commission Report could be enacted. He railed against the war in Iraq, rejoicing in the stance of Adam Price, and Plaid's parliamentary party against that war. And, as always, although his voice was weak, he pressed with passion the basic need to safeguard and strengthen the national movement. His mind was razor sharp and his enthusiasm – in his nineties – was as contagious as ever.

Gwynfor Evans was one of the most civilised politicians that these islands have ever seen. And Gwynfor is the father of the new Wales. His challenge is our challenge – and our privilege – to roll up our sleeves and help bring about his vision – a peaceful world, a cooperative society, a flourishing Welsh language and a national future for Wales. Ours is the duty to build a civilized Wales worthy of such a founding father.

In his book *A National Future for Wales* Gwynfor wrote, "A nation is not only a partnership between the living, but between the living and the dead." In the words of Waldo Williams "cadw ty mewn cwmwl tystion". The partnership of which Gwynfor wrote takes on a new meaning today, and from his grave Gwynfor will continue to inspire us, both as individuals and as a nation.

- Dafydd Wigley is a former President of Plaid Cymru and former AM and MP for Arfon. This article is based on a translation of the address he gave at the funeral service of Gwynfor Evans at Aberystwyth in April.

# buzz factor

yvette vaughan jones **says culture is the driver of the new economy**



**a** great deal has been written about creativity and the economy since the American economist Richard Florida, author of *The Rise of the Creative Class*, burst on the scene in the 1990s with his three indicators for success: Technology, Talent and Tolerance. His lectures sell out as he travels the globe and is adding celebrity economist to a world more naturally inhabited by pop stars, footballers and chefs. But there is still little analysis of how Wales measures up in the creativity stakes. Anecdote and hype make poor indicators but they are pretty much the currency being used.

The recent launch of the Assembly Government's Creative Industries strategy sets out a tight definition, namely the commercial exploitation of intellectual property. A new intellectual property fund will be targeted on gap funding rather than seed corn investment, and loans rather than grants. Decision making will be industry-led rather than culturally driven. The hope is that this will produce a more commercially viable industry. The aim is to stimulate mergers of the current

plethora of small independent businesses to produce larger enterprises which will be better placed to compete in the global marketplace.

At the same time, the Assembly Government has been rolling out its technology programme and promoting broadband to all businesses and homes. If all this is achieved then two of Richard Florida's main indicators of success, enhancing technology and and promoting talent will be met. However, it won't do much for the tolerance of our society and measuring the extent to which this is contributing to the growth of our creative industries.

Richard Florida's definition of tolerance makes a connection between creativity and the willingness to accept and embrace differences, in particular gay culture. His thesis is that where there is a high tolerance of the gay population, creative people will also be attracted. Such indicators of tolerance go hand in hand with the freedom of expression that is at the heart of the creative impulse.

At the same time, the reasons for creative people's location in an area and their reasons for leaving are rather more complicated. In common with many other sectors there are the logical reasons such as higher education opportunities, easy access to grants and loans, particularly setting up grants, availability of cheap property for rehearsal and studio spaces as well as for living. More illogical is what the Greater London Authority in its bold policy document on the creative industries calls "noise". By this it means the buzz of a place which I would interpret as a mixture of a lot of opportunities to produce work (a well developed cultural infrastructure) and a lot of people willing to participate or at least become spectators.

Attracting, nurturing and retaining talented individuals is going to be a key issue in the future as people become more mobile and businesses

*"The economic leaders of the future will not necessarily be emerging giants like India or China. They certainly won't be countries that focus on being cost effective centres for manufacturing... Rather they will be the countries that are able to attract creative people... Creativity is an asset that must be constantly cultivated."*

Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*



*Cardiff Café Culture*, taken from *Cardiff: Rebirth of a Capital*, published by Cardiff Council in June 2005. Photo: David Hurn.

less dependent on buildings and physical assets. Richard Florida may be being simplistic in seeing tolerance as a driver of the economy, but it is certainly true that creative people are vital. The challenge in Wales will be to continue to be competitive in its attractiveness to creative people.

An interesting statistic is that some 70 per cent of visitors to the major cultural attractions in Europe are local. This suggests that without a strong local interest in a city's culture, the buzz becomes more of a low drone and people from outside do not perceive it as culturally dynamic. An example of this is Melbourne (another would-be Brussels) which is fast becoming a 'festival city' since it has a festival of one kind or another going on

most of the time. Such local festivals are only sustainable with local support.

Demos Director Tom Bentley's notion that the City-region is the most appropriate level to develop the creative economy is particularly pertinent for Wales since both Cardiff and Swansea are currently in receipt of Urban Cultural Funding to stimulate creativity during 2005-06. The value of seeing culture and creativity as drivers of the economy is that it brings the language and policy direction of economics and social cohesion together in new and exciting ways. Cultural programmes are intended to be used as tools of regeneration in its widest sense, including building aspirations, skills and opportunities for the disenfranchised.

Connecting social inclusiveness with economic success promotes creative prosperity. There is a tendency to regard developing our knowledge economy as a means of generating social cohesion. However, we should understand that only through social cohesion can we develop a dynamic knowledge economy. The community cultural sector has always known this but hitherto has failed to articulate it effectively.

We need a bolder and more integrated approach to developing cultural strategies that encourage tolerance and diversity as economic drivers. We need to develop greater cultural diversity and ensure the results can be enjoyed and celebrated by a much wider public. There should also be a greater acknowledgement of the importance of festivals such as the Indian Mela, the Mas Carnival and the Mardi Gras.

There also needs to be a clearer progression of opportunity for talented young people whether attracted by the now famed student life of Cardiff, or whether they are emerging from community groups in places like Grangetown and Butetown. Creative cities work in partnership with the private sector and other public bodies to ensure that young people have places to develop creative practice, support and advice in the early stages, opportunities to showcase and market their work, and a thriving and dynamic milieu in which to share ideas and gain critical feedback.

However, if the city-regions of Wales are going to drive growth and renewal they will need more than investment in their cultural and creative products. Creative innovation requires strong links between universities and the business and finance sectors. Connections need to be made between planning and the creative economy as well as between business support and the creative sectors. A much closer and faster exchange of information and practice between cities and city-regions will also be essential if Wales is truly to capitalise on its talents.

Strategic interventions throughout Cardiff's 2005 celebrations are aimed at increasing participation in creative activity and stimulating more activity in the sector. The intention is to help to counteract economic inactivity through increasing engagement by more people. As much of the programme is directed at hard to reach groups, this engagement should be especially valuable. The renewed interest in local neighbourhoods and communities should be a catalyst for more improvements to the city both in terms of facilities and in terms of community participation.

When Cardiff was bidding to be the European Capital of Culture in 2008, it commissioned a study which asked the following questions:

"How is the programme going to both increase the level of creativity and innovation? More specifically how will it raise the level of demand for 'cultural products' and also the capacity of the sector to meet that enhanced demand? It is now generally understood that important linkages exist between a vibrant cultural sector and a dynamic economy. The common factor is creativity. So a full economic analysis [of the programme] cannot be focused narrowly on estimating jobs numbers. It will also need to explain how the programme will translate into the creation of new enterprises and the expansion of existing businesses."

The study noted that in 2003 Cardiff's creative industries employed 8,700 people. Jobs associated with culture generated a further 3,519, while tourism employed 13,145. The table



Cardiff Big Weekend 2004, taken from *Cardiff: Rebirth of a Capital*, published by Cardiff Council in June 2005. Photo: David Hurn.

below shows the expansion of the sector over the decade 1991 to 2001 for Cardiff and Wales as a whole.

It also suggested a range of interventions to maximise the economic benefit and to ensure sustainability. The creative cities of Wales should be working out partnership arrangements to:

- Develop business incubators and business support services.
- Support measures aimed at professionalising key administrators.
- Develop networks and supply chains, including links across Wales.
- Identify new forms of finance.
- Strengthen links with higher education institutions
- Establish market potential within the larger core companies
- Make links with the creative sector businesses with those from outside the sector and cross-sector networks

- Underline the importance of design in business and encourage local design companies in the public and private sector.
- Increase international showcasing for the sector.

The challenge for Cardiff and Swansea during 2005-06 is to create the conditions for the creative sector to maximise the advantages of:

- Increased resources
- Opportunities to showcase its creative sector to a wider audience through increased attention and profile of the Cities
- Increased levels of activity offering more employment.

What we need now is research to benchmark the sector in both cities to ensure that the opportunities are maximised in 2005 and lead towards a dynamic and sustainable creative sector in Wales.

### employment totals for creative and cultural industries

Relevant Sectors as defined by their SIC Codes	Cardiff 1991	Cardiff 2001	Wales 1991	Wales 2001
Creative Industries	4,500	5,650	15,140	18,700
Broad Cultural Sector (including creative industries, heritage, sport and tourism)	17,800	22,300	109,680	122,890
Total Workforce Employment – All Industries	149,300	168,100	963,700	1,077,600

National Statistics – ABI December 2000 / Census of Employment 1991

- Yvette Vaughan Jones is Director of European and Community programmes with Cardiff City Council.

# labour flexibility



Iwan Gwilym  
examines the case for  
and against regional  
pay differentials

**t** The Treasury has proposed that one way of making the UK economy more flexible would be to introduce regional pay differentials. In June 2003 it published a paper *EMU and Labour Market Flexibility* as part of its Euro entry studies.

Whether or not the UK enters the Eurozone in the near future proposals to introduce geographical pay have been a Labour government commitment since 2001. Regional pay differentials are seen by the Treasury as one way of improving labour market flexibility. Given the impact such a move would have both on public sector pay and on the Welsh economy as a whole it is remarkable that there has been such a muted reaction to these radical proposals. In April 2004 the Bevan Foundation published a paper *Regional pay, regional poverty?* concentrating on the potential microeconomic impact of regional pay. This article looks at the macroeconomic impact on Wales.

It is important to note that regional pay differentials represent only one

element of labour market flexibility. Other elements include: geographic labour mobility, employment flexibility, and functional flexibility. Geographic labour mobility is self-explanatory ('get on your bike'). Employment flexibility encompasses working practices including part-time and flexible working arrangements. Functional flexibility is the ability of the labour force to acquire and apply different skills, enabling people to adapt more readily to technological change.

The reasoning behind seeking to increase labour market flexibility is the need to make the economy more adaptable since Euro membership would reduce the ability of the UK government to take measures to absorb economic shocks. This is undoubtedly true given that EMU membership means that the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England would no longer have the power to determine interest rates. The European Central Bank focuses on the priorities of the Eurozone as a whole rather than any sub-unit such as the UK. There are parallels here with the position of Wales within the 'sterling



Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee – "responds to the needs of the UK as a whole rather than the special needs of Wales".

zone' where the Monetary Policy Committee responds to the needs of the UK as a whole rather than the special needs of Wales.

Varying interest rates is one of the classical ways of responding to economic shocks but this option would be denied to the UK in the event of entry to the Euro zone. However it does need to be borne in mind that because management of UK monetary policy has been delegated to the Monetary Policy Committee the scope for direct and immediate government action has already been reduced.

In the past governments have also varied interest rates to effect changes in the exchange rate as a response to economic shocks. Thus the argument that entry into the Eurozone has removed exchange rate flexibility from the armoury of the UK government and requires a policy response that introduces other sources of flexibility, one of which is labour market flexibility, is considerably weakened due to the advent of the Monetary Policy Committee.

The UK government is also proposing to use fiscal policy more actively as a means of responding to economic shocks and this will need to be considered in any response to the government's approach to Euro entry. It is to be expected that the UK government would plan to use fiscal policy at a UK wide level to respond to economic shocks and would continue to resist deploying such measures at a regional level. However, it is of interest to note that regional fiscal flexibility is allowed in that other major monetary union, the United States, where individual states have considerable discretion in levying sales, income and other local taxes and where there are considerable variations in such taxes even in neighboring states. In 2001, New Hampshire's state tax burden as a percentage of personal income was the lowest in the US (4.2 per cent) whilst

### box 1: arguments for regional pay differentials

- 1) There are differences in the cost of living in the different nations and regions of the UK. Continuing with standard rates of pay in the different geographical areas distorts the market and leads to shortages of key workers such as nurses and teachers in areas of the UK such as south east England. If levels of pay are increased to address difficulties in the more prosperous regions it implies that workers in comparable jobs are relatively overpaid in regions where the cost of living is lower. This may be considered unfair to the individuals in the more costly areas as well as leading to shortages of key workers.
- 2) In any event there is already a degree of local pay differentials thanks to London and other regional weightings. Formally adopting local pay differentials merely recognises reality.
- 3) In practice there are already regional pay differentials in much of the private sector. Why therefore should the public sector be treated differently? In the private sector most pay bargaining is local and pay levels in areas such as Wales are, in general, lower than the levels for comparable jobs in, for example, south east England. Private sector workers recognise that such differentials exist and accept them due to the lower cost of living and better quality of life in places such as Wales. Such workers have a choice: they can accept the lower, local level of pay or move to areas where the rate of pay is higher but where the cost of living may also be higher. It can be argued that this is a decision best left to the individual.
- 4) The fact that private sector pay in areas such as Wales is, on average lower than south east England makes Wales a more competitive area in which to employ people and helps off-set the cost disadvantages, such as those due to poor infrastructure, of running a business in Wales.
- 5) Retaining standard rates of pay in the public sector across the UK renders public sector jobs relatively more attractive compared with private sector jobs in areas such as Wales. This is undesirable because it tends to squeeze out the private sector which is already considerably weaker in Wales compared with more prosperous areas of the UK. If we want a thriving, enterprising private sector in Wales we need to reduce this tendency although the important role that the public sector plays as a consumer of private sector products and services should not be overlooked.
- 6) Another drawback of making public sector jobs relatively more attractive compared with the private sector is that it makes the economy and employment over dependent on public expenditure and over-exposes it to changes in such spending. Historically, the UK has a poor record in terms of consistently sustaining steady or increasing levels of public expenditure in real terms. The pattern has been one of increasing and then freezing public expenditure. Areas such as Wales are excessively vulnerable to such stop-go policies due to too high a dependency on the public sector. Expenditure and employment in the private sector is not, of course, immune to changes but in this case decisions are made by a plurality of companies whilst in the public sector it is central government in London that is the one, decisive authority.
- 7) Provided that the Barnett Formula is not changed then key sectors such as health and education in Wales will automatically continue to receive monetary increases corresponding to the increases in England. Given that pay rates in the public sector will probably, if regional pay differentials are introduced, increase more rapidly in England compared with Wales, Wales could use the additional money in the block grant to fund a relative increase in the number of jobs in Wales in such key public services as teaching and health. This could help offset the effect of the 'Barnett Squeeze'.

## box 2: arguments against regional pay differentials

- 1) The Treasury's paper on labour market flexibility shows that the UK already has a high level of regional wage flexibility (see Chart 1). It is significantly higher, for example, than that for Germany, Italy, France or Spain and only slightly lower than the US. The imposition of regional pay differentials in the public sector is not required and certainly not a priority if increased labour market flexibility is the goal.
- 2) Having UK wide levels of public sector pay rates acts as an automatic economic stabiliser between the nations and regions of the UK. The current practice acts as a re-distributor of wealth between the more and less prosperous nations and regions of the UK. (This effect has contributed to the recent improvement in Wales's relative GVA per capita compared with the UK as a whole.) In the absence of effective regional policy this is an important factor for reducing the differentials in prosperity found across the UK. After all, in 1998 the UK had the highest level of regional disparity, when measured as GDP per capita, of any state within the EU. The current government does not have a very effective regional policy and the move to regional pay differentials in the public sector would be a further surrender to the trend of concentrating economic prosperity in south east England and London which is itself due to the concentration of political power and public expenditure in those regions.
- 3) Another major factor in the disparity in wealth between the nations and regions of the UK has been the massive impact over the years of wholesale financial services in the City of London. The excessive influence City interests have had on UK governments of all parties has been a damaging and distorting factor on economic policy in the UK for the past fifty years or more. It has led to neglect of regional policy and an ignoring of the interests of manufacturing industry. It is noteworthy that in the Five Economic Tests for Euro entry formulated by the current government, the only industry singled out is financial services and in particular the wholesale sector in the City of London. In practice studies by the Treasury and others have concluded that the City of London is well prepared for UK entry into EMU and that the wholesale financial services industry has not suffered since the launch of the Euro. Indeed there is strong evidence that the City of London has strengthened its global position since the introduction of the Euro and is the location of choice in Europe for major, international financial institutions.
- 4) If pay levels for comparable jobs are higher in some areas of the UK compared with others then the more ambitious will tend to move to the regions that pay more. A number of articles in the Summer 2004 issue of *Agenda* demonstrated that this 'brain drain' from Wales is already happening. About a third of Welsh born people living in other parts of the UK are graduates compared with 11 per cent only of Welsh born people remaining in Wales. Even allowing for the greater geographical mobility of graduates the analysis demonstrated that Wales suffers a net 'brain drain' of graduates. Regional pay differentials in the public sector would exacerbate this problem.
- 5) One of the causes of pressure for higher pay in the more prosperous regions is the high cost of housing which also leads to excessive and expensive commuting. Introducing regional pay differentials will reinforce this tendency, leading to even higher house prices and more congestion in areas such as south east England. This is undesirable for social and environmental reasons. Thus a policy of regional pay differentials could be self-defeating. It can be argued that distortions associated with the structure of the housing market are far greater than those in the labour market.

neighboring Vermont was the third highest at 9.5 per cent. Unfortunately successive UK governments have been reluctant to use fiscal policy at a regional level within the UK as part of a proactive, regional economic development policy.

The UK government is also planning to publish regional inflation rates and cost of living measures: this is almost certainly part of a campaign to facilitate public sector pay bargaining at a regional level, to justify regional differentials in pay and to defend differences in GDP per capita across the nations and regions of the UK.

Naturally, the first reaction of many in Wales, particularly those employed in the public sector, is to oppose any move to regional pay differentials. However, the possible impact on the Welsh economy as a whole is less clear and the arguments in favour and against regional pay differentials need to be explored (see Boxes 1 and 2).

On balance Wales should oppose the introduction of regional pay differentials. Because this is an issue principally facing the public sector the redistributionist impact of UK wide pay scales is important for the economic well-being of Wales. This is particularly pertinent given the absence of an effective regional policy and the government's unwillingness to replace the Barnett Formula with a needs-based system.

If the Westminster government's real concern is the ability of the nations and regions of the UK to respond to economic shocks then it should be prepared to implement fiscal policies that are geographically specific. Examples would be a lower rate of employer's National Insurance Contribution which is, in effect, a payroll tax, or lower rates of corporation tax in poorer regions.



Source: New Earnings Survey and ONS.

If the government wishes to increase labour market flexibility it needs to focus its efforts on improving functional flexibility by heavier investment in education, training and life-long learning. This is the element of labour market flexibility that can be raised without undermining the rights of employees. Too many elements of labour market flexibility such as regional pay differentials, part time working and mobility, imply that workers, particularly

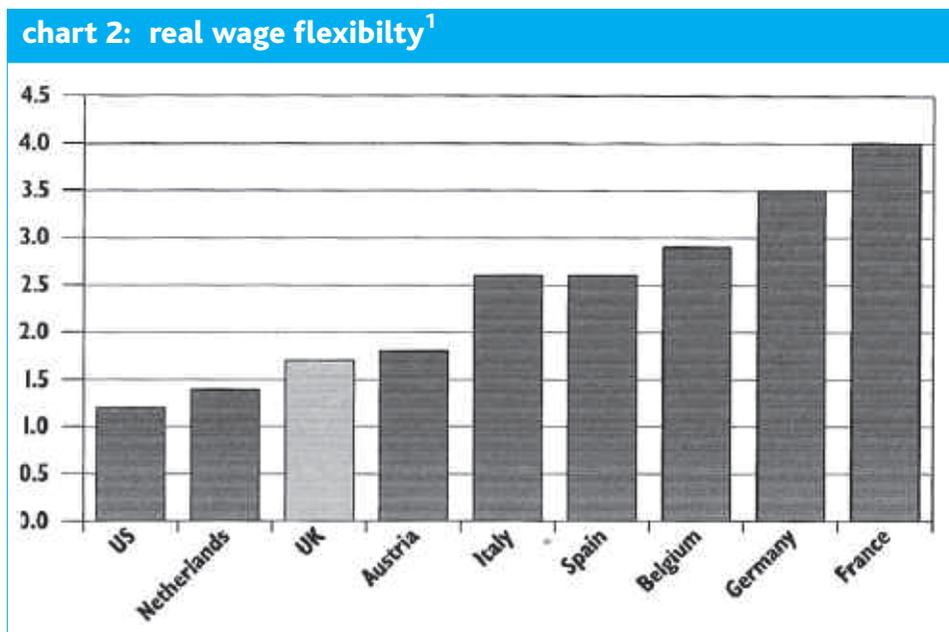
in the poorer regions, are the ones who have to bear the price of increased flexibility. Asymmetry in the labour market means that in considering labour market flexibility attention is focused on the supply side with scant attention being paid to the demand side.

Acceding to regional pay differentials could exacerbate the imbalances between the nations and regions of the UK. This would not only be to the

detriment of Wales but would prevent the UK as a whole from having an economy operating at an optimal level. The UK's monetary and fiscal policy would be designed to answer the needs of south east England rather than the UK as a whole.

Regional pay differentials could accelerate the trend of relative prosperity moving increasingly to London and south east England. This is not only unfair but militates against optimising non-inflationary economic growth for the UK as a whole. The Treasury's report shows that in 1999-2000 wage inflation in south east England was almost 50 per cent higher than in Wales (see Chart 2). Economic growth was already causing inflationary problems in the more prosperous parts of England whilst Wales still had an unemployment rate twice that of south east England.

In these circumstances the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England responded by choking back economic growth when it was inappropriate to do so in the case of Wales. Presumably the government's response is to encourage workers in Wales to migrate to England (thus 'improving' geographic labour mobility). This should be unacceptable to the people of Wales and it hardly makes sense as it leads to increased congestion in south east England. It is for these reasons, and in the absence of effective regional economic development policy, that the introduction of regional pay differentials should be opposed.



Source: OECD, 1999a

<sup>1</sup> Years required for real wages to complete half of the adjustment towards their long-run equilibrium level.

- Eurfyl ap Gwilym has pursued a career in international business and is a director of a number of public companies. He was Director of Research and subsequently National Chairman of Plaid Cymru between and 1975 and 1981.

# out of reach



nic wheeler offers policy options to deal with the crisis of housing affordability in the National Parks

House prices in Pembrokeshire have risen steeply over the last four years and are higher than the average for Wales (see Figure 1). At the same time the latest evidence we have suggests that the supply of new houses is meeting demand. Some 1,000 completions a year roughly meeting the demand caused by new household formation and net in-migration. However, the sharp rise in house prices suggests a market where demand is outstripping supply. Can we offer an explanation for this?

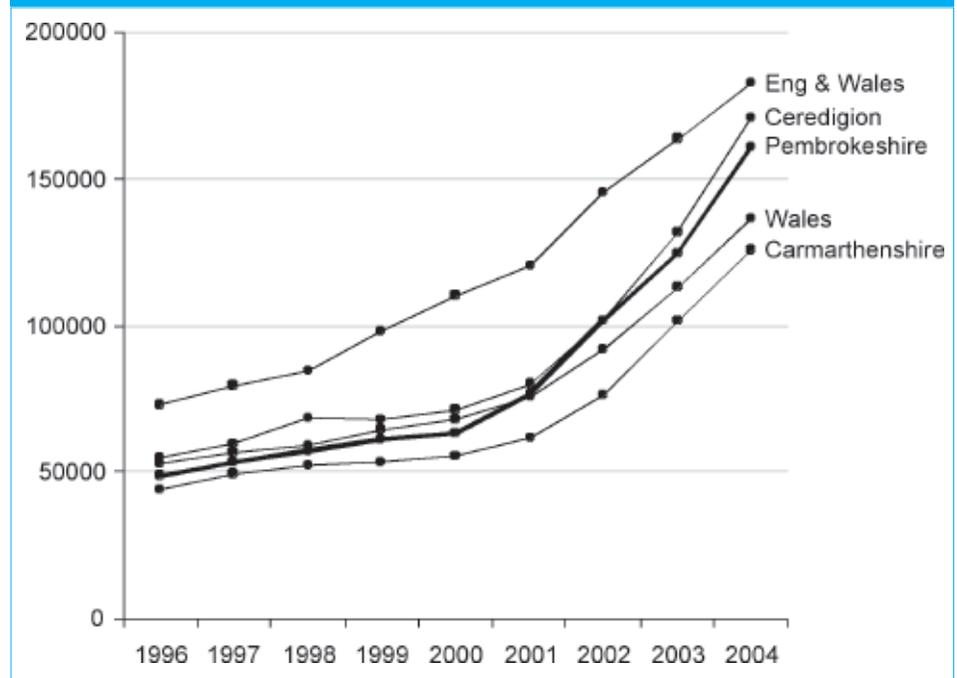
The datedness of information about factors affecting supply and demand may offer up reasons when changes in the housing market in most recent years are considered. One question that needs considering, however, is the role of second and holiday homes in the housing market of Pembrokeshire.

Pembrokeshire has a very high rate of second and holiday home ownership, at 6 per cent. But within the National Park (one third of the County area, with approximately one fifth of the resident population) 18 per cent of the housing stock is used as second and holiday homes (See Figure 2).

Where does this leave people trying to buy houses? Recent research by the Halifax Building Society, published in April 2005, indicates a house price to earning ratio for Pembrokeshire of 6.7, one of the highest in Wales. What is being done or could be done to help with these problems?

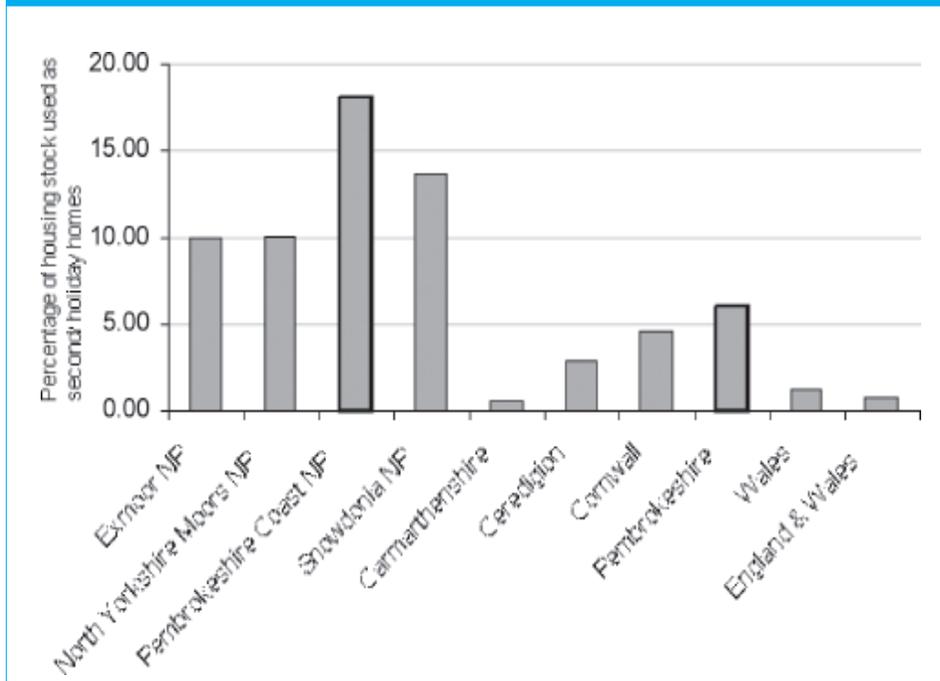
At a National level Welsh Government planning policies on housing have not altered in the past decade. A review of housing policies was carried out under *Better Homes for People in Wales* in 2001. This attempted to integrate the

graph 1: comparative rises in house prices 1996-2004



Source: HM Land registry.

**figure 2: second and holiday homes in selected national parks, counties and countries**



Source: Census 2001.

role of planning and housing, but pointed to the Spatial Plan as providing a context for planning authorities.

The Spatial Plan, which appeared in November 2004, refers to the development of an affordability toolkit to provide local authorities with ways to meet local housing need more effectively. This is awaited, as is the outcome of the Assembly's review of Technical Advice Note 2 on planning guidance in rural areas.

Looking at the range of initiatives available both nationally and locally, attempts are being made to tackle the problems of affordability, but more needs to be done and this means that in Pembrokeshire the NPA, the County Council, Registered Social Landlords and the Government all have a responsibility to do much more in their own spheres, and to work in closer partnership.

From the perspective of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority some of the key issues to

address for the future can be resolved at both a National and Local level. At the national level the following should be considered

- 1 It needs to be stated in National planning policy that sites can be allocated solely for affordable, local needs housing within designated areas as agreed in the Government's response to Recommendation 4 of Second and Holiday Homes and the Land Use Planning System Research Report.
- 2 In National Parks the use of thresholds and percentages for negotiating affordable housing is not appropriate. Where the option of securing an element of affordable housing is prescribed in National Planning Policy National Parks tend to have only small sites for residential development. This means that there is limited opportunity to lever affordable housing. For example, in the Brecon Beacons National Park they have responded by setting a particularly low threshold (2 units). We would be concerned if the forthcoming

Technical Advice Note set a Wales-wide threshold (similar to England's Planning Policy Guidance 3) for negotiating affordable housing as this would severely limit the number of sites where affordable housing could be negotiated in National Parks.

- 3 A commonly agreed definition of 'affordable' is needed and the Assembly Government planning policy should include a clearer definition in the planning context.
- 4 There is a need to increase the role of the Welsh Development Agency Land Division or its successor in National Parks. The role of the WDA Land Division working in partnership with National Parks also needs to be enhanced in delivering affordable housing. Account needs to be taken of the limited opportunities that may be available for the delivery of housing, and it must be recognised that greater intervention may be necessary to unlock sites that are considered appropriate for housing development by the National Parks.
- 5 Consideration should be given to introducing a requirement on developers to provide an element of affordable housing. Currently local planning authorities are only able to seek affordable housing contributions through negotiations with the developer. If the developer is unwilling or only prepared to offer minimal affordable housing, the only recourse for a Local Authority is to refuse planning permission and to take their chance on appeal. The introduction in national policy of the ability for Local Planning Authorities to require the appropriate level of affordable housing provision rather than merely negotiate for it would greatly strengthen their ability to achieve significant affordable housing provision through the planning system.
- 6 There is a need to prioritise resolving Government's policy on planning gain and affordable housing provision. There appears to be no obvious time frame for resolving the



Pembrokeshire pulling power – Cliff path above Marloes Sands, nr. Skomer Island.

issue. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said in March 2004 that a decision on Planning Gain Supplement (PGS) would be made by the end of 2005.

- 7 Should the existing planning obligation (s.106) system continue, consideration should be given to including standardised formats for agreements relating to affordable housing within revised guidance.
- 8 There should be national recognition and funding of Community Land Trusts and Rural Housing Enablers. Community Land Trusts or Common Land Trusts own land for the benefit of the community, and the people living and working there. The purpose of these trusts is to create common wealth, in the form of affordable land for housing, workspace, food growing, leisure or the natural environment. These resources are more accessible to the community,

stewarded by it, and retained in community control. Rural Housing Enablers give free and independent advice to rural communities, acting as a facilitator and helping them through the complicated process of providing affordable homes for local needs.

- 9 The Right to Buy Scheme should be reviewed to allow its suspension in areas of housing pressure in Wales. This will need primary legislation but it is understood that the Assembly Government is committed to achieving this objective.
- 10 The Assembly Government should press the Chancellor for exemptions on Capital Gains Tax for those landowners who release land for affordable housing.
- 11 The Government accepts that Social Housing Grant has not kept pace with needs and is reviewing it. The results of this review should be acted upon as soon as possible.

- 12 Whereas data from housing need surveys and other sources can provide useful information as to the overall scale of the problem at the County level, they become less statistically reliable at the community level, and especially in rural areas. Funding to local planning authorities (rather than just housing authorities) should be made available to carry out more localised housing needs surveys. National Park Authorities are not Housing Authorities. At the very least, if authority wide surveys are to continue to form a major element of national policy, the Assembly should reintroduce grant aid to housing authorities to assist in their provision. A greater recognition of the partnership philosophy that underlies the provision of affordable housing is needed.

At the local level the following suggestions should be considered:

- 1 Full Council tax is charged on second homes in Pembrokeshire. Some mechanism for pooling a portion of the receipts from such charges to help fund affordable housing provision in areas of housing pressure (which are more often than not likely to be the same areas) would help.
- 2 Local politicians and Authorities should recognise and accept:
  - a) That achieving affordable housing provision in local communities may necessitate making tough decisions where 'nimbyism' is pervasive.
  - b) That it may be politically convenient to say that we want affordable housing and not social housing but that may be the very type of housing that the community needs.
  - c) That affordable housing includes social housing provision.
- 3 Local authorities and other public bodies which own land should accept that it could well be in the best interests of the County to release land for sale at 'less than best price' for affordable housing provision and thereby lead by example when seeking the same commitment from private developers. The Assembly Government encourages public authorities to allocate publicly owned land for affordable housing provision and has as a result clarified its position regarding 'best price' for the sale of publicly owned land.
- 4 Locally the development of a 'Homeseekers Register' (similar to that operated by Carrick District Council) for those looking for affordable housing in the National Park, or preferably within the County, but who do not wish to rent housing from the Council or a housing association is needed.
- 5 A recognition and acceptance that local needs housing policies can help to safeguard remaining land for the delivery of local and essential



A new development of detached homes within the Pembrokeshire National Park on the edge of Little Haven in St. Brides Bay. As we went to press, five of the eight were still available, but priced at between £345,000 and £385,000, somewhat out of reach of most pockets, even incomers!

needs housing. In other National Parks such policies, depending on the nature of the occupancy tie, reduce the property below market price by between 25 – 30 per cent (Yorkshire Dales) and 12 per cent in one case claimed in the Lake District.

Local needs policies have found favour with several other National Park Authorities who have found themselves in the same position as Pembrokeshire. The Yorkshire Dales Local Plan (Inspector's Report received Spring 2005), Exmoor Local Plan (Modifications Jan 2005), Lake District Local Plan (Adopted 1998), North York Moors (2001- Revised Deposit), Peak District (Adopted 2001) have all had a favourable response from Inspectors on this approach and many of these plans are now adopted as formal planning policy in the areas in question. In Dwyfor a Welsh Local Plan was adopted in 1998 which also contains some provision for local needs only in certain instances.

More recent reports such as the Yorkshire Dales Inspector's report would appear to ask less of authorities in terms of evidence required than the Welsh Assembly Government.

To end on a controversial note – perhaps it is also time to at least revisit some other potential mechanisms to deal with severe distortion of the housing market in areas of pressure, such as requiring a formal change of use planning consent to be sought when a residential property becomes a second or holiday home.

- *Nic Wheeler is Chief Executive of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. This article is based on the presentation he made at an IWA conference on Housing in Rural Wales, held in Haverfordwest in April.*

shân richards outlines the main features of the new Foundation Phase for young children early years curriculum being developed for Welsh schools

# learning how to learn



In her 2001 policy document 'The Learning Country' Education Minister Jane Davidson first suggested creating a new Foundation Phase for three to seven year olds. This would combine the early years and Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum to provide a more appropriate learning experiences for young children. The proposal rapidly achieved a consensus amongst practitioners and policy-makers, with 96 per cent of respondents to the consultation supporting the recommendations.

There was agreement that children were being introduced too early to the formal skills of reading and writing. They also spent too long doing tasks while sitting at tables rather than learning through well-planned, play opportunities. Such sedentary tasks did little to enhance children's independence and decision-making

skills, essential if they are to succeed in education later on.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) found that while Wales had good practice, this was not reflected in all maintained schools and non-maintained, private and voluntary nurseries and playgroups across the Wales. The Inspectors also found that the percentage of very good standards and teaching was insufficiently high and, in some classes, not enough attention was given to meeting the needs of individuals.

The aim of the new Foundation Phase, therefore, is to build on current good practice and provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum that more closely reflects the way young children learn. The curriculum will be more flexible and allow staff to offer children experiences that meet their individual needs.



The curriculum will be formed under seven areas of learning (see Panel) rather than individual subjects. The way children approach it will be as important as what they learn. They will learn by doing, through play and active involvement and there will be a balance between activities planned by the teacher and those selected by the children.

Emphasis will be placed on the development of skills and children will be more involved in planning and reviewing their work and in the

decision making process. This will help them acquire a positive attitude to learning – an essential requirement if we are to reduce disaffection in Wales and increase the number of people who are committed to lifelong learning. Learning how to learn will be a central theme of the Foundation Phase. This will prepare individuals well for the world of work where there is an increasing emphasis on the need to change career paths and to retrain.

The development of personal and social skills and well being will be at the heart of the new curriculum, emphasising the development of children's self-esteem and self-confidence. This area of learning will be an integral part of all planned activities. The Foundation Phase curriculum will also provide more opportunities for children to learn and enjoy activities through the medium of Welsh and to gain a greater knowledge of the diverse cultures that make up modern day Wales.

Many young children entering the education system in Wales have poorly developed speaking and listening skills, a trend that is continuing as confirmed in Estyn's annual report 2003- 2004. Within the Foundation Phase, there will be a greater emphasis on developing these skills, which will also help to set firm foundations for children's progress as readers and writers.

Within the Foundation Phase emphasis will be placed on the use of the outdoors to enhance children's learning. Staff will be encouraged to use this space as an additional classroom, where children can work on a daily basis. This will allow them to experience real life, problem-solving situations in an environment which is non-threatening. They will benefit from the added physical activity as well as learning about the changes in nature and aspects such as conservation and sustainability at first hand.

In September 2004, 41 settings across the maintained and non-maintained



sectors began to pilot the new Foundation Phase across Wales, with children from three to five years. The Welsh Assembly Government funded a ratio of one adult to eight children in schools, so bringing them in line with the requirements set by the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales, for this age group in the non-maintained sector.

The Qualifications and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) published a draft 'Framework for Children's Learning' which is used by the pilot settings to guide their planning (see panel). ACCAC is currently producing guidance documents for the seven areas of learning (see Box over), which should be available shortly and will also produce

## the foundation phase seven areas of learning

### personal and social development and well being

Children should be encouraged to develop their self-esteem, their personal beliefs and moral values. An understanding that others have differing needs, abilities, beliefs and views should be promoted. Motivation and commitment to learning should be encouraged, as children begin to understand their own potential and capabilities.

### language, literacy and communication skills

Children should be encouraged to communicate their needs clearly, re-tell experiences and discuss individual and group play, referring to their intentions by asking questions, voicing opinions and making choices through a variety of media.

### mathematical development

Children should develop their knowledge and understanding of mathematics through oral, practical and play activities, exploration and discussion in a range of contexts across the curriculum, as well as through daily routines, imaginative role-play and investigation. Number rhymes, songs, stories and counting activities should help children to develop their understanding of counting on and back, to recognise numbers and to match mathematical symbol to sound.

### bilingualism and multi-cultural understanding

Children should listen to Welsh being spoken and respond appropriately in familiar situations using a range of patterns. They should be encouraged to communicate their needs in Welsh and use words and patterns with their peers and adults as they play and undertake activities across the different areas of learning.

### knowledge and understanding of the world

Children should experience the familiar world through enquiry, investigating the indoor and outdoor environment in a safe and systematic way. Using all their senses, children should be encouraged to enjoy learning by exploration, inquiry, experimentation, asking questions and finding answers about past events, people and places, living things, religions and the work people do.

### physical development

Children's physical development, enthusiasm and energy for movement should continually be promoted through helping them to use their bodies effectively, by encouraging spatial awareness, balance, control and co-ordination and developing manipulative and motor skills. Children should be encouraged to enjoy physical activity.

### creative development

Children should be continually developing their imagination and creativity across the curriculum. Their natural curiosity and disposition to learn should be stimulated by everyday sensory experiences, both indoors and outdoors.

materials to support the assessment process. It has created working groups across Wales where practitioners can feed in their comments on draft documents and hence influence the format of the final publications.

The Foundation Phase is strategically managed by a Project Board, which is supported by three sub-groups. Representatives from the key stakeholder groups, which include teachers, unions, local education authorities, trainers, umbrella organisations and inspectorates sit on the sub-groups and have a direct impact on the implementation of the new Phase.

The introduction of the Foundation Phase is being closely monitored by a team of researchers from the Institute of Education, University of London and Cardiff School of Education, University of Wales Institute. The findings of the research will be published towards the end of 2005.

In September 2005, three to five year olds will continue with the Foundation Phase in the 41 pilot settings. In the 22 pilot schools, they will be joined by Year 1 and, if they are taught in the same class, Year 2 children. The Year 1 and Year 2 children will be funded for a ratio of one adult to 13 children.

- *Shân Richards is an Expert Adviser to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning on the Foundation Phase. More information can be found at: [www.learning.wales.gov.uk/foundationphase](http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/foundationphase)*

Source: *The Foundation Phase in Wales: A Draft Framework for Children's Learning*, ACCAC, April 2004.

# climate change

Faced with global threats paul flynn says we need to change the way we run our economy



MPs are regularly battered with scares and anxieties. A branch of Samaritans dedicated to MPs would do brisk business after our Saturday constituents' surgeries. But nothing compares to the gloom created by briefings we have had recently on the Commons Environmental Audit Committee.

The more eminent the scientist, the more terrified they are of global threats. Within a decade or two we will hit several tipping points that could push us into irreversible change. It's not conjecture. The evidence is building now in Wales. Villages in the Conway Valley that expect significant flooding once every 20 years have had three in the past 18 months. Mean temperatures have risen by 1°C rise in Wales over the past three years compared with the 1960-1990 period. Major tidal surges in the channel have historically been once each century.

Now, they arrive every five years.

Quietly spoken and cautious, the Government's Chief Scientist Sir David King convinced the committee that doomsday is nigh. He backed the disputed notion that runaway change would occur if the parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere exceeded 400. Before the industrial revolution there were 280. Now there are 380 and rising. That could send the Greenland icecap into an uncontrollable meltdown that would raise sea levels 18 feet, he warned the committee.

Government Minister Bill Rammell blamed commercial vested interests for sabotaging the scientists' warnings. Swift remedial action should be happening now worldwide. So far government here has caved in on all major remedies. The heavy industry lobby forced a reduction of 80 per cent in the Climate Change Levy. Then government filched the payments from the national insurance fund. It was cowardice in the face of the rural and car lobbies. Disgracefully we have reduced the cost of motoring by cancelling essential fuel rises and increasing pollution.

A splendid World Wildlife Fund booklet 'Cry Wolf' chronicles the exaggerations by business lobbies on the cost of environmental reforms. They have falsely claimed that catalytic converters would cost £600 a car. In practice it is less than £60 and greatly improves fuel consumption. The Jeremiahs predicated that the US Clean Air act

would cost \$91 billion. The final bill was \$26 billion plus benefits worth \$192 billion. President Bush is still the slave of his advisers from the oil industry. As my colleague Alan Simpson said "When push comes to shove, it's the environment that always gets the shove."

There is no shortage of practical remedies. We cannot tax aircraft fuel but we can and must tax their emissions as the greatest single source of pollution. An immediate windfall tax on oil and gas producers could be invested in renewables. We should legislate that new buildings should self-generate energy and recycle their own water. Some cities in the world already do.

Instead of leading other nations with examples of good practices, we are infecting them with our own chronic lassitude. The Chinese Government has guaranteed their population that within the next ten years every family with one child will have one car. This will shift car ownership in China from 33 per 1,000 to 333 per 1,000. In world terms that's not an unreasonable promise. But if they fulfill their promise with conventional cars, the planet will suffocate.

Munich Re, the world's biggest reinsurance company claims that on current trends the global economy could be bankrupt by 2050 because of the sheer cost of making good the damage done as a result of climate change. We are failing to reach many of the environmental goals we set for the planet. We need a mandatory world environment programme. Commercial firms must be convinced of the need to change from selling gross consumption to selling conservation. Alongside global warming are the kindred threats of global dimming and the world water crisis.

Exporting a tonne of grain is sending from one country to another the 1,000 tonnes of water it took to cultivate it. With meat that figure can be multiplied sevenfold. Already areas like the



Newport Docks leads Wales on recycling and environmental work. The new rail link with the docks has moved 50,000 lorry journeys from road to rail.

Middle East have exhausted their water supplies. We are plundering the historic aquifers that will not be replenished for millennia. The prospect of water refugees and water wars are imminent. The demand from China for massive grain imports, even in years without droughts, is a warning of a mounting international crisis. Remedies are possible in controlled recycling and intelligent irrigation. But the problem is still only dimly recognized.

The best reason for voting Labour in the General Election was our declared elevation of global warming as the prime world crisis. There must be no faltering. Politicians have a duty to lead and educate public opinion and not to pander to its lowest common denominator of ignorance and prejudice.

As a Newport MP, I take some comfort from the changes on my own hearth. The city is the inspired choice as the venue for the European Union's Foreign Ministers' September meeting on global warming and Africa since it leads Wales on environmental work. It has Europe's largest and most efficient fridge disposal plant, handling 700,000 units a year. The new rail link with the docks has moved 50,000 lorry journeys from road to rail. Not only that, Newport has the world's largest industrial shredder, which recycles material from 450 end-of-life vehicles an hour.

The city new school at Rogerstone will be a model of sustainability. In June Newport Wastesavers won a UK competition as the most successful household waste recyclers. It would be beneficial if the visiting ministers and journalists could inspect the city's unique

potential for renewable power enterprises by harnessing the world's second highest tidal range. The immense potential has been mysteriously neglected even though its potential is immense, carbon-free, clean and eternal.

All the piffling issues of the General Election are dwarfed by the crushing global threats. Our donkey-brained leaders could take us over the precipice. We need a paradigm shift to change our fundamental assumption on the way we live and how we run our economies. Action should be massive and swift. The alternative is to continue stealing a sustainable human habitat from our grandchildren.

- *Paul Flynn is Labour MP for Newport West. This article is based on an address he gave to an IWA's Gwent Branch dinner in February 2005.*

# cherished heartland



## peter midmore on a search for a vision for the future of upland Wales

**t**he image and identity of Wales have been shaped significantly by its mountains and uplands, its least populated and economically weakest areas. Externally, they contribute to a powerful message underlying tourism promotion, not only the dramatic scenery but the resilience, warmth and unspoilt nature of communities and the contrast that its cultural heritage provides to mainstream Britain.

Despite this amplified influence of topography and resources, which can

be traced across the development of politics and society in modern Wales as a whole, all is not well in the hill areas. Agriculture and forestry, the fundamental shapers of the ecological and anthropological environment, face continuing economic pressures. Life has never been easy for many hill farmers who, from choice or inheritance, have to cope with poor infrastructure, weak communications and difficult production conditions.

Uncertainties are multiplying, as the increasingly subsidy-dependent livelihoods of farmers are once again up for negotiation in an expanded European Union seeking a redefinition of its role and more equitable allocation of resources between its members. Domestically, conflicting tensions arising from environmental concerns and new demands for recreational access have produced a more regulated countryside.

Within such an intricate web of pressures, no clear vision is emerging for this extensive, emblematic area which covers most of the land mass of Wales. What kinds of uplands do we, as a society as a whole, want for the future? What is the best way of securing that future? And how, given limited political autonomy, constrained both by the Assembly block grant and the gridlock of policy evolution in the EU, could we find a way of doing so?

The Breconshire Agricultural Society, as part of the celebration of its 250th anniversary (which, incidentally, makes it the longest-established agricultural society in the world), has commissioned the IWA to undertake a research project to examine the future of the hills and uplands, and to attempt to discover answers to these difficult questions. Currently in progress, the

study will cover the whole of upland Wales, and is due to be completed in the late autumn of 2005. The project has three components.

- First is a stock-take of the uplands as they exist today, placing them in their historical, economic and social context, especially highlighting the neglected role of women in farming, community and cultural life.
- Secondly, we examine the current situation and aspirations of upland family farms, using a number of case studies chosen to reflect the considerable variety of circumstances that exist: from the well-known tourist attractions of the National Parks to the bleaker expanses of the Cambrian Mountains in mid-Wales; These examples also range from farms with the minimum of economic viability to the extensive holdings that have been produced by the interaction of out-migration and the primary vehicle of farm support until recently, payment according to the numbers of animals kept.
- Finally, we explore the influences which may interact to create different futures for the uplands over the medium term, adapting and refining previous applications of scenario analysis which can help to distinguish robust policy options.

These components contribute to the overall aims of the project, which are to indicate and reaffirm the importance of the hills and uplands, to make sure that the interests of their communities are not neglected in the pursuit of a fair and inclusive Welsh society. Additionally, an objective is to contribute to the development and consolidation of a consensus about what is best for the numerous stakeholders who are involved.

Two issues have emerged early on in the study as being of major importance. Firstly, very many of the concerns which are paramount today, such as depopulation and the fragile viability of upland communities, environmental change, and the difficulties of production in a hostile environment, are not at all new, but have turned up frequently in the past. Consequently, the standard solutions of technological and economic intervention have already been experimented with, achieving varying degrees of success.

This leads on to the second key issue, which is that evolution of the form of human habitation and exploitation of the Welsh uplands has been increasingly influenced by the intervention of governments, more recently acting as agents in the implementation of policies formulated at European level. However, because the overall framework of agricultural and rural policies in Europe is determined by entirely different criteria, the resulting inconsistencies for the more peripheral, disadvantaged areas have generated an overlay of piecemeal and fragmented offsetting policy patches. Hence, the need for a new vision for the role and function of upland areas is becoming increasingly urgent.

Upland farms themselves are on the brink of radical change. This year farms will no longer be paid subsidies according to the level of output, but will receive a fixed amount. This will gradually diminish over time, as a rising though still relatively small fraction is diverted into schemes supporting conservation or other forms



Cherished heartland – Brecon Beacons.

of non-farm rural development. In future, though, levels of farm activity (directly at least) will be linked solely to market prices, a situation that has scarcely been experienced within living memory. It is not at all clear what farming, as a whole, will do in response to this change. It is possible to make intelligent guesses as to the response of certain parts of the industry, but not to say how large these parts will be or how they will interact. Quite significant changes in land use could occur. Some farms may opt for more diversification out of agriculture – although as a lot of the opportunities that exist have been taken up, scope for exploitation of this could be far less than the enthusiasm for this remedy would suggest.

In combination with policy reform and the development of alternative land uses (particularly forestry), social, technological and economic change

will affect hill and upland farms and the communities they are embedded within. These interactions are too complex for standard forecasting techniques to cope with – especially as the nature of interdependence between what happens in the hills and uplands and the majority of the population elsewhere is so pronounced. So instead of trying to predict a single probable future, some of the widely differing possible futures can be explored by examining the consequences of various credible combinations of the major influences.

It could be that, in all possible futures, the outcomes for this cherished constituent of Welsh national identity are all unfavourable for at least

some stakeholders. If that is so, then a far more wide-ranging debate about the future will need to be articulated, with all assumptions removed to develop a fresh perspective. Once complete, the report will be launched at an event providing the culmination of a year of activities to celebrate the Breconshire Agricultural Society's anniversary. It may mark a departure from the traditional role that the Society has assumed for the past 250 years, but will nevertheless be a continuation of the service that its members render to support rural communities and their livelihoods.

- Peter Midmore is Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and leading the IWA's project on the future of upland Wales.



anthony campbell and stephanie matthews reveal the startling discoveries they have made about lactose intolerance

# when sugar is not so sweet

**d**o you suffer from migraine, irritable bowel or chronic fatigue? Do you regularly lose concentration? Do your children complain of severe tiredness, or have bad eczema and hay fever, that affect their performance at school? Do you have pain in the muscles and joints, or gut pains a few hours after a meal, and are then sick for hours on end? Or, alternatively, are you just one of those persons whose doctor can never work out your medical problems? Have you been labelled as a moaner and hypochondriac, and even told to see a psychiatrist.

The plain fact is one common ingredient in our food can cause all of these problems. Using established medical methods, we have studied several hundred people who have suffered from all of them. Their lives have been transformed by removing just one ingredient from their diet – lactose, the sugar in milk.

Milk is good for you. Or is it? Certainly milk contains good things for healthy living – protein, vitamins, calcium and so on. But milk also contains lactose, a unique ingredient that can be harmful. A lactose industry has grown up over the last few decades, resulting in lactose being added to many foods and drinks without being properly labelled. In our now multi-ethnic globalised society should we be eating so much lactose, or giving free milk to school kids without taking account of their ethnic origins?

Lactose provides some 40 per cent of the energy for a suckling baby. But after weaning all races, except white northern Europeans and few rare

groups, lose much of the ability to digest lactose properly. This means that some 4,000 million people around the globe cannot digest milk properly. Everyone can take some milk. But most of the world's adult population have a low threshold to lactose. If they eat or drink too much they get ill.

The textbooks say that this means gut problems – gas, pain, distension and tummy rumbling. But we have found that lactose also causes many symptoms around the body, known medically as systemic symptoms. We have now treated successfully over 500 patients whose lives were a misery. They were on a battery of drugs, many of which themselves were causing problems. Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is the most common ailment presenting to specialists in gastroenterology. Yet we

have shown that as many as 80 per cent of people with IBS can be intolerant to lactose, and that this has been missed, sometime for years. We now have a DNA test and major revision of the clinical management of this condition.

A 35-year-old Indian lady was referred to us by a colleague in desperation. No one could find what was wrong with her. For years she suffered severe fatigue, gut problems and mysterious heart episodes, with irregular heart beats and daily headaches. She came to us with a diagnosis of ME and IBS, and said she had a poor memory and lacked concentration. She also had sinus problems, and had had eczema since she was a child. We tested her for lactose intolerance. This involved drinking 50g of lactose and measuring hydrogen in the breath every 30



Husband and wife team Stephanie Matthews and Tony Campbell – between them they have enough PhDs to understand the food labels.

**box 1: lactose intolerance**

Lactose is two sugars 'stuck' together – galactose and glucose. It is the sugar in the milk of all mammals, except sea-lions and walruses. All adult mammals, except white Northern Europeans (Caucasians) and some other ethnic groups (for example, the Bedouins and African dairying tribes), have a low enzyme, lactase, that breaks lactose in two in the small intestine (see Table 1).

You have lactose intolerance if you feel ill a few hours after eating or drinking lactose. Intolerance is not the same as an allergy. Food allergies involve an immune reaction. The symptoms are quite different from those of lactose intolerance. Intolerance is a biochemical problem resulting from something missing in body chemistry, in this case the enzyme lactase. If you have a low lactase you can't fully absorb lactose fully. When you don't digest it all yourself, there are bacteria in the gut that will. These bacteria generate gases (hydrogen and methane = flatus) and metabolites. The gas distends the gut and causes pain. The metabolites are absorbed and affect cells in the brain, heart, muscles, joints and the blood, and so cause systemic symptoms (headaches and light-headedness, loss of concentration, difficulty with short-term memory, severe tiredness, muscle and joint pain, runny nose and blocked sinus, itchy rash, asthma, heart arrhythmia, mouth ulcers, sore throat, and increased frequency of micturition – weeing). Conventionally lactose intolerance also causes diarrhoea. But we find that 25 per cent of our patients get constipation instead.

**table 1: different ethnic groups with low lactase and likely lactose intolerance**

Ethnic group (adult, unless stated)	% with low lactase and potential lactose intolerance
Chinese	>90
Japanese	>90
Indian and other Asian groups	>80
Aboriginal Australian	>80
Black African	>75
American Red Indian	>70
Eskimo	>70
South American (total adults)	>50
Mexican	>50
West Indian	>50
Spanish	>40
Italian	>40
Greek	>40
Mid European (e.g. Hungarian and gypsy)	>40
American (total adults)	30
Finnish	20
White Northern European	10
White Australian	10
Children under 2 years old (any ethnic group)	0-20
Children between 2 and 10 years old	0-40
Patients with Irritable Bowel Syndrome	>50

Note: These numbers are approximate, and intended only to give an indication of whether you are at risk. > means greater than.

minutes for six hours. She was positive, and suffered a range of gut and symptoms around the body over the 24 hours after taking the lactose, including heart palpitations in bed that night.

We advised her to stop taking lactose. This involved not only no milk or dairy products, but also avoiding food and drink which can contain lactose but is not clearly stated on the label. Within a week her bowels were normal, her headaches had gone, and her heart palpitations had all but disappeared. And crucially she was over the moon about her energy level. She really wanted to do things again. We had given this lady her life back, all because she was intolerant to lactose.

Intolerance to milk was first described by the Greek philosopher, and father of modern medicine, Hippocrates (circa 450-370 BC) over two thousand years ago. But only in the past 50 years has the condition of lactose intolerance been fully recognised, and diagnosed medically. It is important to distinguish between hypolactasia, a low level of lactase, and clinical lactose intolerance. There are three causes of loss of lactase (hypolactasia):

- Complete loss of lactase at birth (congenital). This is very rare.
- Inherited loss on weaning. This is very common, the norm in all mammals, in fact.
- Secondary loss, as a result of ageing or intestinal damage, for example from infections such as rotavirus or the protozoa Giardia causing diarrhoea, or hormonal imbalance. Only this type is reversible.

Everyone has some lactase and so can digest some lactose. The question is: what is your lactose threshold? Can you take a couple of spoonfuls of milk in a cup of tea, or even a glass of milk? Or are you so sensitive to lactose that you must be careful not to take any at all? Yogurt, ice cream and cream

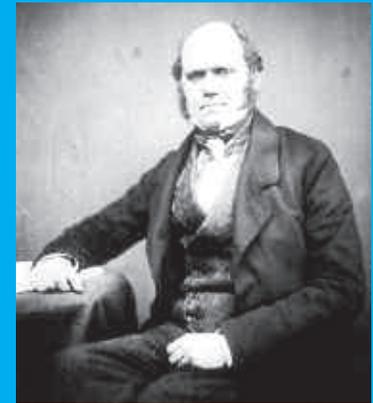
contain similar amounts of lactose to milk. The content in many cheeses is lower. You would have to eat a kilo of Parmesan to take as much lactose as there is in a glass of milk. Lactose can be reduced in dairy products by using an enzyme called galactosidase, often incorrectly called 'lactase', which is available in health food shops. Low-lactose milk is available in supermarkets made by this method.

You need a PhD in Biochemistry to understand many food labels, and often a microscope to decipher them. Sometimes, buried in the list of ingredients, you may find 'lactose', 'milk' or 'dairy'. But often the lactose is in something not so familiar, such as whey or 'added sugar'. Lactose intolerance causes great distress in many patients, who often do not realise that 'hidden' lactose is present in many foods and drinks, without stating this properly on the label. In the US alone there has been a five-fold increase in lactose production in the last ten years or so, reaching its present level of some 300 million kilos per annum.

Food labelling in the USA and Finland seems better than many other countries. The EU regulations have been weak. The Foods Standards Agency must force a change in labelling regulations. Table 2 is a simple guide. An examination of our kitchen cupboard revealed the following: lactose in a French paté, dried skimmed milk in chicken nuggets, milk powder in crisps, whey powder in sponge fingers and cheese biscuits, whey powder in a frozen pizza, skimmed milk and whey powder in chocolate spread, and 'added sugar' in pickles, ketchup and squash without saying what sugar it was. Slimming bars, breakfast bars, and 'low fat' products can have added lactose. And lactose can be added to soft drinks, beers, lagers, and alcopops.

**box 2: darwin's illness revealed**

"I have had a bad spell, vomiting every day for eleven days and some days after every meal." This is what Charles Darwin (1809-1882) wrote to his friend Joseph Hooker in December 1863. Later he wrote to his father, "The sickness starts usually two hours after a meal." In fact Darwin had already suffered chest pain and heart palpitations in December 1831 while staying in digs at Plymouth awaiting better weather for his ship the Beagle to depart. He told no one until years afterwards for fear he would not be allowed on his 'trip of a lifetime'.



We were staggered when we realised that we had solved one of the great scientific mysteries. For over 40 years Charles Darwin was continuously ill. He saw some twenty doctors, including his father. He tried dozens of remedies, including the famous water cure of Dr Gully at Malvern. None really worked. The only time he got better was when, by chance, he came off milk: he did not suffer from his illness on the Beagle (1831-1836). However, on other occasions he suffered regularly from stomach ache, flatulence, headaches, a swimming head, vomiting, chronic fatigue, joint pains, skin rashes and boils, mouth ulcers and heart palpitation. Explanations have included arsenic poisoning, Chagas' disease and psychosomatic disorders. The latter is nonsense – no wonder he got depressed when he couldn't solve his problem. The truth is he had an organic illness. Darwin's symptoms fit exactly systemic lactose intolerance.

**table 2: a guide to food labels**

Substance on the label	Contains lactose (amount)
Lactose	Yes (100%)
Milk (cow's, goat's or ewe's)	Yes (high)
Milk powder	Yes (high)
Skimmed milk or skimmed milk powder	Yes (high)
Milk solids	Yes
Whey or whey powder	Yes (high)
Cheese	Yes (variable)
Cream	Yes
Buttermilk	Yes
Chocolate	Yes
Yoghurt	Some
Margarine	Maybe
Curd	Maybe
'Added sugar'	Maybe
Milk protein or caseinate	No (may have a little)
Glucose	No
Sucrose	No
Dextrose (should be glucose)	No
Lactate	No
Eggs or pure egg powder	No
Coconut milk	No
Coconut cream	No
Peanut butter	No

There has been much debate about the recommended daily amount of calcium. One 250ml glass of milk contains about 300mg of calcium, one fifth of the daily requirement (1-2g). A good portion of greens can supply 150mg calcium. A serving of salmon or sardines contains up to 300mg. Soya products with added calcium are readily available in supermarkets.

There is no evidence for calcium deficiency in people eating a Chinese or Japanese diet with no milk. In the West, we can easily get our daily calcium requirement without milk, and even take a calcium supplement.

be a hundred. But if we feel awful all the time, we can't enjoy ourselves, our family and friends, or our work. Our revelation about the impact of lactose intolerance has given several hundred people their lives back, when they had all but given up.

There are medical publications claiming milk is beneficial, and may reduce, for example, heart disease. On the other hand, there are other publications claiming that milk intake correlates with a number of diseases, including heart attacks, certain types of cancer such as breast and prostate, and even Parkinson's disease. And there is a diabetic epidemic in Asians, many of

- 4 How much money would the NHS save if lactose induced illness was eradicated.

Coming off lactose has transformed our lives, and that of several hundred patients. They now feel wonderful, with a massive reduction in drugs, visits to the doctor, and even coming off surgery lists. This is already saving the NHS huge sums of money.

Our lactose story has the intriguing possibility not only of stimulating a new approach to understanding disease but also of giving us new insights into our own origins. Monkeys don't keep cattle! Dairying only began some 8000 years ago. Darwin missed this unique feature in the evolution of mammals. Milk has no place in *The Origin of Species*, and is only referred to fleetingly in *The Descent of Man*, his two most famous books. Lactose points to the one thing Darwin and Wallace never really addressed: the 'origin' rather than the 'development' of species.

### box 3: lactose websites

- [www.welstonpress.com](http://www.welstonpress.com)  
Our web site: The only one at present that deals with systemic symptoms caused by lactose.
- [www.stephaniemathews.co.uk](http://www.stephaniemathews.co.uk)  
Stephanie's website with more detailed information.
- [www.lactose.co.uk](http://www.lactose.co.uk)  
Conventional information about lactose intolerance and selling products.
- [www.lactoseintolerance.co.uk](http://www.lactoseintolerance.co.uk)  
Conventional information about lactose intolerance and milk allergies, with symptoms, treatments, and 'hidden' milk products.

A further problem is the presence of 'funny' sugars (raffinose and stachyose) in vegetables such as beans, parsnips, and chick peas. These sugars block the absorption of glucose and galactose. So sugars end up in the large intestine. Here bacteria generate hydrogen and toxic metabolites, exacerbating symptoms in patients who are lactose intolerant. The result is thus similar to having a low lactase enzyme. Eating rice or potatoes with raffinose or stachyose makes it worse.

Medicine rightly worries most about diseases that can kill us – heart attacks, strokes, cancer, MRSA, SARS, AIDS and so on. But what about the quality of life we lead? Don't we all want to feel alert, energetic, excited both intellectually and sexually, and hungry not just for our next meal but for life itself. Of course, we all want to live to

whom have westernised their diet. Indian restaurants often use cream instead of coconut milk.

Many of our most common diseases remain unsolved. Our bacterial toxin hypothesis opens a door to a new universal mechanism responsible for disease. We all harbour over 400 different species of bacteria in our gut. We need to know when these are friend or foe, and whether they are the true cause of diseases such as arthritis, diabetes, cancer, heart arrhythmias, kidney failure and multiple sclerosis. Our politicians need to address four things urgently:

- 1 The ethnic issue of free milk in schools.
- 2 The poor labelling of foods and drinks that contain lactose.
- 3 How to develop an all-Wales team to investigate the role of gut bacteria in disease.

- Professor Anthony Campbell, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Immunology, Wales College of Medicine, Health Care and Life Sciences, Cardiff University, and Dr Stephanie Matthews, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Immunology, Llandough Hospital, Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust, are a husband and wife team with an international reputation in Medical Biochemistry. They have just published Tony's lactose free cookbook – the science of lactose intolerance and how to live without lactose, (ISBN 0-954086-1-9), The Welston Press, Pembrokeshire [www.welstonpress.com](http://www.welstonpress.com)

# blue sky research

marc clement explains how Swansea University is getting to grips with Life Science, the most fertile source of technology transfer in the world



**t**he Institute of Life Science, launched at Swansea University in May, aims to be at the cutting edge of advances in obesity, diabetes, heart failure, breast cancer, neuro-psychiatric disorder, asthma and allergy, infection in hospital and antibiotics. It will be housed in a new purpose-built facility providing a home for 350 specialists including internationally-recognised professors, scientists, researchers and business specialists.

The building will be established at the western end of the university campus, strategically located between the School of Medicine and Singleton Hospital. Its graceful design incorporates a double-height atrium and makes imaginative use of materials to maximise natural light. The six-storey building will house state-of-the-art laboratories, a dedicated business centre and incubation space to encourage the development of ideas.

On the ground floor, a large open-plan 'think tank' is planned where analysts, researchers, computing specialists and business experts will meet to share knowledge. The think tank will also provide one of the key access points for the Deep Computing Visualisation Centre, housing the Blue C supercomputer and Virtual Reality Cave.

The IBM Blue C supercomputer – unique to a UK university campus – has the strategic objective of forging

relationships with other world-class research organisations. It is one of the most powerful computers in the world dedicated to life science. It can perform calculations in seconds that would take hours or even days on an existing computer. The University is already using nearly half its capacity and ongoing projects include computer simulations of epidemics, models of fluid flow in arteries and construction of images from computed tomography scans.

Currently housed at a government laboratory, Blue C is due to make its appearance at Swansea University later this year. It will be the key component of C-Lab, a dedicated area housing the new Deep Computing Visualisation Centre for Medical Applications incorporating the university's Virtual Reality Cave amongst other IBM visualisation tools. Unsurprisingly, the possibilities of C-Lab are already attracting interest from companies and academic institutions nationwide.

This interaction of medicine and super, or deep computing is pivotal to the success of the Institute of Life Science. Medicine increasingly relies on the simple presentation of very complex information in deciding the best treatment for each individual patient. Such 'information-based medicine' or bioinformatics requires a powerful IT infrastructure such as that provided by Blue C.



First 'probiotic' mum gives birth – Sketty-based Gill Heinrich, one of the first pregnant women to participate in Swansea University's research on the impact of probiotic supplements on allergic disorders in children, has given birth to a baby boy. Mrs Heinrich, 37, who works for a firm of solicitors in Swansea, started taking either a placebo or probiotic food supplement, developed by Swansea's School of Medicine in collaboration with Baglan-based Cultech Ltd, towards the end of her pregnancy.

She said: "I have always been interested in probiotics. Plus my husband suffers with hay fever. So when I heard of this research I decided to participate in it. The supplement is just a pinch of powder and even though I am breast-feeding I find it no trouble at all to give to Jacob. Of course we will only find out later if he was on the probiotic or placebo and what impact they might have had on his immune system."

The School of Medicine is conducting research to see if administering probiotic organisms, or friendly bacteria, to pregnant women could help newborn babies to avoid allergic disorders and develop healthy immune systems. Allergic disorders such as eczema, hay fever and asthma are very common in south Wales and tend to run in families. There is already some scientific evidence that giving probiotics to babies prevents eczema.

The £600,000 research project is supported by a grant awarded by the Welsh Development Agency's Knowledge Exploitation Fund.

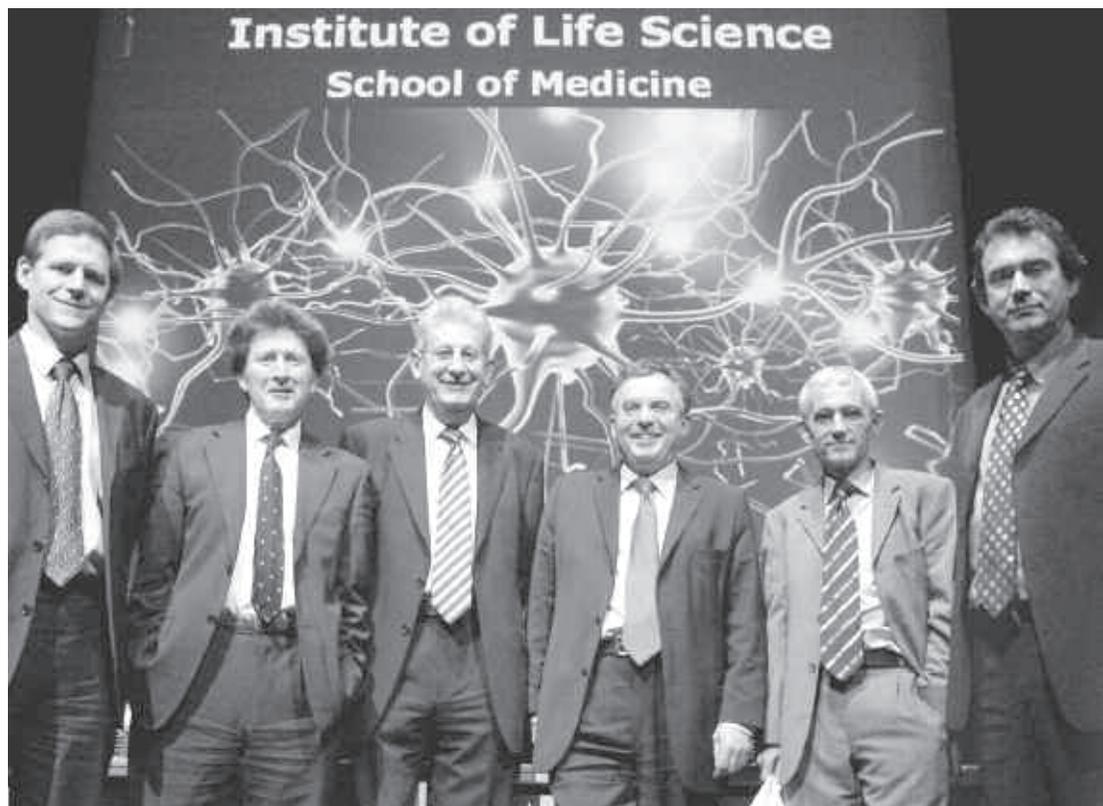
The use of bio-informatics to drive forward medical treatment is at the forefront of current genetic and molecular research and will - one day - enable doctors to tailor treatment to each patient's individual needs. In conjunction with this, visualisation and virtual reality will transform diagnostic body scanning, leading to the most detailed clarification of how the body works and how it malfunctions in disease.

Linking different academic disciplines and drawing in expertise from industry and commerce, the Institute's 22 research groups have the potential to progress much further and faster than as stand-alone units. The aim is to create an environment that actively encourages collaboration between disciplines at a time when major scientific discoveries are increasingly being made where such disciplines intersect.

Research interests centre around the molecular aspects of diseases and treatments, health and the efficient practice of medicine. These include asthma and allergies, cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, child health, health service research, neurobiology, physiology and cell biology, psychiatry, reproductive medicine, drug resistance in microbes and the development of new antibiotics, drug metabolism and drug trials.

Research into these areas is encompassed within two broad groupings within the School, Bio Medical Research and Community-based Medicine. The emphasis is on high quality intra- and cross-disciplinary research and involves interactions with other researchers in Swansea and local NHS Trusts.

The research base is growing fast supported by international and national funding bodies including National Institutes of Health (USA), the



Economic Development Minister, Andrew Davies (pictured third from the right), launches the Institute of Life Science at Swansea University's School of Medicine.

European Union Framework Six and Five programmes, UK Research Councils, charities, the UK and Welsh Assembly Governments, the NHS and industry.

This combination of world-class research and top-flight facilities opens up exciting opportunities. Life science is recognised as one of the most fertile sources of technology transfer in the world, giving the new Swansea Institute the potential to create significant economic wealth.

Opportunities are already arising from research collaboration, intellectual property licensing, new ventures and international investment. Indeed, the Institute is already exciting interest from major blue-chip companies. Announcements expected over the coming months include developments in medical devices and fertility treatment. Supporting these endeavours will be a

dedicated business team focused on taking the advances from the laboratory into hospitals, surgeries and homes.

By combining the support of the Welsh Assembly Government, IBM's industry insight and expertise and Swansea University's research capability, the Institute of Life Science is set to play a pivotal role in transforming the development and delivery of safer, more affordable and more effective diagnostics, drugs and medical care.

- Professor Marc Clement is Senior Executive and Chair of Medical Devices at the School of Medicine, Swansea University.

# nuts



## peter stead

I had not seen much of the Prime Minister in recent years (the once regular games of tennis were squeezed out of our busy schedules) but we recently ran into each other at Heathrow and shared a few beers. "Budweiser, or anything but Kronenbourg," he told the hostess. I was glad to see him but for a while, and this was very much a reversal of roles, I felt unable to look him in the eye.

Of course, he had read my last piece in Agenda and therefore knew that, following the War and Hutton, my enthusiasm for him had waned. He had been particularly amused by my conclusion that the Election result had been bad for him and that consequently the nation would be entering what was essentially 'an inter-regnum'. "O ye of little faith," he said, smiling and appreciatively licking away the foam. "Do you remember Dylan's great description of downing a pint?" he asked,

thereby confirming both his relaxed upbeat mood and his determination to tease me.

"You all fell for my Gordon ploy," he said. "Of course he was useful in the Election but I had no intention of handing over to him at this stage." Once again I was struck by Tony's ability to live only for the present. No other politician has had the ability to move on so quickly. Suddenly the 5th of May seemed an eternity ago, as indeed did the whole debate on weapons of mass destruction and sexed-up dossiers. All that seems now to have been relegated to being a purely American issue. I remembered Harold Macmillan's famous warning to a colleague about the explosive and dangerous nature of "Events, dear boy" and reflected that, in contrast, events, new departures, were what Tony lived for and thrived on.

I pointed out that he had been very lucky that in quick order Liverpool had won the European Cup, the French had voted 'no', Live8 and G8 had made Britain seem like the conscience of the world, we had won the Olympic battle, Chirac had gone into freefall and the Tories were once again giving the impression that they were merely a London club going through a membership crisis. "Fate has been kind to you," I suggested. Tony would have none of this and argued that the essence of

statesmanship was the ability to be free to handle each new event on its merits. He suggested that this was the unique ability that he possessed as compared to all other British and, indeed, world leaders of recent times. As he explained, "All the other guys always come to a new development burdened by the baggage of party or history. I see things clearly and then have to wait for the others to catch up."

At this point I confessed to the Prime Minister that, as a historian, I had recently been giving a great deal of thought to the nature of his premiership. Scholars such as Peter Hennessy had stressed the essentially presidential nature of his governments but had perhaps failed to appreciate this need for a fresh approach to individual problems and crises. I suggested that the best explanation of 'Blair and the Blairite approach' had been provided by James Naughtie in his book *The Accidental American*.

"Ah, Jim," he replied, "the only gentleman in the media! Of course he's right. I have always been essentially an outsider. There is nothing more dangerous than a conventional political training. All those guys, especially the Scots, were ruined by good A-levels, university debating, the NUS and Fulbright scholarships to Harvard. They should have been out there in the real world playing in a band.

You sense that they are all waiting for professors to give them 'A' grades. Jack Straw still speaks as if he were in a debating chamber wearing a gown. The Today programme defines their world. They need to get on MTV!"

I then asked Tony about Mathew d'Ancona's perceptive article in *The Sunday Telegraph* just before the election in which he had argued that "what the voters see in Blair is not the prospect of life-enhancing domestic policy reforms, but something more numinous. It is a curious mixture of primitive, charismatic kingship and the modern cult of celebrity. Truth doesn't enter into it. He may be a liar - if you happen to believe that - but he is also, indisputably, a leader."

"The guy's brilliant," responded Tony as he cleverly threw a nut in the air and caught it in his mouth. "That's the whole bloody point. They worry so much in this country about parliamentary procedure, about the House of Lords (as if anyone cares), about wearing ties and the NHS. We must move on. We are the best country in the world, but we must prove it and demonstrate it. And Peter, I want you to vote for me next time."

"Will you be there next time?" I asked. "What do you think?" he replied as he finished the nuts and paid for the beer.