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Mark Drakeford
charts a course through uncertainty



Adam Price
plots a route to independence

The Road to 2021: Who do you trust to lead Wales?



Paul Davies
battles for broad church conservatism



Jane Dodds
resuscitates the Liberal Democrats

+ **Climate Emergency Special:** Extinction Rebellion | Sophie Howe | Saskia Pagella | Kate Hamilton

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Editorial

Courage, guts and humility

Auriol Miller



Welcome to the latest edition of *the welsh agenda*. As part of our newly updated IWA strategy, our first priority is to offer an open, inclusive platform for independent, robust comment and debate, so our magazine, and its online sister publication *click on wales*, play a key role in this. Second, we aim to provide more opportunities for people in Wales to increase their knowledge of how decisions are made and to make their voices heard. Third, we seek to develop and secure commitment to implementing ideas that can transform Wales under three priority themes: a strong, confident democracy; high-performing, responsive essential public services; and, last, a successful, clean, green and fair economy for the people of Wales.

As I write, the confusion around Brexit continues and shows no sign of abating. The jigsaw of potential steps towards greater clarity changes with each twist and turn of Westminster parliamentary procedure. The nuances of each vote are finely fought over. The picture we thought the jigsaw showed is swept away or the pieces reconfigured so much as to be unrecognisable each time. Meanwhile, preparations continue for Brexit scenarios that may or may not happen.

It would be foolhardy, at this stage, to make any prediction as to what will happen in the coming months. We have all learned that particular lesson I hope. There is nothing cast iron about this current political crisis. Something else that we would do well to remember is that leadership matters, as does trust. If we cannot see the way ahead with any clarity then our political leaders will need to demonstrate that they are worthy of the trust that the electorate places in them. Behaving with integrity takes courage, guts and – crucially – humility, and we could do with more of it all round. Recognising when to stand one's ground and when to compromise

must be seen through the prism of what is best for the peoples of each of the UK's constituent nations, and not the political party each leader represents. Leaders need to earn the trust of those who didn't vote for them as well as those who did. So eighteen months out from the next Assembly election, and who knows how far from a General Election, we set out to discover what drives Wales' party political leaders. You can make your own mind up. Who do you trust to take us forward?

One thing we can predict is that the climate emergency means all of us need to envision a very different kind of future for ourselves, our family's way of life and our work. Driving and enabling this requires joined up action and, importantly, focussed investment to incentivise change. No longer can one arm of government be ignorant of its unintended consequences in another policy sphere. Climate change is front and centre of young people's political consciousness and has erupted onto our streets in a way that few issues have recently. Their movements' leaders are showing us how public awareness has shifted dramatically over 2019 and maintaining the status quo is no longer an option.

Which brings us to independence. As an impartial, apolitical organisation, we take no view on whether Wales should be independent or not. But what we do want to do is unpick the arguments and enable people to be better informed so that they can make their own mind up.

Elsewhere, we feature – as always – articles on the meat and drink issues affecting the lives of people in Wales: education, health and social care, digital inclusion. Whatever the arguments about the future of governance structures at European, UK, Wales or local level, we must never lose sight of what matters to people living their everyday lives. That's ultimately what our strategy seeks to support. **AM**

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Through *the welsh agenda* and the IWA websites, the IWA provides a platform for debate, discussion and the exploration of ideas. The ideas contained in the independently produced articles and papers we publish are those of the writers and contributors and do not, therefore, necessarily reflect the views of the IWA, its members and Board.

The Emergency Alarm

Extinction Rebellion Cymru say Wales' declaration
of climate emergency should be praised, but that words must
be followed by action – and swiftly



What does the word ‘emergency’ conjure in your mind? Blue flashing lights, urgent response, quick decisions and immediate plans. In a word – *action!* How about a ‘Planetary Emergency’ – surely an emergency on that scale would have a response to match it? *ACTION!* Where then is such a response? Looking around us, at the daily continuation of business-as-usual, we could be forgiven for thinking that there is no crisis.

But there is. You only need to tune in to the world’s leading scientists to know that. ‘We are in a Planetary Emergency,’ exclaims Professor James Hansen, formerly NASA’s chief climatologist. ‘Based on sober scientific analysis, we are deeply within a climate emergency state but people are not aware of it,’ pronounces Professor Hans Schellnhuber, founding director of Germany’s leading climate impacts research centre. ‘Climate change is a medical emergency... It thus demands an emergency response,’ asserts Professor Hugh Montgomery, director of the University College London Institute for Human Health and Performance.

What must it be like to possess such knowledge and yet see so little reaction? Here’s one climatologist’s candid explanation: ‘Sometimes I have this dream. I’m going for a hike and discover a remote farmhouse on fire. Children are calling for help from the upper windows. So I call the fire brigade. But they don’t come, because some mad person keeps telling them that it is a false alarm. The situation is getting more and more desperate, but I can’t convince the firemen to get going. I cannot wake up from this nightmare’. More and more of us are now sharing the scientists’ ghastly dreams.

But we must wake up! The question is how? To understand that we must first ask: why are we not acting? There’s a classic psychology experiment in which a participant is led into a room to complete a task; the room is then gradually filled with smoke from under a door. Researchers find that if people are alone when the smoke starts filtering in, they tend to report it immediately. However, when there are several people in the room, far

We are all gaslighting each other, giving each other the unconscious instruction to keep calm and carry on – even as we continue down the path to disaster

fewer participants report the smoke. When participants are in a room with others who have been explicitly instructed not to react, the participants very rarely report it. This is related to a phenomenon known as pluralistic ignorance, which explains how we go through our lives assuming our concerns are not shared by others, and therefore we don’t raise them with others in our social circles. This breeds a culture of silence around certain issues that people want to voice, and a taboo can develop.

Something similar appears to have developed around the Climate Emergency. It is commonly recognised that there is a climate crisis; however, given that we see others continuing to go on calmly with their daily lives, we do the same. We are all gaslighting each other, giving each other the unconscious instruction to *keep calm and carry on* – even as we continue down the path to disaster.

The best way to confront a taboo is to break the silence. We need to set off the alarm and inspire action. In the case of the climate crisis we need to not just accept the truth but act accordingly. The Planetary Emergency is one of the most serious threats to life on this Earth, and the response has to match that.

Enter Extinction Rebellion. Our movement is built on the knowledge that we need direct action to communicate the urgency of the crisis. We need to disrupt business-as-usual and that means getting out on the streets and participating in non-violent civil disobedience. We are the planetary fire alarm!

It has now been five months since the Welsh Government declaration; by now we should have seen dramatic changes to how the Welsh Government operates

Attention needs to be drawn to the issue, politicians pressurised to prioritise it and other members of the public shown that their nagging concerns are warranted; that this is the overwhelming threat they knew it was – for here are others risking arrest to warn us of the danger to our future.

And it's beginning to work. People are starting to come around from their slumber and recognise the panic in each other's eyes. Our first actions in London this Easter, combined with the inspiring Youth Strikes, have led to Climate Emergency declarations from towns and counties to whole countries. The Welsh Assembly should be praised for being the first parliament in the world to vote to declare a Climate Emergency. This is a vital step in breaking down those invisible barriers and giving politicians licence and the appropriate vocabulary to discuss the issue.

Declaring a Climate Emergency is the first step. But words alone are not enough. What we need to see now is the necessary scale of action. It has now been five months since the Welsh Government declaration; by now we should have seen dramatic changes to how the Welsh Government operates. The Climate Emergency does not appear to have gone to the top of the political agenda.

In the Welsh Government's early call for suggestions on the 2020/21 budget, how to fund the response to the climate crisis was not even one of the key questions. It was relegated to the 'additional questions' section of the document, indicating that it is still not a priority. And as we all know: if it isn't in our budget, it will not happen.

As well as taking the necessary action, we need the government to tell the truth about the consequences of the climate crisis so that people can understand why we



need undertake such a rapid transition. There are some positive signs here. In a recent meeting with Extinction Rebellion Cymru, Lesley Griffiths, the Welsh Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, acknowledged that the Welsh Government needs to do more to communicate the severity of the crisis and agreed to work with Extinction Rebellion on a mass public messaging campaign to inform the public of the risks facing us.

Confronting the truth about the climate crisis is hard. The changes required to tackle the crisis will necessarily be radical and wide-ranging and at present the government considers the political cost to be too high. But it is exactly the decades of delay and not grabbing the bull by the horns that have resulted in this becoming a full blown emergency. Had we acted sooner less urgent changes would have been required. Failure to take action in the past has passed the crisis on to the current generation – like it or not, we are now our own last chance.

This is why Extinction Rebellion is calling for a citizens' assembly to help decide on the solutions to the climate crisis. We recognise that it is difficult for politicians to act within the boundaries of short-term electoral cycles. We need to take this out of their hands and give it back to the people. A citizens' assembly is a form of deliberative democracy that works alongside the current electoral system. It is formed of a randomly selected representative sample from across the country. They are then supported by a team of professional facilitators and given training and expert advice to help them decide our policy response. Citizens' assemblies are particularly good at making difficult decisions with a high perceived political cost.

Another reason we argue that a citizens' assembly should make these decisions is to ensure that the costs of decarbonisation are equally shared. Representatives from all sections of society must be at the table to develop these solutions. We are not simply calling for action on the climate crisis. We are calling for climate justice.

Welsh Labour has recently committed to establishing a cross-party group on the formation of a citizens' assembly to address the climate crisis, and Plaid Cymru has agreed to join. While these are welcome developments, we need to ensure that the group moves forward quickly, and crucially, that the citizens' assembly is given the necessary power to make the necessary changes.

That's why we will continue our disruption and sound the alarm. Governments need to see that we are ready for the task ahead and that we will no longer accept business as usual. We need them to tell the truth and communicate the urgency of the situation and empower people to develop the solutions to the crisis. Our future depends on us rising to this challenge. ►

Extinction Rebellion Cymru are part of a global collective organising non-violent rebellion against the governments of the world for climate and ecological justice



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From necessity to invention

First Minister Mark Drakeford *talks to Steve Howell about child poverty, the crisis in social care and how best to reboot Wales' economy*

Since becoming First Minister just under a year ago, a great deal of Mark Drakeford's time has inevitably been devoted to Brexit. Interviewing him as chaos was mounting at Westminster, it was clear that Brexit permeates everything, not least because – in addition to the broader uncertainty it has created – there is still no clarity on its financial implications for practically everything the Welsh Government does.

Although the UK government announced in September that Wales will get £593m in extra funding next year, Drakeford is 'not confident we can rely on that money at all', and points out that it is less than Wales gets from the EU in a single year, never mind what would be needed to restore budgets to their 2010 level in real terms.

Nevertheless, there is a surprising amount going on that bears out how necessity breeds invention. We

started by talking about the Welsh Government's 'social partnership' approach, which Rhodri Morgan instigated after the financial crash and which Mark Drakeford now wants to update.

Mark Drakeford: Our social partnership model has been very successful. You can see the fruits of it in the debates that we had around the Trade Union Act, where we were able to roll back some of the assaults of the Cameron government on trade unionism. And one of the reasons we won the argument was that we had employers providing evidence to Assembly committees explaining why the social partnership model worked for them, the way that it avoided disputes in the workplace, meant that health and safety obligations were properly discharged, developed high trust relationships between employers and employees, with government in the room as well.

So far, all of this relies entirely on the voluntary commitments everyone makes to agreements. As the world gets harsher and harsher for public services, relying entirely on voluntarism doesn't sustain the trust that's necessary around that table, that if something is agreed it will be delivered on the ground. And so we are committed to putting our social partnership model onto the statute book with the force of law behind it.

The key thing that it does is reinforce the confidence that all the parties have that the efforts they make in social partnership bear fruit. That will make people more willing to invest. And social partnership is difficult. Where the critics get this completely wrong is that they think of confrontational relationships as somehow 'tough'



'Come to Wales, we're very cheap' is not something that this government is prepared to consider

and getting around the table as a soft option. It's exactly the opposite. It's the easiest thing in the world to create confrontation if you want to. The real hard work happens when people have to think through common solutions to collective problems. And when that hard work produces an agreement, the parties to that agreement are entitled to know that it will stick.

The Fair Work Commission is a very important strand in all of that because we are determined that in Wales the solutions to these problems will not emerge at the cost of those least able to bear them. Driving down the wages and conditions of the lowest paid and the least advantaged in the workplace is not the way to solve these problems. The very practical proposals the Fair Work Commission has put to us will be part of the social partnership arrangements because we're not prepared to solve problems in that way in Wales.

Steve Howell: Critics might argue that some of the Commission's proposals would push up business costs and make Wales unattractive to inward investors. What's your response to that?

MD: There are two answers immediately. The first is that an economic policy that's based on the slogan 'Come to Wales, we're very cheap' is not something that this government is prepared to consider. And, secondly, it doesn't work. Those employers who demonstrate to their workforce how valued they are, who say 'we are investing in you and in return we rely on the contribution that you make to this business', those are the businesses that succeed. Businesses that say to their workers that *you are the least important thing in this organisation*, they simply don't get the return from the workers that they need.

You can see it in vivid detail in the social care sector. Parts of the sector have a 30% turnover of the workforce or more a year. No sooner have you got somebody in and trained them, than they want to leave and do something else. That's hopeless for quality of service and business continuity, and it racks up huge costs.

SH: Social care is a sector in crisis generally. What's your strategy for tackling that?

MD: When I first came into politics as a councillor back in the 1980s, Cardiff council was a monopoly supplier: we ran all the residential homes and provided all the domiciliary

services. The effect of Mrs Thatcher's reforms of the 1980s was that we now have a private sector monopoly.

What we are about is rebalancing that market. There are some sorts of domiciliary and residential care services that councils themselves are best-placed to provide, particularly the more specialist services. But we want to have more not-for-profit providers in the marketplace as well. We're working with the Wales Co-operative Centre to try to stimulate a not-for profit model where money that's made is reinvested in the service. And there will be private providers too because we have some very good private providers in Wales.

But it's not a good position for a local authority when, as the purchaser of the service, they have no choice about it. That's why we talk about rebalancing the market.

SH: In effect, this is about capacity building and creating indigenous resources. In a similar vein, I gather there are plans for a community bank?

MD: Yes, this is about the Foundational Economy, which is much more important for us in the Brexit context than it was previously. Wales is vulnerable to the inward investment model you identified. Many of the firms we have here have provided jobs over long periods of good quality, but global capital is in the end footloose, and Wales is always at risk of companies under global pressure trying to relocate elsewhere. But you can't locate social care elsewhere, you can't run retail services that are not in that community itself, you can't do food production other than where the food itself is produced. We think about 40% of the Welsh economy is that foundational stuff. So, in our Brexit preparations, we are aiming to strengthen the foundational economy: we have set up a fund, and we have had a fantastic response in terms of ideas and bids that have come into it.

The idea of a community bank – to go alongside the Development Bank for Wales – is to try to make sure we have on the high street financial services that meet the needs of micro businesses. When a high street branch closes, lending to those very small enterprises in the following twelve months goes down by 60%. And that's a huge loss to those nascent businesses. By putting a high street bank back, there will be somebody there who you can talk to, who can make a judgement about lending you money. It's counterintuitive because the fact that branches are closing does tell you something. They're not just doing

it out of perversity. So why do we think we can fly in the face of that? We've been working very closely with the Royal Society of Arts who have developed the business model which we believe we can make succeed in Wales.

We are providing some seedcorn money from the Welsh Government to move forward on two fronts: you need a group of people who have credibility in banking, because you have to get a licence. But you need community credibility as well: if this is going to work, Welsh citizens are going to have to be willing to put their money into this community bank and therefore we need people involved who people would regard as credible.

SH: How will this approach apply to bigger ticket things that require more capital, such as the energy sector?

MD: The long-term future of Wales lies in utilising the natural assets that we have to produce sustainable renewable energy. We have already done a lot in solar and wind. Marine energy is the next big thing. It's fantastic to have had further confirmation from Jeremy Corbyn that a Labour government at Westminster will give the go ahead to the Swansea tidal lagoon. We need a UK government that understands the need to do in marine what was done in wind and solar.

The early stages of production of a new technology will always be more expensive because it is experimental and there's no large-scale production of the equipment. Marine energy is at a stage where it still needs the equivalent of a feed-in tariff. The current UK government has no interest in that at all. It has consistently refused to provide it, and it is now the single biggest inhibitor to our ability to scale up the demonstrator technologies that we have been able to support in Wales.

SH: UK Labour has ambitious plans for public ownership of utilities. What's your view?

MD: I am absolutely of the view that those lifeline things that we all rely upon need to be organised and delivered on behalf of the public. The great utilities that were in public hands and have been sold out of public ownership need to come back. This is not trying to take a 1947 model and drop it into the 21st century. There are new models of public ownership and control, and that's what we need to see.

That works obviously for mature technologies. With

It's fantastic to have had further confirmation from Jeremy Corbyn that a Labour government at Westminster will give the go ahead to the Swansea tidal lagoon

marine, we're still talking about experimental technologies and, at this stage, I think it is still preferable that we invest in those who are at the cutting edge of it and support them to the stage where there is genuine scalable production. At that point, the public has a right to have a return on the investment it has made in creating that industry.

SH: You've said in the past that, though the Welsh government doesn't have the levers to change the fundamental drivers of child poverty, you won't let the search for the perfect drive out the possible. What progress have you been able to make?

MD: There are some practical things that we can do to mitigate child poverty. We have doubled the amount of money we put in the school uniform grant. It used to be you got it once in a child's whole school career. You can now get it twice during a primary school career and twice during a secondary school career. And, if we were able to, we want to go further than that.

This summer we've had sixteen of the 22 local authorities in Wales taking part in our school holiday enrichment programme. It does much more than feeding children but it does have nutrition and food at its core. And next year we will have 21 of the 22 authorities.

And we would like to do more: I have asked officials what it would cost if we were to add a pound to the free school meal allowance that children in secondary school have every day. In a primary school in Wales you get a free breakfast. In secondary schools you don't. And children who rely on the free school meal have to make choices about whether to eat in one part of the day or another. If we can put a pound more into what a secondary school has to spend every day, they would have the equivalent of what it costs to provide a free breakfast in a primary school. Can we do it for every child? Would we have to build it up year by year? We don't know but we are investigating that.

SH: There's a close link between poverty and affordable housing. What steps are you taking on that front?

MD: I often remind people that Aneurin Bevan was the minister for housing as well as health and put much more housing legislation on the statute book than health legislation. From then until the time of Mrs Thatcher, successive governments regarded it as a public responsibility to ensure that there was a proper supply of affordable housing for people to live in.

Mrs Thatcher abandoned that idea completely and handed housing over to the free market. But the market will never provide housing on the scale and of the sort that most people are able to afford. What we need is to recapture housing as a proper object of public policy.

We've been doing that in Wales as much as we can, particularly in relation to how we regulate the private rented sector, and we have built 20,000 affordable homes – the most we've ever managed – during this Assembly term. But the real solution is to get councils building again so that there is a real uplift in the volume of new housing that's being provided of a sort that is affordable, decent in quality and, most of all, reliable as a basis on which you can plan your future.

CPMR Brexit Conference 'European Cooperation Beyond Brexit', co-organised by the Welsh Government (16 November 2017, Cardiff, Wales) Credit: Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions



The climate emergency absolutely has to be a core agenda for this government, and it will take investment, but it also needs a cast of mind that puts the seriousness of these issues at the forefront of what we do

SH: And, finally, the M4 relief road has previously been central to Welsh government policy. Arguably the biggest decision of your first year in office was to come down against it going ahead. Why was that?

MD: The decision was taken on two grounds. One was that the cost had escalated to a point where it could no longer be accommodated from the borrowing available to us. Had we gone ahead, not only would it have prevented us from expanding our ambitions for the Metro, it would have compromised our ability to do things that we were already committed to doing in the field of transport, schools and health. But, even if we had had the money, I wouldn't have come to a different decision because of the environmental damage that was unavoidable in building the relief road.

The climate change emergency absolutely has to be a core agenda for this government, and it will take investment, but it also needs a cast of mind that puts the seriousness of these issues at the forefront of what we do. When we spend money creating a 21st century school, as part of the plan for it we ask how children are going to travel to it. When we are putting investment into the grounds of a new school, we are thinking about the biodiversity potential of it at that point.

The National Forest for Wales is also something I am determined we will make a real start on during this Assembly term. It's important because of carbon capture and, just as our coastal path has been such a success, I am very keen that we have a national forest where people can walk from one end of Wales to another without leaving it. ▶

Steve Howell is a journalist and writer who has worked as an adviser to Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and is the author of a book on the 2017 General Election, *Game Changer: Eight Weeks That Transformed British Politics*

Early days

*As part of the welsh agenda's continuing look at the twentieth anniversary of the National Assembly for Wales, **Jocelyn Davies** reflects on the turbulent early days and the fact that twenty years on, constitutional questions have not gone away.*

So much has happened in the twenty years since the first Senedd term that it seems like a lifetime ago. Those of us who had campaigned for devolution excitedly arrived at the fledgling parliament with great expectations. The referendum message had been clear: we'd have a new democratically elected National Assembly with a different kind of politics where politicians would work together in the interest of the Welsh nation. It would be more transparent, closer to the people, less confrontational, and with a voting system that promoted cooperation and consensus building. That was probably always too idealistic an aim and would have required a confidence and a political maturity that a voting system alone should not have been expected to achieve.

In reality we had pathetically weak powers, insufficient resources and there was no genuine attempt by the minority administration to grasp the opportunity of creating a healthier political culture that the brand new institution presented. It was also clear that Westminster and Whitehall continued to hold all the cards and Wales was still not being taken seriously. So very quickly that idealism descended into a rather febrile atmosphere fed by frustration and disappointment. It was a shaky start and three party leaders were replaced within the first

We had pathetically weak powers, insufficient resources and there was no genuine attempt by the minority administration to grasp the opportunity of creating a healthier political culture

year; censure and no confidence motions were tabled; and the First Minister resigned.

Some respite from the internal machinations was established when Rhodri Morgan formed a coalition with the Liberal Democrats led by Mike German. The negotiations had been secret and so the announcement of the Labour-Lib Dem agreement in the autumn of 2000 came as a genuine surprise to most of us, but entering a coalition had been inevitable for Rhodri Morgan if he intended to sleep at night.

After all, he was leading a minority government within a corporate body whose decisions were legally binding, a body who could bring him down or replace him at any time. Without doubt the ability of the opposition parties to overthrow his minority administration also provided the impetus toward separating the government



The nine surviving Assembly Members from the intake of 1999. The following AMs are currently serving a fifth consecutive term (left to right):

- David Melding AM
- Carwyn Jones AM
- Deputy Presiding Officer Ann Jones AM
- Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM
- Jane Hutt AM
- Kirsty Williams AM
- Presiding Officer Elin Jones AM
- Lynne Neagle AM
- John Griffiths AM

Credit: National Assembly for Wales/
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

It is ironic that attempts to hold back devolution in Wales will always, in the end, push it forward

from the legislature – a move that would eventually lead to the end of the corporate body and the need for that new political culture. The coalition therefore provided a degree of stability. Rhodri Morgan not only had a working majority, but he also had a programme for government. A government with a published programme presents the opposition parties with a useful policy platform to focus on. To my mind, one of the most important components of the agreement was the setting up of the Richard Commission to examine the powers and electoral arrangements of the National Assembly. Its report, and the way it operated, has proved to still be influential today in shaping the debate about the evolving constitutional position of Wales.

One problem the coalition could not solve for Rhodri Morgan in that first term was the intergovernmental

tension with Westminster and Whitehall that continues unabated to this day. The match funding required to make the most of the European Objective 1 structural funds was constantly under debate, as was the need to reform the Barnett formula used to calculate how much money is allocated each year by the UK Treasury to Wales' block grant. The fact that requests from the Welsh Government for new Wales-specific primary legislation in the Queen's speech were usually unambitious and then frequently ignored must have been a constant source of embarrassment for Rhodri Morgan. This was particularly insulting to Wales bearing in mind the distinct lack of powers in the devolution settlement at the time but, on the upside, it did serve to further bolster the unarguable case for transferring primary legislative powers to our Senedd. It is ironic that attempts to hold back devolution in Wales will always, in the end, push it forward.

Jocelyn Davies was one of the 'Class of '99' – the National Assembly for Wales' inaugural cohort – serving as Plaid Cymru list member for South Wales East from 1999 until 2016. In the 'One Wales' Labour/Plaid coalition government from 2007 until 2011, she was Deputy Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Peter Black
(Liberal Democrats)



Jenny Randerson
(Liberal Democrats)



Alun Michael
(Labour)



Jonathan Morgan
(Conservative)

**The Class
of '99:**
*Life after
the Senedd*



Nick Bourne
(Conservative)



Ieuan Wyn Jones
(Plaid Cymru)



Lorraine Barrett
(Labour)



Jocelyn Davies
(Plaid Cymru)

Peter Black, 1999-2016, Liberal Democrat*South West Regional List*

Before 1999 Peter had been a civil servant at the Land Registry Office and he has been a Swansea councillor since 1984. Peter served as Deputy Minister for Housing to Edwina Hart during the Labour-Lib Dem coalition era and he was also an Assembly Commissioner and chaired a subject committee. He is also a prolific blogger. He lost his South West regional seat when the Lib Dems were all but wiped out in 2016. He was awarded the CBE in the 2017 Honours List for his public service and in 2019 became the Lord Mayor of Swansea. Since leaving the Senedd, Peter has become an author and has already published his first novel *The Assassination of Morgan Sheckler*, a political thriller about the murder of the somewhat shady and bullying Mayor of the Cardiff Capital Region, a man with a murky past elected on a promise to prevent a proposed new power plant getting the go-ahead. The plot reveals a dark and sinister world of corruption and blackmail where the American backers of the plant will use any means to secure their deal.

Jenny Randerson, 1999-2011, Liberal Democrat*Cardiff Central*

Jenny was a college lecturer on economics and business studies, a Cardiff councillor from 1983-2000 and a Justice of the Peace before winning the Cardiff Central seat for the Lib Dems in 1999. She quickly established herself as a hard-working member, serving on a range of committees and speaking on a plethora of subjects. She was in the Welsh Government Cabinet during the Labour-Lib Dem coalition and was the Minister for Culture, Sport and Welsh language and for a short period was the Deputy First Minister. Jenny was well respected across the political divide and in 2007 she was the chief negotiator for the Liberal Democrats during the post-election coalition discussions. In 2009 Jenny was the first Assembly Member to successfully bring forward a Private Member's Measure when she proposed legislation about the nutritional value of school meals. She left the Senedd to take a seat in the House of Lords as Baroness Randerson of Roath Park and is her party's Lord's spokesperson on transport. She was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Wales Office with responsibility for education during the Tory-Lib Dem UK coalition years.

Alun Michael, 1999-2000, Labour*Mid and West Wales Regional List*

Alun Michael had been a journalist; a councillor; a youth worker; a Justice of the Peace; Chair of the juvenile court in Cardiff, an MP, a minister in the Home Office and was the Secretary of State for Wales when he became one of the first Mid and West Wales Regional Assembly Members in 1999. He was seen as a safe pair of hands and was Tony Blair's choice as the leader of Labour in Wales and the First Secretary of the newly created National Assembly following Ron Davies' departure from government. His term of office was short as he faced a constant barrage of criticism from the opposition parties and a no confidence vote which his minority administration could not fend off. However, Alun was always destined for high office and following his resignation from the Senedd in 2000, he went on to serve as a Minister of State at DEFRA, steering through the Hunting Act legislation and later holding a ministerial position in the DTI. He left Westminster in 2012 after serving 25 years as the MP for Cardiff South and Penarth to become the first-ever Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales. He was re-elected in 2016 and has recently been selected by Labour to be their candidate for the position at the next election.

Jonathan Morgan, 1999-2007, Conservative*South Wales Central Regional List, Cardiff North
2007-2011*

Prior to becoming an Assembly Member Jonathan had been the European Officer for Coleg Glan Hafren and even though, at just 24 years old, he was the youngest of the 1999 intake he soon established himself as one of the most able. By the second term he already had a formidable reputation for his extensive knowledge on health. By the 2007 election he had secured the marginal seat of Cardiff North from Labour but lost it in 2011 to Julie Morgan. He then set up Insight Wales Consulting, specialising in the health and social care sector and advising organisations on their engagement with public bodies and politicians. As a recognised social care specialist, he was part of the review of the Blue Badge scheme and he also leads the business unit at the Association of Directors of Social Services. He has a keen interest in local government and was part of the Recovery Board set up by Welsh Government to assist Monmouthshire Council out of special measures in 2013.

Nick Bourne, 1999-2011, Conservative*Mid and West Wales Regional List*

Nick was a professor of law and a leading figure in the campaign against devolution when he was elected in 1999. He became leader of the Welsh Conservative group in the Senedd after Rod Richards resigned just four months into the first term. Under his leadership, the Conservatives made ground and he became the Leader of the Opposition in 2007. Ironically, in 2011 he lost his Mid and West Wales regional seat due to the gains made by his party in the constituencies. He joined the House of Lords in 2013 and soon became a whip. By 2015, he was appointed by David Cameron as a minister in both the Wales Office and in Energy and Climate Change. He was part of the UK Government delegation to Paris and signed the resulting treaty on behalf of the UK. Under Theresa May's premiership he served as a minister in Housing, Communities and Local Government and was briefly her minister in the Lords for Northern Ireland. As a committed remain campaigner, Nick felt unable to support a no deal Brexit and resigned from Boris Johnson's government.

Ieuan Wyn Jones, 1999-2013, Plaid Cymru*Ynys Môn*

Previously to politics Ieuan had been a solicitor and was the one sitting Welsh MP who opted to stand in the 1999 Assembly election. He became leader of Plaid Cymru the following year, replacing Dafydd Wigley who then left the Assembly at the 2003 elections. In 2007 Labour won just 26 seats and Rhodri Morgan needed an agreement with another party in order to achieve a working majority. Ieuan entered discussions with Morgan at the same time as instigating parallel negotiations with the Conservatives along with the Liberal Democrats to attempt to form an alternative three-party government; a so-called 'rainbow coalition'. Those talks ended when the Liberal Democrats failed to ratify the deal on a tied vote of their Welsh executive committee. Ieuan continued negotiations with Labour and then became the first-ever Plaid Cymru politician to hold ministerial office when he formed a coalition government with Rhodri Morgan serving as Deputy First Minister and Economic Development Minister until 2011. He left the Assembly in 2013 after accepting the post of Director of M-SParc, a subsidiary of Bangor University set up to create the Menai Science Park, leading on the successful development phase of the project.

Lorraine Barrett, 1999-2007, Labour*Cardiff South and Penarth*

Lorraine is motivated by helping people. She'd been a nurse for many years then undertook casework in the constituency office of Alun Michael for over a decade before winning the Cardiff South and Penarth seat for Labour. She readily admitted she was looking for new challenges when she decided to retire and she knew exactly what she'd be doing next. Lorraine is a humanist and had trained as a civil celebrant in 2008 and was already regularly conducting services when she left the Senedd in 2011 and she's never looked back. She says her greatest honour was officiating the funeral ceremony of Rhodri Morgan in the Senedd in 2017. His was the first ever humanist State Funeral.

Jocelyn Davies, 1999-2016, Plaid Cymru*South East Wales Regional List*

Jocelyn had returned to full time education in her late thirties and was reading Law at Oxford, with the intention of becoming a lawyer, when she became an Assembly Member. As Plaid Cymru's business manager and whip she was often the go-between for informal communications with the other parties and so it was no surprise that she was given the role of Plaid's chief negotiator in the coalition talks in 2007 with Jane Hutt leading for Labour. Jocelyn served as Deputy Minister for Housing in the One Wales coalition government. Since standing down from the Senedd she has filled her time with a wide range of things: sitting on the Board of the Welsh Revenue Authority which is the new tax body for Wales; assisting Sally Holland, the Children's Commissioner, as part of her advisory panel; and supporting Sophie Howe, the Future Generations Commissioner, in a governance role in relation to audit and risk management. Jocelyn was appointed to the Welsh Government Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys and has led on the development of the Valleys Regional Park concept, which aims to maximise the potential of our natural, cultural and heritage assets. Until recently she was also a trustee and chair of her favourite charity Care and Repair Cymru, which helps older people live independently in their own home.

Former Assembly Member profiles by Jocelyn Davies

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‘I want to be Prime Minister of Wales!’

Carolyn Hitt finds Plaid Cymru leader **Adam Price** brimming with ideas and hope, and unapologetic about his use of the term ‘reparations’



Sometimes, let's be honest, you have to say very bold things in order to get a response

Photo: Plaid Cymru

It's fair to say Adam Price is not a soundbite politician. More a sound-feast, in fact. Over coffee in a café filled with young Cardiff urbanites, he serves up a rich platter of ideas, each ingredient considered carefully before it's thrown into the mix. Added spice comes from cultural references that span a spectrum from Simone de Beauvoir to Bertolt Brecht... via Austin Powers.

We meet a few weeks after Plaid Cymru's conference where Price presented a programme of bold promises including a transformative Trans-Wales railway, an end to child poverty and youth unemployment – and an independence referendum before 2030.

It was the demand for £20 billion in economic reparations that stirred the UK media out of its usual indifference towards any vaguely Welsh story, however. And what an eye-catching headline it proved as Price insisted it was payback time for the Wales which had given a century of industrial sacrifice for the greater British good.

From the stage of Swansea's Grand Theatre, Price told delegates that Westminster has limited the Welsh Government's borrowing 'as Thatcher used to rate-cap councils. So if Westminster won't let us issue a bond then it's time it paid its debts to us.

'And I don't mean charity but the money we're owed for all the wealth that cascaded through ports like this with hardly a penny flowing back to Wales.

'We don't want anyone's charity – but reparation for a century of neglect that has left a country, rich in its resources, a bitter legacy of poverty, sickness, blighted lives and broken dreams.'

If it was meant to cause discomfort beyond the border it also unsettled closer to home, not least some members of Price's own party. I put it to him that such rhetoric plays into the colonised victim narrative.

'It certainly is a double-edged sword – I reserve the right to contradict it myself,' he smiles. 'But for me I feel very strongly that it's not possible to understand the predicament we're in without acknowledging the centrality of the fact that we had an extractive economy with a political power centre outside of our nation. For most people that is analogous if not identical to the experience of colonialism. The context, of course, is going to be different in every case.

'The term internal colonialism was invented to

describe the experience of African Americans in the United States. In fact, there is a quote from the 19th century where they were referencing our experience – the Welsh inside the British Isles – in order to explain their own experience of internal colonialism. I don't think you can understand the predicament we've been left in without those two salient facts and the interrelationship between the two.'

Price concedes there were Welsh coal-owners but that they were the 'exception that proved the rule'. He also describes how Welsh mining gave away the intellectual capital of its innovation in the 1940s and 50s as ingenious engineering solutions to geological challenges were pioneered.

'So we have incredible advances in mining engineering, but they decide to give the technology away to the engineering industry in the West Midlands because that's where the cluster of engineering was rather than saying well actually why don't we use that as the germ of a future industry where we can diversify and use that knowledge to create the basis for that?' he explains.

Prices believes the story of Wales in the present cannot be told without acknowledging this part of its past. 'I made the case really that we're owed here because we're caught in a nationwide bind at the moment, because we have this legacy of decades of underinvestment. We're not going to be able to successfully prise ourselves out of the rut without getting access to that level of capital and yet the UK government doesn't invest in Wales. It's invested £3bn [during] the second half of this decade. That's compared with £7bn invested in HS2 that it won't even build and yet it also says you can't borrow above the paltry sum.

'So either let us borrow in our own right on our own terms at this time of historic low interest rates, invest the money yourselves, or give us the money in a national endowment fund to recognise the fact you've given us a hundred years of neglect and it's there for all to see. There was a gasp from the UK press. Sometimes, let's be honest, you have to say very bold things in order to get a response. My saying, *Look you owe us and you owe us big time and we're asking for £20bn* – and it was probably ten times that, the value that was extracted from Wales without any of it coming back – that was reported in the UK media. Why? Because I think it touched a nerve. Fine. OK. If you don't want to do this then what? And that's the question



Adam Price

Personal life:

Married to Swami with one son

Brought up:

Born into Amman Valley mining family in 1968. Studied at Cardiff University.

Political Career:

Entered politics in 2001, winning Carmarthen East and Dinefwr seat from Labour for Plaid Cymru. Sparked UK headlines in the House of Commons with his anti-war campaigning and attempt to impeach former Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2004. Took educational sabbatical in 2010 and was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship at Harvard to study for a Masters in Public Administration.

Culture:

Favourite book: Gwenallt's *Ffwrneisiau* (Furnaces)

Music artist: John Cale

Film: *Reds*

Food: 'South Indian'

Fantasy dinner party guests:

Gwyn Alf Williams, Walt Whitman, Simone de Beauvoir, Hannah Arendt and Gerald of Wales

We don't want anyone's charity – but reparation for a century of neglect that has left a country, rich in its resources, a bitter legacy of poverty, sickness, blighted lives and broken dreams

I would put back to the next Prime Minister, whoever that might be.'

At the age of eight, Price was answering questions from the Prime Minister rather than asking them. Encountering James Callaghan on the campaign trail in his home town of Ammanford, the miner's son was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up. 'Prime Minister,' he told Callaghan.

'So you want my job?' chortled the incumbent.

'No, I want to be Prime Minister of Wales,' young Price retorted.

If his vision of an independent nation began before he had reached double figures, by the time he took over as leader of Plaid Cymru in 2018 the i-word was bizarrely still somewhat taboo.

Critical of the party's reluctance to discuss independence, Price said at the time: 'When we have tried to avoid saying anything that might frighten the voters we ended up saying nothing at all. I have always been consistent that we should make it our express purpose to achieve an independent Wales, and sooner not later.'

A mere year later and even Eddie Butler is issuing a rallying cry from the balcony of Merthyr Tydfil's Redhouse while the Indy-curious gather in impressive numbers below. Not that Price is taking personal credit for the growth in interest, of course. He sees it as a positive by-product of these politically febrile times.

'There are many, many roots to it. Each person will have their own pathway,' he says. 'Clearly at a macro level you've got to say that Brexit has been a massive catalyst. For many pro-Remain supporters in Wales I think it's exemplified to them that an independent Wales would be potentially a far more inclusive, forward-looking, modern, comfortable place to be for the country we feel we are than what's possibly on the horizon in the future of Britain and people who are on that pathway the classic line is *I never thought I'd say that but...* It's almost like the coming out moment for independence.

'And then I think there's the general contrast with the tragicomedy, the daily pantomime and worse that is Westminster and just the general sense that surely we can do better than this. And thirdly there's been some kind of realisation, an inversion of the classic question: *We're too poor to be independent*. There's almost the sound of a million pennies dropping, *Hang on now, maybe it's the other way around*. We're not more intelligent than any other nation but we're certainly not less intelligent on average than anyone else. There's nothing about us that predetermines us to poverty so there must be another reason for it. So I think people are realising it wasn't us, it was the political structure, the centralisation of power, the British state etcetera. And it's probably not going to change and we have a choice between being poor generation by generation going into the future, or at least having the chance to do something about it ourselves. With those levers, and tools and pulleys, we can prise ourselves out of poverty. And that actually is as convincing to Leave supporters as it is to Remain supporters.'

Price is as surprised as many of the traditional Welsh nationalists at the diversity of those turning up at rallies and filling his timelines. 'It's fantastic that every day I get people on social media in the nicest possible way putting pressure on me saying *let's have the referendum now*. I think this is great.

'People are ahead in many ways of the political parties. And that's how it should be. At moments of great, deep political change that work is done by movements. Political parties have a role to play because there are certain technical things that only a government can do – you need to have a pro-independence government eventually as part of the mix. But the deep work of actually moving an entire society that can only be done through a movement and this is a movement that is very diverse. It's

the social and the cultural that is at the forefront of this movement and if you think of every country that has self-liberated itself, Ireland in the late 19th, early 20th century it was that cultural element – everything from hurling to W.B. Yeats. The debate was won there and the political moment emerged later. And that's always been the case so it gives me a lot of heart.'

But what of the head? Cultural arguments for independence have an easy appeal but how can the logistical case be made? I ask Price for a simple economic message to sell independence to the sceptical. He obliges in detail.

'One of the strong simple points to make is if we were independent tomorrow then we would be in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) which is the official club of rich countries of the world,' he says.

'Even where we are now in terms of income per head we would be in the top 25 in the world out of 200 countries. We are an advanced industrial economy and we'd be above some fairly major advanced economies in term of income per head.

'What is true is we are underperforming relative to our potential. It's a difficult balancing act, we're a country that has high levels of poverty but we're not a poor country overall. I think storytelling comes into this.'

He cites the example of IQE which supplies the world from its base in St Mellons. 'It's an entirely homegrown company which basically has its technology in two thirds of the world's smartphones, a billion plus bought every year has a little bit of Wales in them. The issue is we don't currently have the ability to take that and multiply it a hundred times. But it shows we can be world-beaters. The Welsh are intrinsically very good at business. The reason we haven't got a hundred IQEs at the moment is that we don't have the capital. We don't have the capital to invest. We can solve that tomorrow. A sovereign independent nation can actually borrow money. You can borrow money from the IMF but we don't even need to go there. The world is crying out for sovereign debt, even paying negative interest rates. So an independent Wales could actually borrow money to invest in our future at a negative interest rate where they would be paying us for the privilege of lending us money and then we could create the type of infrastructure and invest in our companies and turn the development bank which does great work with its limited financial firepower. There's

Even where we are now in terms of income per head we would be in the top 25 in the world out of 200 countries. We are an advanced industrial economy



We had an extractive economy with a political power centre outside our nation

never been a better time to become independent. We've hit the jackpot. There have been more difficult times in the past. This is the best time – the next decade.'

Price's conference promise for a referendum set its deadline for 2030 but he believes we might get there earlier. 'The situation around us may accelerate. The United Kingdom might cease to exist if Northern Ireland becomes part of the Republic and Scotland becomes independent. So we've got to have a plan together as soon as we can and that's why we are going to be announcing the detailed work. That's one of the roles a political party can do and should do: to provide the detailed answers. What is the economic strategy? What is the actual fiscal gap that we've got to close? How are we going to close it? How soon can we close it? What are the economic challenges? What are the economic opportunities? Because there are opportunities for a newly independent country that you can't [use] as part of another state. Let's set all that out and start to make the case.'

Our conversation continues to roam widely, from the shape a remade Britain might take – 'It will still persist as an idea, as an identity. We'll still need overarching institutions because we share an island, we share a history, we share common institutions, we share some

common values' – to the difference fatherhood has made: 'it's changed me as a person and by extension it has to have an impact on my political worldview.'

Price concludes by summing up that view: 'I think politics is calling out for us to do some big things. We live in an age where I think the pendulum has swung because we've been going through such collective despair. Human beings are optimistic creatures by nature otherwise we wouldn't get up in the morning, so we always reach a point where we say *Do you know what – I'm bored with this?* And I want to hear some hope. And I want to hear some transformational ideas that can actually change things for good. And I think that's where we've arrived at. There's never been a time in the last 20 years like this in terms of new, radical thinking. Whether it's universal basic income, federal job guarantee, the Green New Deal... there's an appetite for thinking big.'

I leave having only had a coffee, but Adam Price has left me with much food for thought. ➤

Carolyn Hitt is co-founder of Parasol Media. She won Columnist of the Year at the Regional Press Awards for her work in the *Western Mail*

Battling for the broad church

Nicolas Webb meets the Welsh Conservatives' leader, Paul Davies

Paul Davies takes his seat with the Senedd as backdrop. The impression given is that of a First Minister in waiting, but there is no disguising the number of hurdles which exist. Nor are these challenges simply about the historic strength of Labour in Wales, the apparent resurgences for Plaid Cymru and the Lib Dems, or the emergence of the Brexit Party in the Senedd. There are sighs of resignation when the inevitable questions come about who actually leads the Welsh Conservative Party, or about having to field complaints on UK government policy from rival AMs who at times appear rather more interested in giving 'Westminster' a kicking than debating devolved issues.

Straight to the point, then. Is Philip Hammond a Conservative? There is no hesitation in Paul Davies' answer. 'Absolutely, Philip Hammond is a Conservative. Philip Hammond has always been a Conservative and I am of the view that the Conservative Party needs to continue to be a broad church.' This leads us naturally to Boris Johnson's recent expulsion of twenty-one MPs. The 'purge' was unacceptable to Ruth Davidson; it was unacceptable to Amber Rudd; is it acceptable to Paul Davies? The response: 'I hope that the people who've been purged, to use your word, find a way back into the Conservative Party'.

He proceeds to repeat the mantra about a 'broad

church' and says the party should cover a wide enough spectrum to include Ken Clarke, Hammond and Jacob Rees-Mogg. The fourth reference to the phrase in as many answers comes in a sentence that also includes the other historic term associated with the party: 'One-nation Conservatism'. 'I find the broad-church argument difficult,' I reply, arguing that the 'purge' establishes a precedent. 'This is, overnight, undermining that broad church and what is there to stop the same thing happening again on another issue?'.

Calmly, Paul acknowledges that the power for such decisions lies with the leader but that: 'I'd like to think that whoever is the leader of the Conservative Party will recognise that it is important to remain a broad church party because that is how we win elections'. On the charge that the 'purge' reflects a radicalisation of the Conservative Party into a 'national populist party', the softly spoken Welsh Conservative Assembly leader retorts: 'No, I don't believe that for a minute. There are huge challenges in dealing with Brexit. In the last three years we've just been going around in circles as far as Brexit is concerned and that is why it is important that as a country we move on from this impasse'.

Moving on from our own impasse over matters non-devolved, we return the discussion to Wales and Davies sets out his approach to politics with five values.



Paul Davies

Personal history

Paul Davies was born in 1969 and grew up in Pontsian just outside Llandysul, Ceredigion. Until elected to the National Assembly for Wales in 2007, he was employed by Lloyds TSB as a Business Manager based in Haverfordwest, helping to develop small businesses.

Political history

Paul Davies was first elected to the National Assembly in 2007. Until March 2009 he served as Shadow Minister for Culture, the Welsh Language and Sport. From March 2009 until the Assembly election in 2011, Paul held the role of Shadow Minister for Education and the Welsh Language. After his re-election as Assembly Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire in May 2011, he briefly held the role of Interim Leader of the Welsh Conservative Assembly Group before being appointed as Deputy Leader of the Welsh Conservative Assembly Group, and Shadow Minister for Finance. After his re-election in May 2016, Paul was also appointed as Welsh Conservative spokesperson on Rural Affairs. Paul Davies was elected leader of the Welsh Conservatives in September 2018.

Source: National Assembly for Wales

‘I stand for empowering people, boosting localism, promoting accountability, supporting businesses and a strong Wales in a strong United Kingdom’. What, in Paul Davies’ mind, does localism look like? ‘I want to devolve as much power as possible to our communities. What we have seen from the Welsh Labour government unfortunately is them grabbing power and centralising power in Cardiff Bay.’ He offers a practical example: ‘We want the people who run our health service in Wales to be much more accountable and that is why we want to see elected Health Commissioners so that people know it is that person who is responsible for running health services in their area and that is about empowering people and promoting accountability’. He continued on the wider theme, ‘We want people to feel they have power in their communities, that they are in control of their communities’.

On the topic of how the Welsh Conservatives had adapted to the radical shift from austerity to pre-election cash splashing Boris, Davies says: ‘It is a different approach because we have been able to balance the books. We had a deficit of £150 billion. I hear all the time from Labour the accusation of austerity, but they created this situation. We have now got into a position where we can start reinvesting in public services.’

The prominence of Welsh nationalism is raised. ‘I think the Welsh nationalists are being opportunistic because they are using Brexit as a tool to promote Welsh nationalism’. Davies noted the increase in media discussion but reiterated that the Conservative and Unionist position was clear and the counterargument to nationalism was being made and would continue to be made. When asked if the Welsh Conservatives were conclusively a pro-devolution party in light of what appears to be a growth in devo-scepticism among some activists, Davies replied: ‘I don’t think that will change,

Whatever our views on Brexit or anything else we should respect each other’s [opinion]

I want to devolve as much power as possible to our communities. What we have seen from the Welsh Labour government unfortunately is... centralising power in Cardiff Bay

Paul Davies

but of course, you will have individuals with other views. I am very comfortable having that broad church. However, the Conservative Party policy on devolution is absolutely clear: we accept the devolution settlements in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We are a pro-devolution party.'

Attempts to identify which opposition AMs Paul specifically respects or would choose to socialise with are batted away with the ease of an experienced diplomat, aware that to favour one would be to risk offending another. Though he goes on to add: 'I think what people often misunderstand is that although we have political differences, we respect each other's positions and that means we can be friends. I have friends in all political parties and I think that is right and proper even when we disagree on politics. That's what has disappointed me a little bit over the last few years because we have had this huge debate around Brexit and it has polarised people's positions and it has certainly divided family, friends and colleagues. We've seen a lot of anger. Whatever our views on Brexit or anything else we should respect each other's views, but unfortunately it has boiled over in the last few years.'

Paul is clear on the need to deliver Brexit, so I ask what comes next. Do we revert to right versus left politics or does a different spectrum apply – such as *open versus closed*? 'If we do deliver Brexit and leave the European Union in an orderly fashion then we can get on with [politics as normal]. I don't know if it will revert to left and right, let's wait and see. It will be interesting to see how politics will look post-Brexit.'

Paul notes that 'I've been an Assembly Member for twelve years and I don't want to continue in opposition because not having your hands on the levers of power is hugely frustrating'. But reading between the lines of some of his answers it appeared that the slow grind of constitutional matters within the Conservative Party were also a cause of displeasure. One announcement by the Prime Minister and the Welsh Conservatives must adapt, yet the party is poorly structured to respond with such rapidity to ideas emanating from its Welsh wing. This hampers the scope of the Assembly group to set out a distinctive agenda. Nonetheless, Davies is quick to point out progress. He now attends Political Cabinet meetings in Downing Street. The Scottish Tory Leader has previously been entitled to do so, but Davies is the first Welsh AM to do so.

Let us finish with Paul's perspective on the future. 'If you believe in the values of freedom of the individual, choice, opportunity, personal responsibility, those are Conservative values; if those are your values I'd encourage to join the Conservative Party. The Conservative Party exists to be in power. My job over the next 18 months is to offer a credible alternative to this failing Labour government.' ▼

Nicolas Webb is studying International Politics at Cardiff University. He is a trustee of the Welsh Refugee Council and a management board member for the think tank Gorwel. He has previously served as Chairman of Newport Civic Society

Is Europe the issue that brings radicalism back to Welsh Liberalism?

Rhys ap Iwilym *speaks to the Welsh Liberal Democrats' leader about her political motivations and her personal journey*

In the course of twenty-four months, [the Lib Dems'] revival has taken Dodds from unsuccessful candidate in a dying party to leader of a resurgent party and an MP in a hung parliament where individual votes might well prove crucial

The spectre of the Welsh Liberal Radical looms deep in our national political consciousness. Of non-conformism writ large on the political stage. Of disestablishment, home-rule and land reform. More myth, perhaps, than reality. Epitomised by David Lloyd George, the firebrand, champion of religious freedom and opponent of the Boer War, ultimately cossetted, compromised and corrupted by the privileges of power. From Cymru Fydd to Ireland partitioned.

Over the course of the last century, the Liberal fervour that had engulfed the country dwindled into lethargy. Usurped of its hegemony in industrialised Wales by the Labour movement, and in the Fro Gymraeg by Plaid Cymru, Welsh Liberalism struggled to assert a clear identity. From 32 out of 34 MPs in 1906 to none in 2017. From Lloyd George as Prime Minister to the ignominy of a party forced to change its own rules so that the leader no longer had to be an AM or an MP, because its solitary AM was not interested.

When Jane Dodds took over the leadership of the Welsh Lib Dems in November 2017, the party was polling at 5% for both Cardiff Bay and Westminster elections. A century of gradual decline had reached its nadir. Few people paid attention to that leadership election. Barely a third of party members bothered to vote in a contest between two relative unknowns. Dodds won on the back of a paltry 587 votes. It was unsurprising that those outside the party hardly noticed the events at all. Many were beginning to question whether the party had a purpose or a future.

Fast-forward two years and the party has seen a substantial resurgence. The October Political Barometer poll has the party riding high at 11% for the National Assembly and 16% for Westminster, levels not seen since 2010. What's more, there have been significant electoral successes. May's European elections saw the Lib Dems attract 13.6% of the vote, almost four times their level of support in 2014, and the highest ever in a European election, bar the SDP-Liberal Alliance zenith of 1984. Then in August, Dodds herself won the Brecon and Radnorshire by-election on the back of a 24% swing from the Conservatives, albeit against a convicted fraudster. In the course of twenty-four months, this revival has taken Dodds from unsuccessful candidate in a dying party to leader of a resurgent party and an MP in a hung parliament where individual votes might well prove crucial.



Credit: Keith Edkins

32	Liberal MPs in Wales in 1906
0	Welsh Liberal Democrat MPs in 2017
24%	Swing from Cons to Lib Dems in Brecon and Radnorshire by-election
587	Number of Welsh Liberal Democrats members who voted for Jane Dodds as leader
11%	People who intend to vote Liberal Democrat at next National Assembly election
16%	People who intend to vote Liberal Democrat at next UK general election

Source: Cardiff University October Political Barometer Poll; YouGov interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,032 adults in Wales online between 10-14 October 2019.

There is little doubt that the re-emergence of the Lib Dems is founded on their unequivocal opposition to Brexit. Nevertheless, when I spoke to Jane Dodds, I was keen to understand what else binds Welsh Liberals together.

A native of Wrexham, Dodds describes her upbringing as non-political – a mother who voted Plaid Cymru and a father who would be ‘spinning in his grave’ if he knew she was an MP. But it was a childhood that would influence her future professional and political interests. Dodds proudly remembers her family and church hosting choirs that had come to compete at the Llangollen Eisteddfod, and the emotional connection that she made with these visitors from all corners of the world.

Having studied at Cardiff University, Dodds chose to follow a career in social work. Following a period in local councils in England, she gravitated towards working with refugees and asylum seekers. Working for the children’s section at the Refugee Council, she became frustrated that her efforts to support individuals and families in great need were undermined by a system that required them to travel ‘up the down escalator’. This exasperation at first led her to join the Labour Party, but

her membership was short-lived. Having campaigned actively in just one election, dismayed by the Labour government’s collaboration in the war in Iraq, she left the party in protest.

A chance meeting led to a conversion to the Lib Dem cause and subsequently a successful election to a local council in London in 2006. Having lost that seat in 2010, and failing to regain it in a 2012 by-election, Dodds returned home to help support her mother in 2013. She was soon back on the campaign trail, however, challenging for Cardiff Bay and Westminster seats in the former liberal stronghold of Montgomeryshire in the three successive elections between 2015 and 2017. On each occasion, she came a clear but distant second to the Conservative incumbents.

Of course, second was the best result that any Welsh Liberal Democrat – bar Kirsty Williams – achieved in either the 2016 or 2017 general elections. As a result, when Williams decided to concentrate on her role within the Labour Government in Cardiff Bay rather than recapture the Lib Dem leadership, that rule change was necessitated, and the path was opened up for Dodds to gain the party leadership.

She is proud of the welcome that nine Syrian families have received from the community in Ystradgynlais in the far south-west of her constituency... steadfast in her perception of the Welsh as internationalists

There is a clear thread in our conversation. It is obvious that a sense of compassion and social justice has motivated Dodds' political vocation. As she puts it, she is guided by a feeling of 'there but for the grace of God go I'. She is proud of the welcome that nine Syrian families have received from the community in Ystradgynlais in the far south-west of her constituency. She is steadfast in her perception of the Welsh as internationalists, a view she insists is undimmed by the evident support for Brexit. Rather, she chooses to interpret the 2016 referendum result as a protest vote, driven by a lack of hope.

What is less clear is how this concern for social justice inspires a political vision that can counter that lack of hope. The vision, if there is one, seems to be based on fiscal redistribution, of 'shared prosperity'. Without a hint of irony, she points to the EU's structural funds as a model of redistribution that the UK should seek to emulate.

On the constitutional question, she says that the Welsh Lib Dems are 'clear that federalism is the answer but, when probed on what institutions might underpin a federal UK, the response is that: 'I don't think we need to radically reshape things... it's too early for me to say whether Westminster does or doesn't function for Wales... I think it could'. Dodds is in favour of the full implementation of the Silk Commission's report. Beyond that, she wants to see more support and devolution of powers to local authorities. Details on which powers are not forthcoming, but the meaning of support 'always comes back to funding'.

I ask about the Lib Dem record in government. Having spent six of the last twenty years in coalition in Cardiff Bay and five of the last ten in Westminster, I wanted to know what Dodds saw as her party's legacy and whether there were any regrets that her party had not made a more positive impact. She is proud that, as part of

the UK coalition, the party 'moved the debate on in terms of climate change and the green agenda, we introduced the income tax floor... we introduced free school meals for children, we introduced the pupil premium'. As part of the current Welsh Government, she praises Kirsty Williams' role in the 21st century schools programme and in reforming funding for higher education students.

Finally, I ask her how she views her new colleagues who have joined the Lib Dem benches in Westminster from Labour and Conservative parties alike. 'I welcome them all. I think they all bring a different perspective. We are a centrist party, which is progressive, which wants to stay in Europe. And those are the values, as I understand it, that the six or seven that have joined since me reflect as well.'

I come away from my conversation with Jane Dodds underwhelmed. The Lib Dems have and will benefit electorally from their clarity in opposing Brexit, but it remains unclear to me what other principles they are willing to stand up for. The party claims pride in pushing the climate debate forwards, but was part of a government that scrapped the fuel duty escalator. The Liberal Democrats are proud of increasing the income tax personal allowance, but was part of an austerity government which caused widespread economic hardship. Perhaps this party, with one AM, one Welsh MP, yet six members of the House of Lords, resembles the old Lloyd George compromised by power, rather than the radical agitator of his youth. Only time will tell whether Europe can reignite that radicalism. ▼

Dr Rhys ap Iwan is Senior Lecturer in Economics at Bangor Business School, and a member of *the welsh agenda's* editorial group

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The Left Behind

Chartists in the Newport Afterlife

Gareth Leaman *considers the place of Wales' third city – a 'blind spot' in the national imagination – and meets the group using its past as a means to inspire a new present*

To live in Newport is to be irrevocably entwined with the historical forces that built this city. Symbols of the past are etched into the landscape: what we might call our 'industrial heritage' is all around us. But these totems are not fossilised relics, and they're not engaged with passively: they're the milieu of our everyday life.

The canals that once lubricated the flow of capital from the Valleys to Newport and then the world are now the routes of choice for lethargic family bike rides or shortcut stumbles home from the pub. The boarded-up shops at the foot of grand old buildings are a reminder that wealth once flowed through these streets, leaving very little lasting benefit to the people who generated it. The site of an attempted working-class insurrection against the state is occupied by a discount store and an abandoned political party campaign office.

There is a feeling here in this landscape that something has been lost, that these public spaces are haunted by memories of the circumstances that built them. 'These familiar experiences', as Raymond Williams writes, 'are profoundly effective, even when they are commonplaces, in so much Welsh feeling and thought.'

We might call these experiences the perception of a 'lost future' in which the failed political projects of the past are perceptible in contemporary cultural melancholia, as Mark Fisher does, or perhaps it's the 'tradition of all dead generations [weighing] like a nightmare on the brains of the living', to borrow from Marx. In Newport, perhaps, this is felt so acutely and innately in our collective consciousness, our cultural

memory, that we don't feel the need to name it.

Identities, as social categories, are often felt most acutely at their margins, when they're challenged and othered. 'Welshness' is no exception, and neither is class: you can learn a lot about that in Newport. It may often be claimed in jest by residents of other parts of Wales that Newport 'isn't really Welsh', but in fact it's here, on the national periphery, where you gain an implicit sense of what is and isn't Welsh. It's here that the facades of a homogenised sense of Britishness make themselves known, and where the equivalent symbols of Welshness transcend the clichés.

It's here that we feel the porousness of borders, both real and imagined, and from this a generalised sense of being neither Welsh nor English: citizens of nowhere, to reclaim the phrase of a soon-to-be-forgotten authoritarian. As a post-industrial commuter town on the edge of two nations whose identities are both in flux, Newport finds itself full of people who would rather be somewhere else: priced out of homes in cities they used to call home; displaced from other nations altogether; or people who have always been here and that the world has left behind, forgotten, trapped here.

These economic migrations, forged in the fires of early industrial capitalism and continued throughout the past two centuries, have thrown people together and forced them to create something new: Irish immigrants, English immigrants, migrants from the north and west of Wales, Bangladesh, Somalia, Kurdistan. This is what Newport is, and always has been: the poor and marginalised thrown together by the forces of capital,

As a post-industrial commuter town on the edge of two nations whose identities are both in flux, Newport finds itself full of people who would rather be somewhere else

Torchlit parade to commemorate the Newport Rising
Photos: Kamila Jarczak



living side-by-side, indebted to the same rentier class (though not without a history of tensions spilling over into inter-class, racialised violence). Yet from this, slowly, tempestuously, new solidarities can be born. The working classes of the world uniting, because they had to, in this dirty old town that no nation wanted.

Newport is the left behind of the left behind: a blind spot in all national imaginations. 'Always caught in between', as the Manics sing, 'the capital and the other country... the river and the valley,' These binaries, this sense of being defined by what it's not, creates a void that can only be filled by other identities, inviting a deeper analysis of the social forces that formed the city's microculture.

This absence of conventional national identities – national stereotypes – leaves us with more questions than answers. Why are such huge tracts of our city apparently trapped, generation after generation, in an inescapable cycle of poverty? What forms of exploitation are vested in maintaining this destructive status quo? Why do we appear to lack the means of overcoming these oppressions? How can we democratise our everyday life and reclaim public space as our own? It is through questions such as these that the spectre of Chartism haunts this city, for the spirit of their fundamental demands are still palpable, the fundamental conditions that necessitated them are still here, a past inside the present.

You can still see the bullet holes

You can still sense a little hope

Crushed dreams

And the martyrs too

Silent, ghostly, still so confused

Manic Street Preachers, 'The View From Stow Hill'

This view from Stow Hill, of course, is that of the Westgate Hotel, site of that ill-fated insurrection: the Newport Rising, that most visceral flashpoint of the Chartist movement in the UK. The first national working-class movement on this island conducting the last armed uprising against the state. Questions arise from the void here too, in that this 'view' can still

Newport is the left behind of the left behind: a blind spot in all national imaginations

be observed despite being apparently consigned to the past. Patently, nothing that materially exists in the present has its meaning condemned irrevocably to the past. So why does it still exist? How have the meanings of Chartism, the struggle for democracy, and working-class culture been translated into our present moment?

It's these ghostly remnants of collectivity and solidarity in the face of adversity that provide the focus for contemporary commemorations of the Chartist movement, the Newport Rising, and its legacy in South Wales. This is the main focus of Our Chartist Heritage, a charity aiming to '[Inspire] today's citizens with a passion for justice and truth which roused yesterday's Chartist and Suffragette reformers'.

As David Daniel, Project Development Officer, explains, the organisation's purpose is not primarily concerned with 'the importance of the event in history (though it is important) or about telling the story because it happened here in the city we are from'. Rather, it is because 'the Chartists – eventually – achieved positive change by acting together. That remains the enduring message that inspires what the charity does and why we believe it's an important story that must continue to be told.' Key to all this is the idea that heritage is not simply a 'dusty, old word': instead it's a means of fuelling the desire to 'reconnect people with their past so that we might make connections between what happened in 1839 and their lives today'.

So how, exactly, is Our Chartist Heritage able to achieve this forging of a connection between past and present? Their desired meanings aren't being imposed upon the historical objects they've preserved for the public, yet they're not inherently contained within them either.

Most aspects of the project follow a basic premise: highlight the material evidence of Chartism that exist all around us, and draw out the universal political spirits that still haunt them. The goal here is thus to call attention to the link between past and present not just

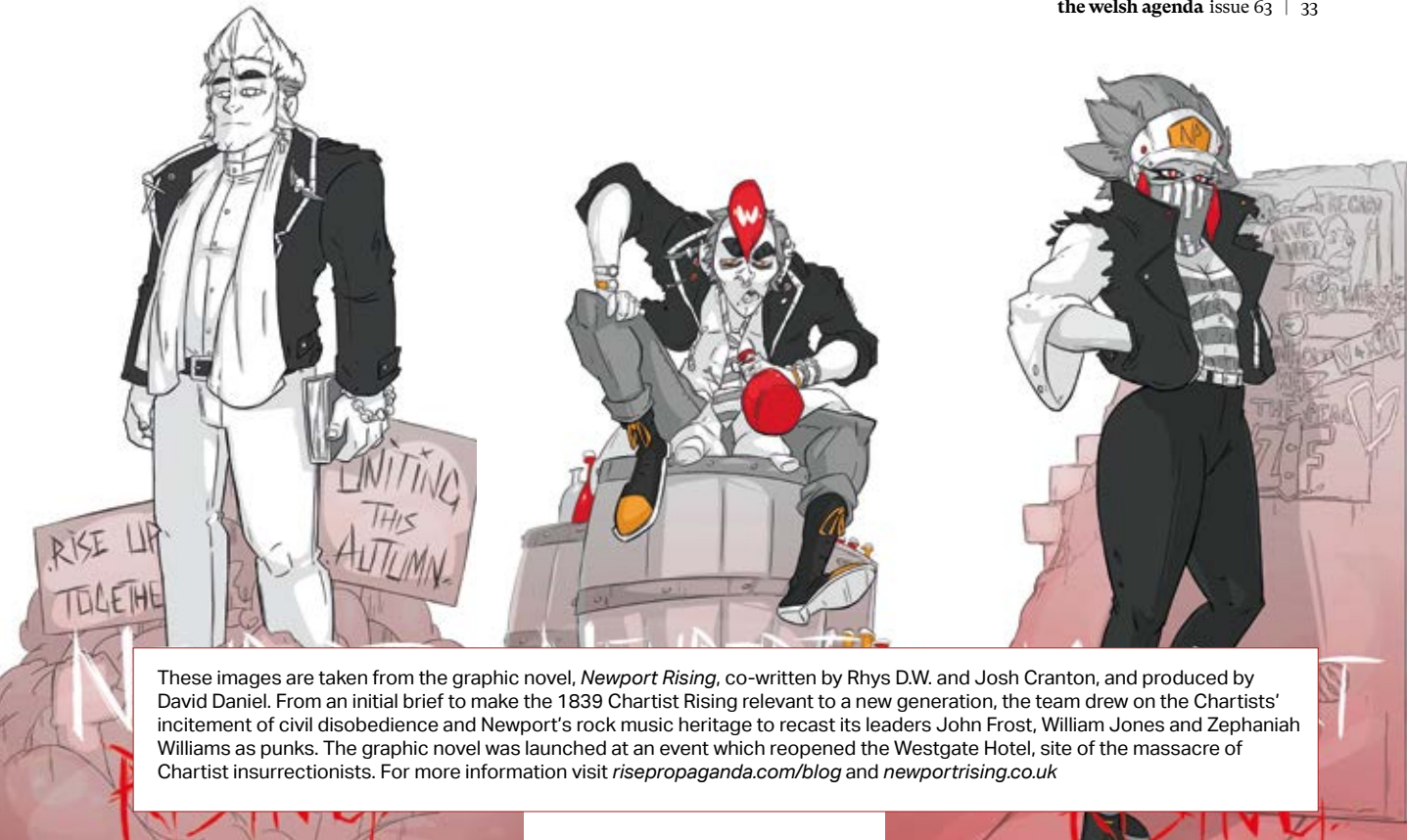
in a superficial way, but to draw out what Mike Sanders calls 'the ideological afterlife of the Newport Rising', taking the raw material of the 'heritage' of Chartism as an aesthetic, and drawing out its semantic content.

The project therefore concerns itself with exploring what we might call the Rising's 'myth content', in that this act of meaning-creation enters the historical event into what Roland Barthes calls the 'second-order semiological system'. The objects, sites and events of the Newport Rising signify a basic meaning: these events occurred on this date, concerning these people, for these reasons, and so on. But this act of commemoration, at its most effective, analyses the *meaning of this meaning*.

Thus the contemporary meaning of the (albeit apocryphal, mythical) 'presence' of bullet holes in hotel pillars does not lie in the events of the Rising itself, but in the implied efficacy of agitating against the state to win political concessions. Retracing the route the Chartists took when marching on Newport tells us not just about the event itself, but about the power of the *dérive*, of reclaiming public space, and of people marching together, standing side-by-side in solidarity to demand a better world. In a more general sense, the sacrifice of the Chartists – not least, of course, the 22 who lost their lives in the Rising – tells us that a life without democratisation, without a say over how your life unfolds, is no life at all.

This is reflected in the general themes of the annual Chartist Convention run by Our Chartist Heritage, held every November during the wider Newport Rising Festival. While ostensibly focusing on the Chartists as a subject of historical study, the event often uses this history as a means of discussing wider, contemporary themes focusing on questions of democracy: how it was won, how we can preserve it, how it can continue to be fought for.

The main focus of Our Chartist Heritage [is] to '[Inspire] today's citizens with a passion for justice and truth which roused yesterday's Chartist and Suffragette reformers'



These images are taken from the graphic novel, *Newport Rising*, co-written by Rhys D.W. and Josh Cranton, and produced by David Daniel. From an initial brief to make the 1839 Chartist Rising relevant to a new generation, the team drew on the Chartists' incitement of civil disobedience and Newport's rock music heritage to recast its leaders John Frost, William Jones and Zephaniah Williams as punks. The graphic novel was launched at an event which reopened the Westgate Hotel, site of the massacre of Chartist insurrectionists. For more information visit risepropaganda.com/blog and newportrising.co.uk

The annual recreation of the march itself is also a key highlight of the Festival: a torch-lit procession that, again, seeks to draw meaningful links between past and present. As Daniel says, this isn't merely a passive, unthinking reenactment, but a 'shared, communal experience' that gives the Newport Rising its dual meaning: referring to the historical event, but also imbuing contemporary residents of Newport with a sense of what this city can achieve 'through the collective actions of its people'.

This foregrounding of the past inside the present, of the meaning within the meaning, is only possible because, in our contemporary moment, we still fight those struggles, still face those same oppressions. Cultural memory of the Rising – its commemoration through the heritage industry and in aesthetic practice – is not just the circulation of an apolitical story, but the presence of class struggle as what Williams calls a 'structure of feeling': perceptible in 'affective elements of consciousness and relationships', but before the point of cohering into a material cultural form.

That these structures of feeling are emerging again now tells us something about our current political predicament. It can surely be no coincidence that there is a resurgence of interest in the Newport Rising and the Peterloo Massacre, or the increased visibility of the Durham Miners' Gala, in a state beset with democratic deficits, constitutional crises, endemic poverty and widespread disenfranchisement. The next step is to recognise what that means, and to turn them into coherent political demands, so that we can begin to make sense of, as Williams, that great theorist of the Welsh margins, puts it, 'the pieces of past and present that are safe to handle. Here, in this living country.' ▸

Gareth Leaman is a writer and musician from Newport. He has recently contributed to *Poetry Wales*, *New Socialist* and *Wales Arts Review*

Machynlleth to the World: from alternative technology to climate emergency

The Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) effectively called for a climate emergency to be declared more than twelve years ago with the publication of their first Zero Carbon Britain Report in 2007. Are governments finally taking climate change action, and is Wales leading the way? asks Saskia Pagella

On the 29th April 2019, Environment Minister Lesley Griffiths declared a climate emergency in Wales, ahead of the rest of the UK. This declaration clearly signals that Welsh Government acknowledges its central role in mitigating and adapting to climate change and that the free market or individual action will not be enough. For a relatively small country, Wales played a significant role in the first industrial revolution, driving the energy agenda. Now Wales is arguably leading the way towards a zero carbon future. For over 45 years the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), near Machynlleth, has been exploring sustainable solutions to environmental challenges. What began as a group concerned about the emerging environmental challenges now houses and hosts some of the world's leading experts and educationalists in sustainability.

Climate Chaos and Ecosystem Degradation

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported in 2018 that we need to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century. Debra Roberts, IPCC stated: 'the decisions we make today are critical in ensuring a safe and sustainable world for everyone, both now and in the future.' CAT has long believed that radical action is needed to avoid serious impacts from climate change. The earlier society can

achieve a zero carbon economy, the greater the chance of limiting global temperature rise to near 1.5°C.

The situation is not straightforward though. As well as finding solutions for the changing climate, the degradation of ecosystems globally has led to an unprecedented rate of biodiversity loss. In 2019 The International Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services published their *Summary for Policymakers* documenting how 'nature and its vital contributions to people, which together embody biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are deteriorating worldwide.' There is a real challenge ahead in terms of balancing an equitable supply of healthy food and resources from our ecosystems – for a growing human population – whilst at the same time finding solutions to the 'silent crisis' engulfing the natural world.

With the loss of biodiversity and concurrent degradation of ecosystem functions, the knock-on effect on human well-being is increasingly evident for even the most recalcitrant citizens to see. Research funded by Welsh Government and the Climate Change Consortium for Wales, and conducted by researchers in Cardiff University, demonstrated how those most affected by the severe UK flooding in 2013-14 were far more likely to acknowledge that the climate was changing, as opposed to those who were still remote from the impacts.

While extreme weather events are a natural



The Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth

phenomenon, flood risk is generally a product of how humans have managed their environment – building in the flood plains, extensive capping of soils in urban areas and tending to manage the uplands for food production over water regulation. However, with the continued release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the warming effect leads to more energy in the system, which leads to increased likelihood of extreme weather events. The threat of flooding and coastal storm surges to communities and infrastructure around Wales is already a life-changing threat for many citizens. These impacts will only worsen as the climate changes. In May, Tom Wall of the *Guardian* reported that the residents of Fairbourne on the west coast of Wales ‘could be Britain’s first climate refugees’. Rising sea levels and the concurrent coastal erosion have meant

Centre for Alternative Technology – timeline

1973	CAT opens with a £20,000 donation
1974	First hydro installed. Prince Philip visits
1975	Visitor centre opens. 5kW Elektro windmill arrives. UK’s first completely solar-heated building is erected
1977	An Alternative Energy Strategy for the UK is published and presented to Tony Benn’s Energy Ministry
1982	Dulas Engineering founded at CAT; they go on to become an independent company, inventing a solar fridge that helps preserve vaccinations in off-grid locations across the world
1984	Polenko wind turbine installed
1988	Eco Cabins built. Aber Instruments founded
1991	Water-balanced cliff railway finished
2000	Strawbale Theatre finished. AtEIC Environmental Information Centre, an award winning low energy building, opened
2003	First community wind turbine in Wales erected
2007	Graduate School for the Environment launched. First <i>Zero Carbon Britain</i> report published by CAT
2010	WISE education and conference centre opened – built with experimental low-energy building materials
2013	<i>Zero Carbon Britain: Rethinking the Future</i> published
2014	New MSc in Sustainable Food and Natural Resources and Sustainability in Energy Provision
2018	<i>Raising Ambition: Zero Carbon Scenarios from Across the Globe</i> published

the battle against the waves has been effectively lost. In 2013 Gwynedd council decided it can no longer afford to defend the village indefinitely.

It is important to acknowledge though, that while governments have immediate responsibility to their own citizens, the climate and ecosystems function in ways that do not recognise the same geopolitical boundaries, meaning solutions need to be conceived of at appropriate spatial scales. This is exemplified by the recent fires in the Amazon, an ecosystem which plays an important role in mitigating the effects of climate change. However, with the current rate of deforestation the humid conditions maintained by tree cover are deteriorating and the implications for Brazil and neighbouring countries could be huge in terms of localised warming. Brazil is a global food supplier and we are all tied into the same global food supply system.

Despite the growing impacts of climate change evident in Wales, as one of the relatively wealthier nations in the world it continues to remain reasonably buffered against these impacts. Compare this with some of our global neighbours, they are already suffering the effects in real time. How long this buffering can be sustained without urgent action, is unclear. Ecosystems can dramatically shift due to disturbances and when 'tipping points' are reached; changes can become irreversible.

Stability in any system is a critical corollary of sustainability. Ailing ecosystems tend to lack the resilience required to withstand the impacts of the changing climate. These systems are complex and interactive, meaning climate change and the wider environmental challenges we face are frequently referred to as a 'wicked problem'. Despite the compelling evidence base to support the need for action, the institutions and



Staff and volunteers at CAT, 1978;

Paul Allen presents CAT's *Zero Carbon Britain* research to Jeremy Corbyn



What was needed was a project to show the nature of the problem and indicate ways of going forward

CAT founder,
Gerard Morgan-Grenville

lifestyles responsible for affecting this decline in our ecosystems have a good deal of undesirable resilience, resisting change toward more sustainable systems.

CAT Beginnings

In 1973 a group of committed volunteers built a community based on shared values and slate waste. The group, which included engineers, builders, horticulturalists and architects, set up in a derelict slate quarry just outside Machynlleth in mid Wales. Having been abandoned by industry since the 1950s, the site brought significant challenges for this visionary group of individuals, not least a complete lack of soil substrate to enable them to grow their own food.

It was from this initiative that CAT evolved into the visitor and educational centre it is today. An internationally recognised charity specialising in finding a wide range of solutions in the built and natural environment, the Centre attracts over 28,000 visitors from across the globe each year.

In the early days the driving force for the community was the 1970s oil crisis and the growing evidence base around the environmental impacts of fossil fuels on ecosystems and the climate. Transport prices rocketed with the Yom Kippur war, and along with it the cost of living. The community wanted to find alternatives to relying on these unsustainable and highly polluting energy sources and so it began life as an off-grid community.

There were countless efforts and some successes in generating energy from early experimental technologies with wind and solar. These technologies contributed to the development of commercial systems, now increasingly ubiquitous and fundamental in transforming society away from fossil fuel reliance.

One of CAT's revolutionaries – Peter Harper – is credited with coining the phrase 'Alternative Technology'. Speaking on BBC Radio 4's *The Reunion* Peter recalled: 'Alternative Technology is the application of intermediate technology to a developed situation, and in 1972 I wanted to run a conference on this and we were looking for a title for it and that's when we called it Alternative Technology'. Bob Todd, the Centre's pioneering technical expert lived on site with his wife Liz and young family. Creating an intricate web of electric cables, without any of the Health and Safety restrictions governing innovations

today, he successfully generated 2kW of energy from a small water turbine.

The existing onsite buildings were also completely refurbished and CAT has sustained a team of architectural and construction experts with a wealth of experience in green building design and technology.

As word got out, more and more people wanted to visit and learn about this alternative technology and their 'good life'. In 1975, the Visitor Centre opened which enabled the residents to create a platform for sharing their knowledge and showcasing the technologies that would drive us towards a more sustainable society.

If you visit CAT now, the site is transformed. Over time and by working with nature, the restoration of the post-industrial landscape is clear for all to see. The process of soil formation was fast-tracked via extensive compost operations which continue today, led by a dedicated team of CAT gardeners and volunteers. The plants eventually found a foothold in the slate waste, permitting pioneers such as birch to populate the slopes and the oak from the riparian woodland at the bottom of the site to creep back up the hillside. These habitats continue to diversify under CAT's caring hand.

At the forefront of the future, many of the advances being displayed in the Centre are now mainstream and arguably no longer Alternative Technologies. However, CAT pioneers and their new recruits have continued fostering forward-thinking, addressing this increasingly precarious time for humans on earth.

Graduate School of Environment

From the outset, CAT has not only been about research and innovation but about education too. Early on, the cross-fertilisation between the different volunteers and their various backgrounds was pivotal to the interdisciplinary ethos that grew alongside the recovering slate slopes.

In 2007 CAT's Graduate School of the Environment opened. Offering a wide range of short courses and MScs, they are geared towards learning for people from all walks of life. To date almost 2,000 people wanting to understand the environmental challenges and find solutions have attended the Graduate School. In 2010 the WISE education and conference centre opened. Built with experimental low-energy materials, including the tallest rammed earth walls in the UK, this facility is an impressive addition to the site.



The early days of CAT saw the construction of a small water turbine



Zero Carbon Britain

In 2007 CAT launched the first Zero Carbon Britain project. A research team, led by Paul Allen, aimed to provide an evidence base to demonstrate how a shift to a zero-emissions society is possible. The integrated approach applied by the team, explored all sectors and potential climate solutions, from land use and diets to renewable energy systems.

Part of the benefit of this work has been the considerable dialogue it has fostered, within and across different sectors. Instead of pummelling the fear associated with our changing climate and environment, a solution-focussed approach has been at the heart of this work. Key reports include *Zero Carbon Britain: Rethinking the Future*, a technical scenario that shows how we can reach zero emissions; *Zero Carbon Britain: Making it Happen*, an exploration of the cultural and social barriers to change and *Raising Ambition: Zero Carbon Scenarios from Across the Globe*, a summary of zero- and low-carbon models from around the world.

A major new Zero Carbon Britain Hub and Innovation Lab is being launched at CAT later this year to help communities, local authorities and policymakers to create Zero Carbon Action Plans, and to provide support for the development of innovative solutions.

Next Steps?

As with the Climate Emergency, Welsh Government is ahead of the rest of the UK, with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) which is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and improving

the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in Wales. And now we remain poised to see what steps are taken following their declaration of a Climate Emergency.

By some happy accident I was in the House of Commons on the day Jeremy Corbyn's call to declare a Climate Emergency was being debated. As I listened from the Special Gallery, gripped and on the edge of my seat, I nearly lost that grip when I heard the Right Honourable Conservative MP for Ludlow stand up and impress upon the House that what politicians need to be doing is talking to centres like CAT about their work on Zero Carbon Britain. Was this what prompted a recent visit from Mr Corbyn?

Perhaps governments really are becoming serious about the need for radical change? Eileen Kinsman, CAT Head of Development recently made a statement that: 'Over the past six months, we have seen a surge in requests for CAT's expertise in helping train and advise communities and organisations in planning for zero carbon.'

Either way, between Welsh Government, a wealth of impressive climate and environmental science arising from the Welsh universities, and the pioneering energy still emanating from CAT, Wales can lead the way to a more sustainable way of living. ►

Dr Saskia Pagella is Senior Lecturer in Sustainability at the Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth, and Impact and UKRI Manager at Bangor University



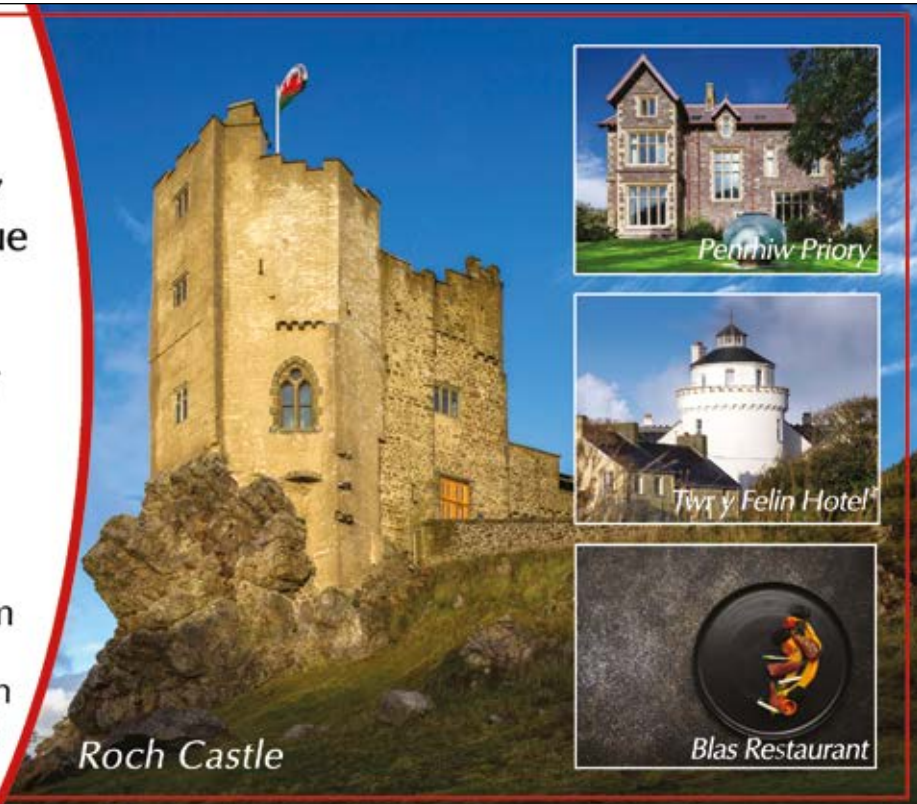
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The new normal

Kate Hamilton gives an account of how *Renew Wales* is engaging communities in conversations about climate, to effect culture shift as well as micro change

Renew Wales is a programme run by the Development Trusts Association for Wales which supports communities to take action on climate change. Our work starts from the premise that everyone can make a difference, and that community groups have a significant role to play in responding to climate change, whether the issue is already on their radar or not and whether it's their core business or not. Our approach is designed to enable community groups of every kind to firstly think about the challenges to sustainability, including climate change – identifying how and where it intersects with the issues that matter to them and the things they do every day – and then to start taking relevant action.

Since 2012 we've supported hundreds of communities to take action on climate change in all sorts of ways. From setting up community-owned renewable energy schemes to running repair cafes, developing community-run green transport schemes to growing local food, conserving green spaces to revitalising miners' institutes and leisure centres, all the while skilling up to build a sustainable future and spread awareness about the need for action. In all these ways communities are quietly taking positive steps in the face of climate change at grassroots level and micro-scale. But the change can be profound, and our intention is that first steps lead to further steps, building up movements for change that start from what matters here and now in this place, and accumulate into greater collective capacity to tackle the challenges that climate change poses.

Based on this experience we have great confidence in what communities can do to make a difference, operating mostly under their own steam and initiative, often with just their own resources. However, we're also painfully aware of the many obstacles that limit what community groups can achieve: lack of money, time, permission, support. Trying to effect system change from below when the wider system is not playing ball – 'no you can't have our support, our permission, access to our budget, cover under our insurance' – can be exhausting and disheartening.

So it's here, in the realm of aligning everyone's efforts across sectors and silos, shifting the system to lean in the right direction and learning to collaborate effectively and purposefully in the face of a universal threat, that we most hope declaring climate emergency will make a difference.

Renew Wales has been approached by a number of town, community and county councils, looking for support with figuring out how to turn their declarations into meaningful action, before people lose faith. One of the key steps is simply putting them in touch with the community groups in their midst who are already taking action and have both creative ideas and practical experience to share. It is astonishing quite how oblivious those on both sides of the public/third sector divide can be to what it is they are each doing and what they have in common, despite the advent of new forums and processes like Public Service Boards and area statements which are in theory meant to help us all be more joined up.

So, where we can, we've started to convene those

We shouldn't let the language of emergency obscure the complexity and sensitivity of the changes ahead

who have good stuff to share. For instance we hosted a *Gwynedd 2030* event, bringing councillors, officials and community groups from across the county together, to have a shared conversation about where we need to be by 2030 and how we're going to get there. Responding to inspirational provocations from a range of contributors, and then mapping out who has what ideas and resources for change around some key issues such as food, transport, energy, and land use, this kicked off connections and conversations which have extended everyone's sense of both what's needed and what's possible.

As well as fostering information-sharing and relationship-building, bringing people together in this way also helps demonstrate to official bodies that citizens don't actually expect – or want – their authorities to take on the full burden of 'delivering' a response to climate emergency. What they want to see is real leadership, which serves to galvanise, encourage and support citizen-led action alongside bold and progressive official actions. Accountability shifts from being about 'them and us' to being about 'you and me' or 'all of us'.

The first body in Wales to declare a climate emergency was Machynlleth Town Council, and their approach has been to invite anyone interested to get involved in developing an action plan. This was an admirably inclusive first step and was a good way of ensuring that the response can draw on the collective resources of that community. In practice the effect has been that it has taken many months and hundreds of voluntarily contributed hours to get from that point to the first iteration of a plan, and the draft plan still requires a lot of work – and some potentially painful prioritisation – to reach a point where it's focused and ambitious enough to take the town much beyond what it's already doing in terms of climate action. It's one thing to galvanise what you've already got but another to plan for the step-change that will be needed to ensure that the response is on the same order of magnitude as the problem.

It's [in] the realm of aligning everyone's efforts across sectors and silos, shifting the system to lean in the right direction and learning to collaborate effectively... in the face of a universal threat, that we most hope declaring climate emergency will make a difference



A further challenge is how to respond to the climate emergency in ways that reach beyond the ‘usual suspects’ who have an existing interest in green issues and low-carbon transition. For many people worrying about ‘climate emergency’ feels like a luxury that they can’t afford to worry about or something that other types of people get exercised about. Whilst social attitudes are changing all the time it’s unrealistic to expect to turn everyone into a climate activist or to win arguments which too easily come across as downgrading other issues. It’s more about responding to the climate emergency in ways that impact positively on the things that do matter to the people for whom ‘climate’ or ‘the environment’ as such doesn’t really.

In our work we approach this by starting from open conversations about *what matters to you?*, teasing out visions of the future which appeal on that level whilst drawing out how climate change might impact on these things – or how acting on climate change might deliver them. It is slow and sensitive stuff, and involves being as willing and able to talk about culture and crime and childhood as carbon, but it does spark steps towards action where it might not otherwise have happened.

So, we do embrace the way in which emergency declarations are making climate change part of the public agenda and everyday discourse in a way that we could only have dreamed of even only a year ago – generating momentum and creating possibilities for change which have not really existed before. But we shouldn’t let the language of emergency obscure the complexity and sensitivity of the changes ahead. Climate change is an urgent but long term challenge, and we can’t risk kidding ourselves that making an exceptional effort now will let us return to ‘normal’ later – which is how ‘emergency response’ could be construed. We need to somehow learn to hurry carefully, seizing the opportunity to create a ‘new normal’ that is not just ‘decarbonised’ but better in all the ways our wellbeing goals describe and in which everyone has been able to play a meaningful part. ▼

Kate Hamilton is Renew Wales’ programme director

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Sophie Howe

and the art of the possible

Clare Critchley *meets the Future Generations Commissioner, and finds signs of progress tempered by frustration at a lack of investment*

My first question to the Future Generations Commissioner is – to my mind – simple enough. Three years into the job, is she winning? It elicits a passionate seven-minute outpouring, without pause for breath, peppered with detailed examples taking us on a journey from Texas to Cwm Taf. Certainly the ‘brave’ decision in June to once-and-for-all ditch the proposed M4 relief road around Newport was a significant win for Sophie Howe; one of its most vocal opponents. But, crucially, does the M4 decision genuinely signify a change of mentality?

‘Yes. I think it *is* the beginning of a change in thinking from the very top: from the First Minister.’ She has seen a ‘significant difference’ in decisions coming from Welsh Government since Mark Drakeford took over from Carwyn Jones. And while she is in no doubt that change at the top will have the most impact, Howe is adamant that she wants a sea-change from top to bottom in the way our public bodies make decisions. To this end she has drafted in people from all over the public sector to join her twenty-strong team in Cardiff. Up to a third of her team at any one time is seconded: ‘they challenge our thinking, which is good for us... and then they go back and “infect” their own organisations with Future Generations thinking. It’s win-win.’

Howe says she has had to be inventive with staff and budgets. She has brought in £650k of extra funding to stretch her budget, which – at £1.5m – is the smallest

of any of the Welsh commissioners, ironic given that it underpins the widest remit. But I get the impression she would have worked this way anyway. She doesn’t underestimate the scale of the challenge; fundamentally changing the ‘intrinsic fear of failure and short termism’ that follows from a four or five year political cycle. But she insists there *is* a growing movement for change and believes that it is very often the Future Generations Act (FGA) that is mandating that change. She describes progress among the 44 public bodies she monitors as ‘patchy’ but enthuses about Cardiff GPs prescribing Nextbikes, and Monmouthshire Council taking over the running of a post office rather than see it close down, as examples of what she calls ‘the art of the possible’. The post office example is a classic win-win: ‘it meets wellbeing objectives by providing a focal point for the community; it decreases loneliness and isolation particularly among older people and it increases physical activity as people walk there. And they used the FGA to do that’.

Simply try to pit the economy against the environment is, for Howe, looking at the whole question from the wrong angle; things have moved on. Integration is the message: putting money into active transport for example helps with decarbonisation, public health, cohesive communities *and* delivers new jobs. She has seven ‘wellbeing goals’ against which she measures any policy or project so its contribution to ‘a prosperous Wales’ is assessed alongside ‘a healthier

If we were in an emergency one of the key things you would expect to happen is finances flowing in the direction of the emergency... I'm not seeing that at the moment... [nor] even what the plan is around that

Wales', 'a more equal Wales' and so on. But where does climate change fit in? After all, as she notes, 'there are no jobs on a dead planet'. Her answer is typically pragmatic: 'What a whole career in public services has taught me is that no matter how important the issue is... you have to connect it back to the day to day actions of government... Because decarbonisation doesn't just happen on its own. It happens in housing, transport, planning and so on. So that's why I'm making those connections and having decarbonisation at the centre of everything... So if we have a target to build 20,000 affordable homes, are they going to be 20,000 carbon neutral homes or not? Are our apprenticeship programmes, our degree courses, what we are teaching in schools preparing [pupils] to be the renewable energy technicians of the future?'

I wonder where the Swansea Tidal Lagoon project fits into that vision? She believes the decision would have gone in Swansea's favour if there had been a UK wide FGA, 'because what they looked at was purely the economics or finances: they weren't looking at the longer term benefits; to decarbonisation, regeneration of the area, to job creation in the area and all of those sorts of things which is of course what they would be required to do under the FGA'. She cites the project as a prime example of the solutions she's trying to find. 'The thing that is going to have the biggest impact across all seven wellbeing goals: that's the thing we want to spend our money on'. Is she actively involved in efforts to revive the

project? Not at the moment, no. 'I'm keeping a watching eye on it. But I certainly don't think it's dead in the water'. Howe is more optimistic than pessimistic that it *will* eventually get the go-ahead.

On the subject of a UK-wide FGA, she is hopeful too; there are a lot of think tanks interested, *Big Issue* founder Lord Bird has drawn up a private member's bill to introduce one and UK Labour have committed to it. One way or another she thinks it could be a very real prospect. 'Wales is acting as a thought leader and we can be really proud of that.'

On her appointment Howe was criticised by some as too close to Labour, but she doesn't pull her punches when it comes to the 'implementation gap' that she says has existed, under a Labour administration, fairly much since devolution. 'You can't fault the Welsh government for its lofty ambition... people around the world are blown away by the FGA; that it even exists'. But do they match that ambition with sufficient detail? She points to the new school curriculum as a prime example: 'there's nothing in it I can complain about in terms of the content... but does it have significant resources to implement it? You can't just say to people *stop what you're doing, what you've learned over the last thirty years... and we'll give you a few training courses to help you*. The whole system has to shift and adapt to that.'

Similarly with the Welsh Government declaration of the 'climate change emergency' in April: 'You declare a

Wales is acting as a thought leader and we can be really proud of that

climate emergency. If we were in an emergency, one of the key things you would expect to happen is finances flowing in the direction of the emergency... I'm not seeing that at the moment, and not only am I not seeing it but I'm not seeing even what the plan is around that'.

As part of her own ten-point plan to address the emergency she has put a figure of £1bn a year that Welsh Government should be investing in decarbonisation. She admits that the breakdown of the figures is up for 'a conversation' but insists it is based on evidence and certainly won't be far off the mark. And her frustration with Welsh Government is palpable: 'If these figures *aren't* right, what is it that we need to do? You tell me because you've just declared a climate emergency, what it is that you're going to do? And so far no one has been able to answer that question.'

Her website claims that we have twelve years to avoid total climate breakdown. 'That's already a year old,' she laughs, 'so let's call it eleven: that's two political cycles!' She has been working with the Children's Commissioner Sally Holland and engaging with Wales' young climate change activists, visiting the Minister for Natural Resources: 'I'm not sure Lesley [Griffiths] was able to give them all of the reassurances that they deserved... but what she did commit was that there would be constant engagement.'

Are young people the key to getting politicians to act? 'I think it's just stating the bleeding obvious... Because the science is there. You've just declared a climate emergency. You spend £15bn a year. It's not unreasonable therefore to be asked the question and have to provide a reasonable answer as to how that is meeting this huge existential threat that's facing us. It's not unreasonable.'

Reasonable or not, Howe can't force Welsh Government to act on climate change or any other issue. Her frustration is clear, so should she be able to do more than name and shame? Particularly over such a fundamental issue as climate change? The FGA was described by one of Wales' top QCs as being 'virtually useless' after a court case in which a group of parents tried to force Neath Port Talbot council to reverse a



Sophie Howe at Hay Festival, 2019
Credit: Future Generations Commissioner

school closure. Does she need more teeth? It's a fine balance: 'I'm an unelected commissioner. Politicians are elected to take decisions... and who am I to tell politicians what they should do? They should have to justify themselves to the electorate.' Interestingly she rejects the High Court's ruling that the FGA can't trigger judicial review. 'I don't agree with that interpretation... I decided that I wouldn't intervene in that case but... I think that the FGA *can* be used to trigger judicial review.' And she doesn't rule out the possibility of intervening in future if it were the right case.

As I pack up to leave she is still fizzing with examples: of buses in Indonesia where you can pay the fare in plastic bottles; of a pilot scheme in Scotland where homeless people are being trained as tourist guides; of how the Minister for Happiness in the UAE ('Minister for Happiness – that's an even better job title than mine!') has lifted large chunks of the FGA for his National Wellbeing Act. The art of the possible, perhaps, is what Sophie Howe is all about. ▼

Clare Critchley is a former producer of Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*, and a member of *the welsh agenda's* editorial group

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The Welsh Awakening

*In the wake of marches, opinion poll surges and even talk at the school gates, **Dr Alan Sandry** explores the prospects for a widening independence movement*

When Wales becomes an independent nation-state, which it almost certainly will do at some stage in the not too distant future, it may well be the drowning of Capel Celyn that proves to be the catalyst. This is because the seemingly mindless act of vandalism that defaced the Cofiwch Dryweryn wall at Llanrhystud in February 2019 came at a time when the forces of resistance to the tired political system were mustering.

Whilst the wanton semi-destruction of the wall provided a locus for attention, historians and commentators will inevitably argue over key dates and incidents that kick-started the present interest in Welsh

nationalism, and the calls for political independence. One undoubted turning point for those advancing Welsh political nationalism was the Welsh football team's Euro campaign between 2014-2016. Those days witnessed an authentic feeling of unadulterated pride, and sense of purpose; an empathy that is often conspicuously missing on other national sporting occasions. The Gareth Bale song, with the unequivocal line 'Fuck the Union Jack' was sung, in stadia and bars alike, with passion and meaning. Only a few clenched fist versions of *Yma O Hyd* come close to summing up a spirit of Welsh resistance and defiance.

It would be easy to say that Wales is on the imminent verge of a political earthquake – a moment of social upheaval – but things are not that straightforward. Fifty years after the ostentatious Investiture there have been

Devolution has delivered Westminster-style politics with a Welsh façade, but... we are still locked – in Rousseauian bondage – to the UK State and its political, legal and monarchical machinery

many words of reflection, with some of the protagonists sharing their thoughts, and much talk about ‘water under the bridge’. Nevertheless, mechanically and psychologically, little has changed. Devolution has delivered Westminster-style politics with a Welsh façade, but in structural terms we are still locked – in Rousseauian bondage – to the UK State and its political, legal and monarchical machinery.

Crucial to developments has been the Brexit debate, with its accompanying English exclusivism. Across the institutions of Brussels and Strasbourg, Brexit is referred to as ‘the English problem’. All of this London-Mainland friction has been taking place in parallel with a ratcheting up of anti-Welsh (and anti-Scottish) jibes in a newly chauvinistic environment – but ‘it’s only a joke’ is the constant refrain.

The UK is now in a deep existential crisis. It is not something from which anybody can withdraw. What people have to do is to envision the future – the innovative structures, the nascent nation-states. When pondering change, it would appear, fairly obviously, that the existing nations of Scotland, Wales and England would do their own thing, and Northern Ireland would combine with the Republic, but there could be a new amalgam – England and Wales – arising as the Scots and Irish wave farewell. Whether that amalgam holds in the mid- to longer term is debatable, but to find oneself in a reduced, rump UK, could spell disaster for Wales.

Nationalism is an ideology; a set of ideas. It is a position open to all. It is not the preserve of one political party. It is more akin to a movement; an individual impulse that manifests itself through collective voices.

To succeed, nationalist thought and practice cannot be reactive. It must adopt a proactive approach. Miroslav Hroch identified three phases for national maturation. Wales is currently in Phase B with ‘a new range of activists emerging’. It is moving, at a decent speed, towards Phase C, wherein ‘a full social movement comes into being and the movement branches into... wings,

each with its own program.’ So, diversity of nationalist ideas should be seen as natural.

For nationalism to attain its goals, it must be a political, social and cultural movement. Aligning with any one political party, and seeing them as the panacea, may appear to be enticing, but it will ultimately prove to be an error, as no one political party, or indeed any one civil organisation, can capture the full range of nationalistic sentiment in its entirety. Therefore, there must be space for a variety of parties, organisations and pressure groups who each contribute to the pool of national debate. Breadth rather than constriction is what is required, certainly at this particular juncture. Hence, whilst Plaid Cymru may raise the clarion call, in a traditional sense, others must be brought on board and their voices heard and appreciated. The flanks will be as important as the core in modelling an independent Wales. So who are these emerging voices?

Challenging, though sometimes overlapping Plaid Cymru, are the new forces of Ein Gwlad, Undod and Yes Cymru. Ein Gwlad was established in 2018 and seeks to save Wales ‘from Westminster’s imperialist rule’. Critical of Plaid Cymru’s perceived Establishment posturing, Ein Gwlad’s logo is the phoenix; a representation of a ‘reborn Cymru’. Interestingly, they contend that they are ‘a syncretic party that does not recognise the traditional single-axis left, centre or right wing labelling paradigm’.

Undod, on the other hand, propose ‘radical independence for Wales’. Embracing leftist positions they reject ‘national chauvinism, racism and intolerance in Wales in all its guises’. Advocating common ownership, they will clearly look to appeal to socialists who despair at the creeping neo-liberalism, or Thatcherism Mark 2, that London is offering.

Yes Cymru has, indisputably, had the most impact. Founding branches in every city, town and village, their *Independence in Your Pocket* booklet has proved attractive. They have also been the driving force behind the All Under One Banner (AUOB) rallies in Cardiff, Caernarfon and Merthyr. These were major manifestations, with key sporting icons like Eddie Butler and Neville Southall giving rousing addresses to the assemblage. Public figures are important to the dissemination of the narrative. In the print media, the *Western Mail* journalists Carolyn Hitt and Martin Shipton are confessing to their Indy-curiosity. Overall, conversations about independence are shifting away

from the realms of the academics and anoraks, and into the mainstream of the school gates, the internet and cafes. More signs of acceptability and advancement!

Whisper it, if you dare, but Wales is suddenly chic. In recent months activist groups from the Basque Country to South Tyrol have held sessions on the Welsh awakening. Whereas emerging nationalism in the UK has been long-dominated by the comings and goings of SNP personnel in Holyrood, now the focus is on the latest manifestations in Wales; be they the painting of protest slogans, or marches for political identity. From Belfast to Barcelona, politicians have suddenly become interested in Wales.

That said, there is a constant need for grassroots interaction to further spread the message and implications of independence. One prime advocate of this strategy is the indefatigable AM Neil McEvoy. Rather than eschewing him, Plaid Cymru's top brass should be looking at ways in which they could clone him. It is not the suppression of his style of street activism that is required, but a fostering of thousands with a similar outlook and disdain for those who are desperate, for a plethora of reasons, to maintain the status quo of the UK State.

One requirement for the national movement, going forward, will be the codification of intrinsic values, principles, expectations, and a statement of existence,

Wales is currently in Phase B with 'a new range of activists emerging'. It is moving, at a decent speed, towards Phase C, wherein 'a full social movement comes into being and the movement branches into... wings, each with its own program'

within a drafted and agreed Welsh Constitution. This would provide a blueprint for Welsh laws and constitutional practice, and would place a soon-to-be independent Wales on a level playing field with other nation-states. From the country that gave us the Laws of Hywel Dda in 942 AD – a mere three centuries before the much vaunted *Magna Carta* – a written declaration of this nature is eminently achievable, and should be something that progressive voices within Welsh society put pressure on the Welsh Government to instigate as a matter of priority.

The UK's current constitutional (and foreign policy) impasse – its 'paralysis', to quote Michel Barnier – proves that a laid out legal framework would establish the foundation for internal and external working methods. In essence, it would articulate who we are, where we stand, what we represent, and how we transact with



peoples beyond our border. It would give us clarity in terms of our national expression.

Over the summer, opinion polls in Scotland and Ireland – the Lord Ashcroft polls – showed a slender majority for independence, whilst ‘secret’ UK Government polling suggests a 10-point lead for independence in Scotland. Together this data presents a real threat to the continuation of the present political arrangements. These were then followed by the YouGov poll which, excluding Don’t Knows, saw 41% of respondents saying they would support independence if Wales remained in the EU, with 31% opting for independence if a referendum was held immediately. Though this poll was disparaged by BBC Wales, amongst others, who ran the line that support for independence was in single figures, based on their own St David’s Day Poll, these are still startling figures. It is worth recalling that for many years support for Scottish Independence was hovering around the 15% mark.

Polls are one thing but the narratives and polemics around national identity and political independence are another. Stephen Kinnock’s recent intervention was fascinating. Kinnock, like many in his party, offers a dolorous British nationalism that is designed to present the Welsh as supine acceptors of London-knows-best, patrician policies. It also falsifies Welsh internationalism, because Labour only perceive internationalism and solidarity as being operable through class-based British nationalism. The workers jingoism and flat cap Unionism they promoted at the time of World War One is still very much in the air.

The Liberal Democrats call for ‘Home Rule’ is yet another position – the Halfway House ‘Federal UK’ option – which has been doing the rounds since Victorian times. Jane Dodds’ mantra of a ‘truly equal family of nations’ is akin to the Unicorn stance of fundamentalist Brexiteers. In any equitable

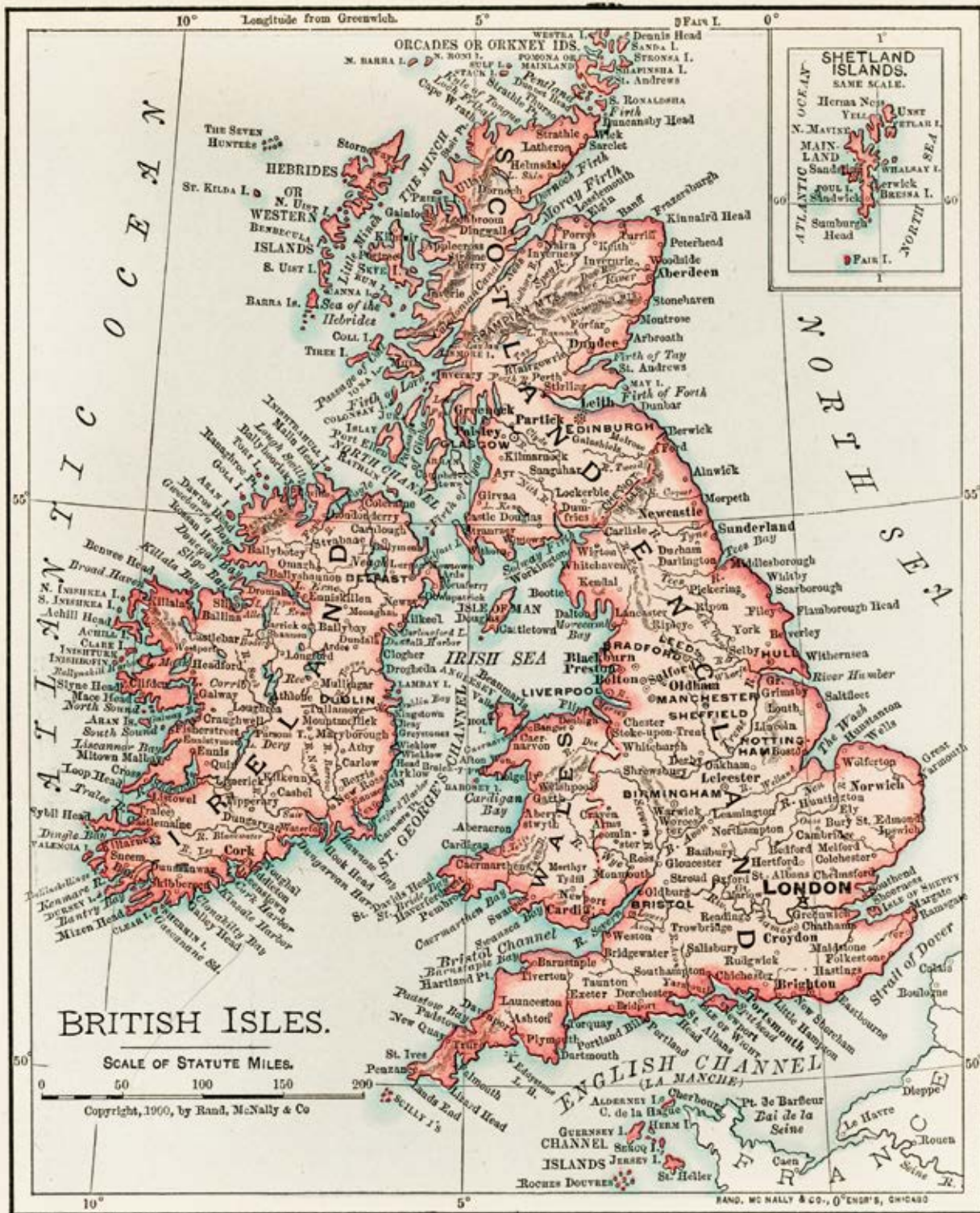
arrangements, the stronger have a moral duty to protect the weaker, and certainly don’t fleece or disparage them. Centuries of exploitation, on the other hand, speak the truth. Thus, any talk of equality through Federalism is a chimera. Pragmatic realism, to paraphrase Kinnock, it most certainly is not. For these, and allied reasons, Plaid Cymru should be extremely wary of getting too cosy with the Liberal Democrats, or any other London-based party, in any formal or informal agreements or electoral pacts. If they do so, Plaid Cymru could well self-diminish its nationalist appeal.

What has to be considered, though few appear to take this into account, is that in a couple of years’ time Wales may well be independent by default, if not through desire. When it happens, the disintegration of the UK will be swift – far more so than many envisage – and the domino effect of Scottish independence, its most likely prime mover, will be felt across Europe with rapid geopolitical consequences. Wales can either prepare for this or stick its head in the sand. The default independence scenario will come about if England finally grasps the nettle and cuts our umbilical cord. There are signs, albeit on the social media fringes, that more people are picturing a ‘stand alone’ England; be they inside or outside the EU. Despite some fears that without Scottish oil and Welsh water England may be too small or too poor to become an independent nation-state, it is probably fair to say that they would be capable of making a fist of it. Good luck to them when this occurs.

Welsh nationalism, and a sense of nationhood and pride in community, has always been present; one could say since the days of Macsen Wledig. What we can now report, in the autumn of 2019, is that it may be curving upwards towards its apogee. Whether it is down to the chaos of the Tory psychodrama that is Brexit, the political mood of the time, identity politics, or the persuasive ideological thrust of the nationalist campaigners, Wales may... no, let us say will... be an independent nation-state within the next decade. The UK state is in its death throes, and Wales must seriously prepare for life after its cessation. ►

Rather than eschewing [Neil McEvoy], Plaid Cymru’s top brass should be looking at ways in which they could clone him. It is not the suppression of his style of street activism that is required, but a fostering of thousands with a similar outlook

Dr Alan Sandry is a Fellow and co-founder of the European Institute of Identities, and the author of *Devolution in the United Kingdom* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), and *Plaid Cymru: An Ideological Analysis* (Welsh Academic Press, 2011)



Unionism/Federalism/Nationalism

In April 2019, the IWA published *Three Isles*, an essay in four parts by Glyndwr Cenydd Jones, to be found at the *welsh agenda's* online sister publication *click on wales*. Subtitled 'Mapping the Union', 'Plotting a Course to Confederal Federalism', 'Navigating Fiscal Decentralisation' and 'Charting a Constitution', the essays advocated a 'confederal federal' solution to the constitutional questions currently occupying minds across the British Isles. Then, in May, David Melding, Conservative AM for South Wales Central, launched his essay *Unionism and Nationalism in Welsh Political Life* at a panel event convened by the IWA at Hay Festival, seeking to find common ground between ideologies often set up in direct opposition. Here the two discuss the state of our changing union with Helen Mary Jones, Plaid Cymru AM for Mid and West Wales.

From: David Melding

To: Helen Mary Jones, Glyndwr Cenydd Jones

Dear Friends,

Are we getting Indy-curious? Let's start with the economy, always the supposed knock-out blow against independence. Economic necessities and cultural values have an interesting relationship. For 50 years before rupture the Irish stayed loyal to the Union on mostly economic grounds. The Easter rebellion and the executions thereafter shifted opinion quickly and economic considerations were put aside. What followed was 50 years of economic struggle but few regretted the decision to leave the Union. Trauma has a big and unpredictable political impact.

No wonder many Unionists fear something similar in Scotland and Wales following the trauma of Brexit. After all Brexit was about values not economics. If people are prepared to take a risk on Brexit why not likewise on independence?

And remember much of the social union in Britain would survive regardless (as will some of our links to the EU post Brexit). That's why Adam Price went to Edinburgh in the summer to talk about the value of Britishness in a confederation with England that may include an independent Wales, Scotland and a united Ireland. A new Union of sorts.

Not for me, but I can see it appealing to the Indy-curious.

Kind regards, **David**

From: Glyndwr Cenydd Jones

To: David Melding, Helen Mary Jones

Thank you David,

With many asserting a multicultural Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or English character before claiming a form of dual nationality which also embraces a British personality, it is now legitimate to reconsider the nature of Westminster's parliamentary sovereignty such that it more appropriately encompasses authority only over select key isle-wide functions held in mutual interest and regard by the nations. These could include large-scale economic policy, defence, foreign affairs, and aspects of welfare.

The consequential and pressing strategic issue going forward relates to whether sovereignty, as currently understood, should be shared across these five territorially defined identities (including that of Britain) in a traditional federal arrangement or instead assigned individually to the four nations – Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England – which in turn would lease parts of their sovereign authority to common central institutions of a fundamentally British civic character.

In effect, choosing between a Federation and a confederal-type League of the Isles.

Good wishes, **Glyndwr**

From: David Melding
To: Glyndwr Cenydd Jones, Helen Mary Jones

Dear Glyndwr and fellow correspondents!

This will sound dry but I need to get it on the record. Federations require strong central authority if they are to flourish. The exercise of federal power otherwise becomes nominal and ineffective. This was the lesson of the American experience in 1787. Executive government exists in spheres although the legislative oversight of federal powers can have inbuilt checks to enable member states to express their interests (the US Senate is an example, and the House of Lords would offer itself to this adaptation). The judicial branch can also police the boundary between state and federal.

A lease based system would invite encroachment by the member states on federal powers. The Confederacy based its legitimacy on this states rights constitutional theory even though it was a flawed interpretation of the 1787 settlement.

Another problem. Federations have been classified by some as either *holding together* or *coming together* federations. The USA was a *coming together* federation which explains in part the ambiguity on how far states rights actually extended. Britain clearly would be a *holding together* federation where ambiguity on constitutional boundaries could scupper the settlement from the start. I note with interest the recent calls in *The Times* for a Constitutional Convention. I have long argued the need for such an event to produce a new Act of Union. This is all the more necessary it seems to me to work our way through these constitutional challenges. But my basic point is that if power is leased in the manner suggested you create a confederation not a federation.

Best wishes,

David

From: Glyndwr Cenydd Jones
To: David Melding, Helen Mary Jones

Thank you David, and all

The constitutional choice may not be binary. Professor Kincaid, in *Confederal Federalism and EU Citizen Representation* (1999), highlights ‘a confederal order of government operating in a significantly federal mode within its spheres of competence’. EU nations have delegated parts of their sovereignty to central bodies which agree laws on their behalf, as illustrated by the existence of a common currency. The modern UK deserves a similarly nuanced response, durably acknowledging the long-respected status of our home nations in European history, and their equality.

A League or Union proposes a confederation of Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England, with aspects of federal-type control built into a few policy areas, underpinning solidarity. A suitably elected Council enacts legislative power on defence, foreign affairs, internal trade, and currency, with a Congress of Member Nations supporting wider cooperation, fiscal decentralisation, and harmonisation of laws. Her Majesty continues as the Head of State.

The National Parliaments are the legislative, representative bodies of their people, holding all powers and rights not delegated to joint institutions by treaty or constitution. These are mirrored by distinct legal jurisdictions with an overarching Supreme Court as the ultimate authority.

With all good wishes,

Glyndwr

From: Helen Mary Jones
To: David Melding, Glyndwr Iwan Jones

Dear All,

Today I'm on a visit to Fairbourne in Dwyfor Meirionnydd to see the work that Gwynedd Council is doing with the community to prepare for rising sea levels, coastal erosion due to climate change.

Even when we are an independent nation there are issues like the climate emergency that require international cooperation. I believe in Wales having the freedom of participating as a full partner in the international community, and to build a fair nation with equality at its heart, where all our people are enabled to contribute and the vulnerable are protected.

I've always thought to express support for devolution is by implication to recognise the legitimacy of the central power, and its right to devolve, and therefore by implication its right to withhold power. The reality is legitimate power rests with the people of Wales.

In a poll earlier this year by Hope not Hate almost half of those surveyed agreed that 'politicians clearly cannot decide how to resolve the issue of Brexit and the country is deeply divided. Therefore, it would be better to pause the process and seek a consensus by gathering ordinary people together to discuss the options.'

As Adam Price has suggested what we need is a Welsh Citizens' Convention to engage and inform our people – and to do so on an entirely different basis to the tired and discredited conventional politics that have underpinned the Brexit debate.

A citizens' convention, a representative group of randomly selected people meet to discuss and deliberate a question before reaching a conclusion or recommendation.

A Welsh Citizens' Convention could take the lead in reaching out across the Brexit divide to arrive at a common understanding. A way forward that works for everyone, not just the politicians.

Helen

From: Glyndwr Iwan Jones
To: Helen Mary Jones, David Melding

Thanks Helen,

My recent paper *Constitutional Frameworks and Sovereignty in These Isles* summarises the various applications of a partially sovereign and sovereign Wales in relation to a selection of potential isle-wide and European structures, including federalism, confederalism, confederal federalism and what is understood by independence.

Powers and functions of governance are pooled, or shared, centrally to varying extents within these options, having different implications for the way in which individuals relate to their respective national parliaments, and to that of the centre.

The most effective modern constitutions articulate the essential framework of governance and are open to modifications in time, such as the pooling of sovereignty in supra-national bodies. It is now necessary to progress a UK-wide Constitutional Convention, so that these isles, and Wales's place within it, can be made modern, and fit for purpose, for the 21st Century.

All good wishes,

Glyndwr

David Melding is Conservative AM for South Wales Central; **Helen Mary Jones** is Plaid Cymru AM for Mid and West Wales; **Glyndwr Iwan Jones** is a former Plaid Cymru candidate, and an advocate for greater cross-party consensus in Wales



Independence: *an economic route*

Eurfyl ap Gwilym *examines the age-old claim that Wales is too poor to go it alone, and identifies the UK's imbalanced economy rather than Wales' lack of potential as the stumbling block*

When considering the case for Welsh independence a frequent and understandable question is whether Wales can afford it. Are we too poor to be independent? Of course, in practice any country can afford to be independent, but the key question is whether it would be better or worse off compared with the status quo. This summer two reports have been published which help shed light on this subject. The first report by Wales Fiscal Analysis, a new research body within Cardiff University's Wales Governance Centre, published findings which sought to estimate the revenues raised and public expenditure undertaken in Wales under the current constitutional arrangements. The second report, by Sheffield Hallam University, analysed the widely differing range of reported economic

performance between the countries and regions of the UK. An earlier report by the OECD shows that across its 25 member states the UK has the highest levels of regional disparities in labour productivity.

In 2017-18 public spending in Wales (by local authorities, the Welsh and UK Governments) exceeded revenue by £13.7bn. This shortfall of £4,376 per person far exceeded the UK average deficit of £632 per person. To put this shortfall in context, nine out of the twelve countries and regions of the UK have been in deficit for many years: London, south east and eastern England, often tellingly referred to as the 'Home Counties', are the only areas in surplus. The principal cause of the high deficit in Wales is not so much higher public spending per person, which is 108% of the UK average, but the much lower revenues, that is taxes and duties raised, which are 76% of the UK average.

Given this persistent pattern of deficits and surpluses, where only the 'Home Counties' of England generate a surplus, we need to answer different questions. Why this is the case? Does it have to be so? Looking across the

UK, it is striking how London and south east England dominate politically, fiscally and economically. Of the approximately 435,000 additional rate income tax payers in the UK (with a taxable income of more than £150,000 a year) 300,000 reside in the 'Home Counties'. The number in Wales is 6,000. Given the progressive nature of the UK income tax system a major source of the disparity in deficits is not just lower average wage levels (the median weekly earnings in Wales is £50 lower than the UK average) but the *distribution* of pay levels. With 4.7% of the UK's population Wales generates just 2.7% of income tax revenues. Put simply, Wales has far too few higher earners.

The Welsh deficit is £11.8bn higher than if revenue and spending per person matched the UK average. Of this, £8.5bn is due to lower tax receipts. Only £3.3bn is due to higher spending, most of which spending is on state pensions and social security payments. Such disparity between spending and income is indicative of a poorly performing economy. Spending on pensions and social security while ameliorating the symptoms does little to address the underlying problems of a relatively weak economy. At the same time public sector cumulative capital spending per person in real terms on transport, essential if productivity is to be raised, was £3,000 in Wales compared with £7,600 in London, in the first eighteen years since devolution.

There are two principal reasons for the skewed distribution in earnings. Certain high-paying professions such as investment banking; fund management (Edinburgh being an exception); hedge funds; and private equity barely exist outside London. These high paying jobs have boomed since the Big Bang in the City of London in the 1980s and successive UK governments, both Labour and Conservative, have given the highest priority to cultivating and nurturing these 'cash cows'.

The second reason is the high concentration of corporate headquarters in London, locations where the highest paying jobs are to be found. Compared with other advanced economies such as Germany and the US, the UK is unusual in having such a high concentration of economic and political power in one geographic centre. Moreover, this concentration has increased since the decline in importance of location-dependent industries such as agriculture, mining and manufacturing. Meanwhile, there has been an increasing financialisation of the economy which has also benefited the City.

Overview

4.7%

Wales has 4.7% of UK population

2.7%

Wales generates 2.7% of tax revenues

Cumulative capital spending per person on transport

Wales

£3,000

London

£7,600

Public spending deficit

Wales shortfall

£4,376

per person

UK average shortfall

£632

per person

Wales' loss of EU funds after Brexit

£370m a year

Current UK economic and fiscal policies underpin a high concentration of political and economic power in London and south east England. These centres have generated fiscal surpluses while the remainder of the UK, including Wales, have received fiscal transfers to ameliorate their relative weakness. In other words, the approach is to reward success rather than remedy underperformance, which serves to perpetuate and exacerbate economic disparity. For successive UK governments such transfers, which are about 3% of GDP, are a 'price worth paying' to maintain the current, unsatisfactory model. Those who favour the constitutional status quo need to recognise that this implies Wales and many other parts of the UK will not fulfil their economic potential.

What should be done to rebalance the UK economy? In the aftermath of the Brexit vote there has been an increased awareness of the massive economic disparities across the UK with think tanks such as the Institute of Economic Affairs questioning why this is so and advocating far-reaching measures to rebalance the UK. In England the UK2070 Commission has published its

first report analysing regional disparities, particularly in England, and in subsequent reports will be advocating far-reaching measures to tackle the problem.

What needs to be done in Wales? The unionist parties have displayed little appetite for changing the current, broken model and implicitly buy into the London-centric political and economic nexus. What is needed instead is a two-phased approach. The first phase requires political pressure to oblige the UK Government to allocate greater public funds for investment and encourage private investment outside the south east of England. Particular emphasis should be given to raising the quality and thus the pay levels of jobs.

If Brexit takes place, Wales will lose EU funding to the tune of £370m a year. Details of the fund to replace this loss, the proposed Shared Prosperity Fund, are yet to be released by the UK government. However, simply replacing the lost funding will not be enough. What is needed is extra funding: to replace the EU funds; to help sustain the economy through the Brexit headwinds; and to pump-prime the economy to redress the current and long-standing geographic imbalances. At a UK level such funding should be at least an additional 1% of GDP per year (£20bn) for a minimum of five to ten years. The funding should be allocated across the UK on a needs-basis with Wales receiving at least an additional £1.5bn a year. According to the International Monetary Fund, total investment in the UK was the equivalent of 17% of GDP in 2018 compared to 20% in Germany and the US and 23% in France. The G7 average was 20%. With an increase of the scale proposed the UK would still be a laggard compared with its principal competitors.

Stimulating greater economic prosperity in Wales calls for a number of measures, all of which require greater, sustained capital investment. Under the current UK fiscal framework, the Welsh Government has a cumulative limit of £1bn over five years on the funds it can borrow to invest in infrastructure. This is wholly inadequate. Areas for such investment include physical infrastructure (housing, road, rail, energy and broadband); post-16 education and skills training with a greater focus on the more than 50% of young people who do not go on to university; and increased R&D with a particular emphasis on commercialisation. Such a programme should be supported by both the unionist parties and those advocating Welsh independence. After all, surely no party should find the current gross imbalances acceptable.

Some will claim that such funding is not affordable. Yet this cannot be the case when governments can currently borrow at extremely low interest rates which are negative in real terms. With the global economy slowing down and productivity stagnating, now is the time for such investment. This will result in higher growth in the medium term with corresponding increases in tax revenue.

In addition, there is scope for using the tax system to encourage greater investment outside the south east of England. If the UK leaves the EU, corporation tax rates could be reduced in those areas which need an economic stimulus. (In the case of Wales corporation tax in 2017-18 yielded £1.3bn which was 2.3% of the UK total excluding the North Sea). A number of such schemes have been proposed, and a key element would be that any revenues foregone by central government should not be offset by a reduction in the block grant.

Even if such an ambitious policy programme to address the current imbalances across the UK is undertaken, that will not be enough. For those of us who want to see Wales as a self-governing member state within the EU, raising our economic performance will not only help narrow the fiscal gap but will facilitate the transition to independence.

To achieve this there is a need to change the mindset which tacitly accepts that political and economic power should reside in London. There is a real danger that Brexit will reinforce this mindset.

This is the second phase of the two-phased approach mentioned earlier. Wales needs to take greater control over its economic destiny. Otherwise we will continue to perform below our potential and continue as one of the poorest regions of Europe. For those who are understandably nervous and conservative and describe themselves at best as 'indy-curious' we invite them to join us on the first phase of our journey: implementing policies to revitalise the Welsh economy and to enable Wales and many other parts of the UK to fulfil their economic and social potential. Then – who knows – perhaps many of them will find the confidence to join us in campaigning for an independent Wales. ►

Eurfyl ap Gwilym is senior economic adviser to Plaid Cymru, and a trustee of the IWA

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More than prevention

Emma Henwood *talks to Professor Chris George and cardiac nurse Louise Norgrove about a new initiative to help detect hidden heart conditions*

A new initiative in Swansea and the surrounding regions gives scientists and health professionals a unique insight into the basis of Inherited Cardiac Conditions in the Welsh population, which will ultimately lead to better heart and circulatory health in Wales and the rest of the UK. Professor Chris George from the Molecular Cardiology group in Swansea University's Medical School and a British Heart Foundation (BHF) funded researcher agree that improving heart and circulatory health for people in Wales and the rest of the UK needs more collaboration between scientists and clinics, and is more than just about prevention

With one in four people in Wales still dying from heart and circulatory diseases, far more could be done to ensure that this number is much lower, from tackling the unnecessary variation in treatments for these diseases across the country to making it much easier for people to live healthy lifestyles. The Government's *A Healthier Wales* strategy talks about being more collaborative and moving treatments and diagnosis into the community, as well as innovation. One such innovation is taking place between Professor George and the recently created Swansea Bay Health Board.

Professor George says: 'I am fortunate to be working with Dr Carey Edwards, Consultant Cardiologist at Morriston Hospital who leads the Inherited Cardiac

With one in four people in Wales still dying from heart and circulatory diseases, far more could be done to ensure that this number is much lower

Conditions service, and Louise Norgrove, a BHF-funded Inherited Cardiac Nurse Specialist. The study, which will look at data gathered over many years in Swansea Bay Health Board (formerly ABMU) and the surrounding areas is a unique opportunity to profile the spectrum of inherited heart conditions occurring in south west Wales. It will give us a much fuller picture of the underlying causes of problems with heart rhythm, what factors may impact on the progression of the disease and the impact on other family members.'

Professor George is at the forefront of current research into the mechanisms that cause abnormal heart rhythms. Calcium signals control virtually every biological process. The group at Swansea University

investigates how the release of calcium from stores found inside every one of the billions of cells that make up the heart becomes disrupted in disease. The group's work is revealing mechanisms that are common to lethal arrhythmias in young people as a result of genetic mutations and also those that occur in the arrhythmias of the adult population.

Professor George explains: 'As researchers, we're used to working with other experts from across the world to develop better treatments for arrhythmias and these insights will ultimately improve the clinical management of patients. By strengthening partnerships with clinicians, engineers and computer scientists we can be more agile in our approach to tackling arrhythmias. There is a real change in how science is now done and there is no doubt that working collaboratively across disciplines and sectors is essential to produce the best outcomes for the people of Wales and beyond. Our research over many years means that we have a really deep knowledge of arrhythmias at the molecular and cellular level. What we need to do though is to translate this knowledge into improved treatments for heart rhythm diseases that continue to blight the wider population.'

This is why closer working with the Inherited Cardiac Conditions Service at Morriston hospital is so valuable. Louise Norgrove, a cardiac nurse for more



IWA NEW VOICES

This article is the first in a series of three for *the welsh agenda*, promoting the work of the British Heart Foundation. BHF Cymru are working in partnership with the IWA to establish a 'New Voices' fund, which will allow freelance writers on low incomes and from marginalised backgrounds to contribute to public debate through the Institute's platforms for debate, *the welsh agenda* and *click on wales*.

If your organisation is interested in working with the IWA to bring this scheme to fruition, please contact dylan@iwa.org.uk

BHF Professor Alan Williams, Vaughan Gething AM, Emma Henwood, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Professor Chris George and Adam Fletcher, head of BHF Cymru





The BHF estimates that around 30,000 people in Wales have a faulty gene that can cause an inherited heart-related condition

than 15 years, was appointed last year as a new Inherited Cardiac Conditions Nurse Specialist for Swansea Bay and Hywel Dda university health boards. She helps detect deadly inherited heart conditions in people across mid and south west Wales.

Louise Norgrove explains: 'My role supports the existing Inherited Cardiac Conditions service and ensures that more patients and families have access to clinical and genetic testing in order to detect people who may be at risk from an Inherited Cardiac Condition. The funding for my post has been provided by the Miles Frost Fund and the British Heart Foundation. Swansea Bay and Hywel Dda are the first Health Boards in Wales to receive the funding, the aim of which is to improve access to genetic screening services to test for genetic heart conditions such as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM).'

'Genetic testing within families is known as cascade screening which is provided to relatives of an individual who has been identified as having a genetic heart arrhythmia or an inherited cardiac condition, which if not detected can be fatal. It's often called a silent disease as many people don't know they have it. The important thing is understanding family history, and a genetic diagnosis is probably the most valuable thing that you can know about your disease – even if you're not showing symptoms.'

The BHF estimates that around 30,000 people in Wales have a faulty gene that can cause an inherited heart-related condition. Many affected individuals have no symptoms at all. In some cases, the first time the condition is identified within a family is when a loved one dies suddenly. The BHF estimates that more than 6,000 people in Wales have HCM and most are likely to be undiagnosed. Immediate family members of those

who test positive to having the gene have a one in two chance of inheriting the gene themselves.

Once someone has been diagnosed with an inherited heart condition, genetic testing can be offered to first-degree relatives – a process called cascade testing. Genetic testing on family members can identify individuals who carry the faulty gene and steps can be taken to monitor individuals and reduce the risk of sudden death, such as surgery, medication and lifestyle changes.

Louise Norgrove continues: 'This is a really important service. It's vital that immediate family members of those affected by inherited heart conditions are referred to the service so we can carry out this cascade testing. It can be a frightening prospect so the care of a specialist inherited cardiac conditions nurse is vital to support them through the process. My role means we can now raise more public awareness and help hundreds more families, as the consequences of failing to identify those at risk of HCM can be fatal.'

Professor George agrees: 'Knowing someone's genetic profile is an excellent indicator of their clinical risk profile but it's often not enough. You need to integrate as much information as possible about the patients themselves, factor in their broader clinical and other risk factors, their family history and current medications. By working across the laboratory and the clinic, in order to mine a rich seam of data, we can build a more complete picture of the causes and progression of arrhythmias in this, and the wider, populations. This project will do just that and I see it as a really important step forwards.' ▴

Emma Henwood is Policy and Public Affairs Manager for the British Heart Foundation Cymru



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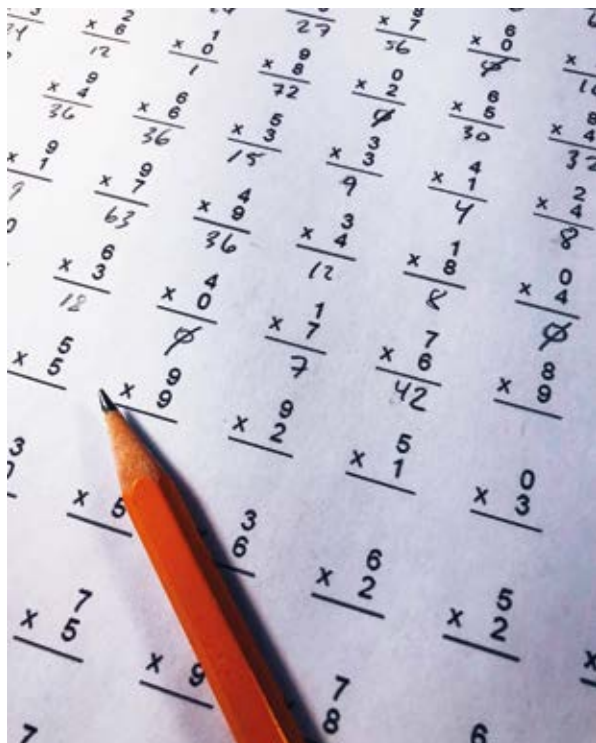
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Perils, Pitfalls and Potential Wales and PISA

*Ahead of the latest round of PISA in December, **David Reynolds** says Wales should stick with the international education comparison tests, despite their significant shortcomings*

The results of the 2018 PISA testing done in the schools of Wales – and in other countries – are all due for publication on December 3rd this year. PISA – the Programme for International Student Assessment, to give it its full title – involves testing samples of 15 year olds in different countries on the same tests at the same time and with the same marking schemes, making it possible to compare levels of apparent national educational success in ways that other data do not permit. As an example, it is increasingly difficult to compare the ‘home nations’ of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales on GCSE and A Level results, because curriculum content and assessment practices are increasingly divergent across the UK, meaning a comparison is no longer ‘like with like’. PISA, in theory, makes comparison possible

The PISA tests are in the areas of Science, Mathematics, Reading and, beginning in the 2015 testing round, Collaborative Problem Solving, on which the results were published one year after the other subject areas in 2017. As can be imagined, what some have called the ‘international educational horse race’ has usually generated both huge publicity and huge controversy. Partly, this is because of a world that is becoming smaller all the time. The revolution offered by new information technologies is affording all countries a global reach – and ideas travel internationally with great rapidity. Discussion of ‘good countries’ in education and of countries who are ‘poor performers’, like us in Wales, has made education an ‘international commodity’, to be picked up and used by countries to try to improve the life chances of their populations. An orgy of criticisms, suggestions for improvement and debate will undoubtedly take place in Wales post December, as



it has all over the world when previous PISA results were published in 2007, 2010, 2013 and 2016.

There is something rather sad about nations and their children being reduced to positions on such simplified 'educational league tables'. In media discussions, nations go 'up' and 'down' based upon quite minor changes in their PISA scores. However, there is increasing concern that, whatever they are, the media reporting of those PISA results may influence structural and cultural decisions, including those of companies and firms about where to site investment. As an example, one of the headline changes of recent PISA results – the emergence of Poland as a high performer – is said to have generated a much more favourable climate for investment. The revolution in curriculum (to a greater core), teachers' professional lives (improved professional development) and the treatment of vocational education (to something that takes place after general education not at the same time) is something that has attracted widespread attention internationally and has created a change in Polish 'image', said now to be influencing the flow of capital.

Put simply, if you are an entrepreneur why would

you invest in Wales when our wage levels are double those of Poland but our educational results are worse in every area tested? Industrialists don't follow sentiment in their decisions: they put money where there is the greatest return. And they judge the greatest return, partly, from PISA.

In this contemporary context, Wales' PISA performance gives great cause for concern. We are below the other UK nations in every area tested and since 2007 have declined quite dramatically overall. We seem to do well in the relatively small difference between the performance of children from more advantaged and less advantaged homes, but this is only because our more advantaged children are doing particularly poorly! Our lauded Welsh medium schools, in detailed analysis, depressingly only do similarly to our other schools.

Our classrooms would score very highly on 'low level disruption' but at least our schools and headteachers seem to be doing most of what matters to support their teachers.

There are of course major issues about the PISA enterprise. There are no measures of the 'inputs' into the educational systems of different countries that



might explain the high scores of the effective ones. Take Finland, the European country used by the media as their favoured example of a country keeping up with the Pacific Rim. It is a wealthy society built on Nokia and other high tech industries. It has had the world's highest levels of newspaper readership, because paper in Finland has been historically cheap due to the massive forests in the country keeping timber prices low. It has very high levels of adult literacy fuelled by the large numbers of libraries in its towns and villages, encouraging reading as an activity for those dark winter nights. It is relatively monocultural, without the massive migration levels seen in some countries.

Yes, it possesses large number of very small schools that have a 'family' atmosphere. Its teachers are all educated to Masters Level. But to what extent is it doing well because of 'cultural' and 'social' factors, connected with its society, rather than because of its schools? That we cannot learn from PISA, because PISA doesn't do these kind of analyses.

And if these 'cultural' things matter, isn't it likely that 'what works' successfully in education will be different in other cultural settings, making it unwise to use 'Finnish' recipes directly in Wales – or anywhere else for that matter?

And then there are the issues concerning how different countries may be sampling their schools and children differently, with widespread concern that China, for example, may be using its city schools in PISA more than its countryside schools, simply because they are more accessible. Argentina was actually thrown out of PISA 2015 because of concern about rigged sampling of schools outside the capital of Buenos Aires!

And, lastly, there is what PISA doesn't measure because it cannot do it easily: the actual behaviours in classrooms in different countries. PISA doesn't study teaching because it is a very hard thing to do: you would need a system to describe it that could be applied in the jungles of Indonesia and the yuppie heartland of San Francisco. Do we measure the behaviour of the teachers, or of the children, or both?

We cannot just use teacher's words – the phrase 'come on, work harder' can be said with meaning or menace or support, depending on the culture of the classroom. Teaching the whole class is said to be part of the educational recipe for successful countries, but this looks entirely different in countries in the Pacific

Rim compared to the UK, where pupils coming to the blackboard and shouting would never be tolerated as an acceptable method. How can we compare methods when one method may have 57 varieties?

So, inevitably, PISA appeals to educational policy makers and bureaucrats more than it does to teachers, because it measures only their simple worlds of formal organisational systems, money spent, pupil teacher ratios and class sizes. It does not constitute at the moment the fine grained descriptions of their educational settings, their methods and their children that would interest our teachers. It is merely an accountability mechanism without the knowledge bases that teachers need and is seen as more punishment than reward by teachers participating in it.

Changes are coming, however. The OECD who produce PISA is trialling video based classroom observation systems of teaching that may be used in future PISA rounds. It is going into new skill areas: global competences (which are really social skills) and creativity, (although this latter may be difficult to measure since it involves by definition measuring things that currently do not exist!). It is going beyond the present samples of mostly industrialised countries to poorer and more agrarian countries.

However, in spite of all the problems with it, not participating in PISA in future would be a serious mistake for us to make in Wales. Imperfect knowledge is better than no knowledge at all. In the case of the 'home nations', the culture of the countries are relatively similar, suggesting any differences may after all be due to our diverging educational systems. And when a whole planet's educational system is scrambling for PISA style information, any Welsh non-participation would be seen as ignorant.

And the PISA results for Wales on December 3rd 2019? I would expect us to do a bit better than we have historically, although we will still do worse than the other three home nations. Our schools have been supported, chivvied along and encouraged with their attempts to improve PISA by Welsh Government more than any time since 2007. Very shortly, we will see. ▽

Professor David Reynolds was one of the founders of the international educational effectiveness movement, and has advised the Welsh and UK Governments



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Capital Vision

Cardiff, a unique asset to Wales

*Cardiff Council Leader **Huw Thomas** outlines his vision for Cardiff as a thriving capital city at the vanguard of creating a cleaner, greener, fairer economy for the whole of Wales*



Anyone who spends as long as I do tracking discussions of Welsh public life on Twitter will know that one of the most consistent refrains is how ‘everything goes to Cardiff’. From Môn to Monmouth, there is a consensus that Cardiff is full of glitzy buildings and public money that belongs to the rest of the country! As a native of Ceredigion, who moved to the capital twelve years ago, I can certainly appreciate the frustrations behind such views, even whilst being clear that they have little basis in reality.

Indeed, if I wanted to set a ‘Cardiff First’ agenda, I might point out how Cardiff Council receives less funding per head than twenty of the twenty-two Welsh local authorities, despite having the greatest concentration of Lower Super Output Areas in all of Wales. Or how, since devolution, only one mile of new road, and not a single new railway station has been built in Cardiff. However, a ‘beggar-thy-neighbour’ relationship (in either direction) between the capital and country gets us nowhere. Instead the question responsible policy-makers should be asking is what role should the capital city play in creating a greener, fairer and more prosperous Wales? Because it is clear to me, such is the importance of the capital city to the future economic and cultural success of the nation, that if we in Cardiff fail then Wales will fail, whilst we have the opportunity to succeed for all.

A glance at the numbers confirms this, and underlines the case for pragmatic policy making, rooted in the evidence. Consider that:

- over the 20 years since devolution, Cardiff has grown by more than 70,000 people
- over the next 20 years, Cardiff is projecting greater population growth than any other major British city outside London
- incredibly, Cardiff is projected to grow by more than the rest of Wales combined
- since devolution, Cardiff's productivity growth has outstripped every major British city except London and, over the past five years, five in every six new jobs created in the Welsh economy were created in Cardiff.

These figures represent possibly the biggest shift in the demography and economy of Wales since devolution. The bold and ambitious city leadership seen in Cardiff during the eighties and nineties certainly played a big role in this, but that isn't the whole story. The truth is that across the world, cities have emerged as centres of economic and population growth meaning that Cardiff has prospered while, in contrast and through no fault of their own, large parts of Wales have faced, and continue

When the majority of our population and jobs growth are taking place in [Cardiff], then we – as a nation – need to think clearly and carefully about how to support that growth and ensure its benefits are widely shared

to face, severe headwinds. These are global trends that demand a local response. Simply put, when the majority of our population and jobs growth are taking place in one local authority, then we – as a nation – need to think clearly and carefully about how to support that growth *and* ensure its benefits are widely shared.

And so, as we seek to strengthen the Welsh economy, to build new industries and create new jobs, the future



**If we in Cardiff fail
then Wales will fail**

A £1bn programme of rail, bus and bike projects... will radically change how people move around the city, reduce carbon emissions, tackle congestion and dramatically improve air quality

of Cardiff must be front and centre of our thinking and decision making. In particular we must recognise that Cardiff is not in competition with other parts of Wales, but with cities like Bristol, Manchester and Glasgow – and that if those new jobs didn't come to Cardiff they would not have come to Wales at all. In any post-Brexit world, Wales' inward investment strategy must therefore be built around the capital city economy, and delivered in close partnership between the city, the region and the Welsh Government.

I have spoken publicly before about how, as the capital city, we are duty bound to ensure that the benefits are felt across communities in the wider city-region, and in particular the South Wales Valleys. To do so, we must build a relationship with our neighbours based not on an arrogant we-know-best attitude but on an understanding that all the communities of the Capital Region have something to offer city-region collaboration and something to gain from its success. The Cardiff City Deal is an important first step, but no more than that. The imminent local government reform bill offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to establish a proper, grown-up city-regionalism where honest discussions and strategic decisions about housing, transport and investment are taken for the equitable long-term benefit of the whole of the Capital Region, and ultimately, Wales.

The role of the capital city has to be much more than simply creating jobs and attracting investment. For example, I want Cardiff to play a leading role in the Welsh response to the climate emergency. In no area of city life will this be more important than in shifting to sustainable transport. We have put forward a £1bn programme of rail, bus and bike projects that will radically change how people

move around the city, reduce carbon emissions, tackle congestion and dramatically improve air quality and we are looking at different, innovative funding mechanisms. With 100,000 people travelling in and out of Cardiff each day, 80,000 by car, this is not a challenge the city can or should face alone. The capital city's transport challenge is a national challenge which will need national solutions.

Above all else, I want Cardiff to play a leading role in creating a fairer Wales. The rising tide of Cardiff's economy has not lifted all boats, and it's a scandal that many of the poorest communities in Wales – including the one I represent – are less than a stone's throw away from the nation's economic centre. This is why we are investing hundreds of millions in building new schools across the city; why we now have one of the UK's most ambitious council house programmes – the first thousand of which will be built by 2022; why we are reforming our employment services and family support services, helping get more people into work, and protecting our most vulnerable. We must use every lever at our disposal to drive social equality, so we need to look much harder at the totality of public funding going into a community and ask, what are the big outcomes that place needs, and how can that resource be deployed to achieve them.

Cardiff is a unique asset to Wales – a bilingual capital where 100 languages are spoken daily, a melting pot of culture, sport, and gravy on chips, a skilled city that attracts and retains talent and, through major events such as last year's free-to-access National Eisteddfod, enables Wales to speak to the world. So if we want to successfully build a new post-Brexit economy, respond to the climate emergency or tackle the causes of multi-generational poverty we need to debate the future of Cardiff and to rethink the role of the capital city, resetting old relationships and assumptions in order to strike a new deal between the capital city, the Capital Region and the Welsh Government. ▼

Huw Thomas is Leader of Cardiff City Council

Over the next year, Cardiff City Council will be hosting a series of discussions in partnership with the IWA and Cardiff University, drawing on the best thinking from all corners of Cardiff, Wales, and further afield. Events will be announced soon on iwa.wales

Aelodau Glas Cymru: Croeso i Ddosbarth 2020

Fel cwmni nid er elw, mae Dŵr Cymru yn unigryw yn y sector cyfleustodau, am fod pob gwarged yn cael ei ddefnyddio er budd cwsmeriaid. Sefydlwyd ein rhiant-gwmni, Glas Cymru, at ddibenion perchenogi, ariannu a rheoli Dŵr Cymru.

Nid oes gennym gyfranddallwyr. Rydym yn dibynnu ar Aelodau annibynnol sy'n cyflawni rôl llywodraethu allweddol o ran dwyn Bwrdd y Cyfarwyddwyr i gyfrif. Maent yn cyflawni rôl debyg i gyfranddallwyr mewn cwmnïau preifat eraill, ond nid oes ganddynt fudd ariannol.

Rydym newydd benodi ein Haelodau newydd ar gyfer 2019 – gan ychwanegu at y cyfoeth a wybodaeth ac arbenigedd y mae ein 49 o Aelodau presennol eisoes yn ei gynnig. Byddant yn cyfarfod o leiaf ddwywaith y flwyddyn ac yn clywed gennym yn rheolaidd ynglŷn â'r gwaith rydym yn ei wneud, fel y gallant sicrhau bod Bwrdd y Cyfarwyddwyr yn rhedeg y cwmni fel y dylai.

Rydym bob amser yn awyddus i glywed gan bobl sydd am fod yn Aelodau – ac yn arbennig o awyddus i glywed gan bobl o bob cefndir a phrofiad, fel ein bod yn adlewyrchu'r cymunedau rydym yn eu gwasaethu.

Rydym yn rhoi'r cyfle i fynegi diddordeb mewn bod yn Aelod yn gynharach nag erioed o'r blaen ar gyfer y flwyddyn nesaf – felly gallwn gysylltu â chi pan fyddwn yn dechrau recriwtio eto.

Os oes diddordeb, anfonwch e-bost at ein Cwnsler Cyffredinol ac Ysgrifennydd y Cwmni, Nicola Williams, yn company.secretary@dwrcymru.com i goel rhagor o wybodaeth.

Glas Cymru Members: Welcome to the Class of 2020

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We have no shareholders. We rely on independent Members, who fulfil a key governance role in holding our Board of Directors to account. They fulfil a similar role to shareholders in other private companies, but don't hold a financial interest.

We have just appointed our new Members for 2019 – adding to the wealth of knowledge and expertise we already benefit from with our current 49 Members. They will meet at least twice a year and hear from us regularly about the work we do, so they can make sure our Board of Directors are running the company as they should.

We are always looking to hear from people who want to serve as Members – and particularly keen to hear from people from all backgrounds and experiences, so we reflect all the communities we serve.

We are opening up expressions of interest for next year's intake earlier than ever – so we can get in touch when we start recruiting again.

If you are interested, drop an email to our General Counsel and Company Secretary, Nicola Williams, on company.secretary@dwrcymru.com to find out more.

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Concrete, Culture and Community


Cwmbran at 70

Emma Schofield *celebrates the quiet achievements of an often overlooked Welsh town*

Following the creation of the Italian nation state in the nineteenth century Massimo D'Azeglio famously declared: 'we have made Italy: now we must make Italians', a poignant reference to the fact that a true sense of identity is constructed from far more than a shared name and a geographical location. You may be wondering what this has to do with Cwmbran, a small town in south Wales which has a population of around forty eight thousand people and is often locally identified by the fact that it offers free parking across its town centre. Yet until 1949 when the area was chosen for

the creation of a designated new town, Cwmbran, as we know it today, did not exist. Indeed, the Cwmbran of 1949 consisted of a small village and residential area, situated slightly north of the site of the main town as it stands today and a cluster of nearby villages and farmland.

The decision to create a town is a strange one. Simply deciding to build the structure and infrastructure required to create a town is not enough alone to embed a sense of place, a culture or an identity. Instead, over the past seventy years, Cwmbran has gradually forged its own identity; one which has grown significantly from when the town was initially constructed in a bid to enhance housing and employment opportunities for the surrounding area. This was the remit of the Cwmbran Development Corporation who oversaw the construction work which took place throughout the



Like so many small towns in Wales, old and new, Cwmbran receives very little national attention, but this in no way lessens the significance, or impact, of its local culture

1950s and 60s, leading to the installation of much of the 1960s architecture which still defines Cwmbran's physical appearance. Writing on the development of new towns in Wales since 1945, Neil Harris notes that the 'the challenges for planning in post-war Wales were varied. They ranged from reconstruction of urban centres, and providing housing to accommodate workers in the newly industrialised areas, to stemming rapid population decline in rural mid-Wales'. These challenges were addressed in part by the construction of Cwmbran's new town centre and surrounding residential areas.

The plans were ambitious, the so-called 'Master Plan' for the construction details the way in which planners envisaged a series of linked neighbourhoods, each with their own local amenities and all connected to the main shopping centre which lay at the heart of the development. It was a plan which was hugely ambitious, but also symbolic of a wider determination for regeneration and expansion which characterised much of a recovering, post-war Britain. Similar schemes were undertaken across the UK, with plans for places such as Stevenage, Basildon and Bracknell being developed as part of the 1946 New Towns Act. Construction of this magnitude did not happen overnight and structurally there is much which can still be recognised from Cwmbran's initial design. The town's undercover shopping area, concrete tower blocks, designated green spaces and baffling number of roundabouts remain distinctive, although these features are now surrounded by no fewer than five supermarkets and a separate retail space on the town's perimeter, a reminder of just how much the town has grown in recent years. The foundations for this growth were spurred by the opening of the town's train station in 1986 and the use of the newly-built Cwmbran Stadium as an international athletics venue in the 1970s and 80s.

To acknowledge the remarkable nature of this continued growth is not to say that problems haven't arisen as Cwmbran has expanded. The planned nature of Cwmbran and its geographical location have meant that there is only limited scope for development within the town, placing additional pressure on sites around the outskirts of the town centre. Nowadays, residential developments and retail units sprawl widely in the area around the town centre, stretching this now cramped

expansion far beyond the town's original remit. And where industry in the surrounding valleys has declined, retail and housing has exploded within the area around the town, bolstering its position as one of the busiest shopping centres in South Wales.

Looking to the future, it's difficult to predict what might lie in store for Cwmbran as it enters a new decade. With housing developments continuing to grow on the outskirts of the town, the real challenge may lie in supporting the area's increasing population at a time when political and economic uncertainty weigh heavily on much of Wales. Prospects for Cwmbran are intriguing, with changes to the area affected by cycles of notable growth and decline. From a commercial perspective, the town has recently been faced with the loss of a number of its high street stores, while certain local community spaces and leisure initiatives, such as nearby Greenmeadow Community Farm, have come under threat as a result of proposed cuts to local council budgets. In contrast, a new sixth form college is set to



There is more to a town than shops and consumers and... far more to a place than the number of inhabitants in its many houses

open in the town in September 2020 at an estimated cost of £20 million, replacing sixth forms at local Torfaen schools and relocating post-16 education to the centre of Cwmbran. The opening of the College, which will fall under the responsibility of Coleg Gwent and will provide 1,000 places for sixth form study, will no doubt bring fresh challenges and opportunities to the town.

Yet there is more to a town than shops, businesses and consumers and there is far more to a place than the number of inhabitants in its many houses. Concrete architecture and retail growth aside, seventy years on from the 'Master Plan', what kind of cultural identity does the Cwmbran of the twenty-first century really have?

When it comes to culture, the town has managed the far from insignificant feat of maintaining a steady presence for arts and culture for a number of decades thanks, in no small part, to the determined work of a number of organisations and countless volunteers. Built in a prominent location in the middle of the town's shopping centre lies a steady testament to Cwmbran's contribution to the cultural scene in south Wales. The Congress Theatre, a registered charity, which first opened as a multi-functional hall in 1972, before officially becoming a theatre in 1975, was an integral feature of the new town's design. The theatre may not host touring West End productions, but it does provide a venue for a range of local theatre societies, a thriving youth theatre company, and schools, choirs and musical groups as part of its regular programme.

A similar stalwart of Cwmbran's cultural scene, the Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre celebrated its own fiftieth anniversary in 2016. The Centre, which is now a registered charity, plays host to a variety of exhibitions, workshops and arts classes, as well as hosting a permanent collection of contemporary artwork. Yet this Centre, only constructed in 1966 and which provides a much-needed space for contemporary artwork, is actually housed on land which was first developed by the Cistercian monks in 1179, within a building whose current iteration dates back to the nineteenth century.

There is a pleasing irony that the space which is now afforded to promoting contemporary art and culture is located on land with such a long history and a timely reminder that this is an area with a history which extends far beyond the conception of any modern master plan.

That these venues continue to survive and promote art and culture in today's volatile climate is an achievement in itself. Of course, spaces such as the Congress Theatre and Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre are unlikely to ever compete with larger theatres and centres in areas such as Cardiff or Swansea, but they don't need to. Their function may be the same, but their purpose is different. They are there to provide access to culture, art and, most importantly, a creative space in the area they serve. There are, of course, other cultural venues within Cwmbran, all of which contribute greatly to the community around them. Culturally, like so many small towns in Wales, old and new, Cwmbran receives very little national attention, but this in no way lessens the significance, or impact, of its local culture. For many local children, their first experience of performing on a real theatre stage will have been in the Congress Theatre, and it is impossible to measure the impact that opportunity can have.

Perhaps then the most important of Cwmbran's quiet cultural achievements over the past 70 years have not been on a national scale, but have been in the provision of venues and opportunities for local people, whether artists or audiences, to explore culture in their own part of South Wales. The town's principal architect, Gordon Redfern, was also a member of the Wales Arts Council and had argued passionately in favour of Council support for art which addressed topics which mattered to local communities and spoke to their concerns. It may not be a coincidence that the town he helped to design has developed a culture which extends that hand to the local community. What Cwmbran has managed to construct over the past seventy years is much more than a concrete structure and a popular shopping centre. It has managed to develop a sense of identity for its growing community and its own presence in a wider cultural scene, no small feat for a town which only came into being a few decades ago. ▼

Dr Emma Schofield researches culture and politics in Wales, is an Associate Editor for *Wales Arts Review* and works at Cardiff University

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Sharing knowledge and expertise: Lessons from the Netherlands

Gareth Evans joined teachers from across Wales on a study visit to one of the world's leading education systems

Windmills, clogs, the Cruyff turn – there are a number of things that come to mind when thinking about the Netherlands. But while I can indeed vouch for tulips being sold in the vast majority of the country's gift shops, far less is commonly known about the Dutch education system. It was with that in mind that Yr Athrofa, the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's Institute of Education, led a study visit to the Netherlands to see what Wales could learn from a nation renowned for its impressive school standards.

A rich and diverse study programme gave those present unique access to policymakers, school leaders, teachers, student-teachers and pupils, and offered a first-hand look at different aspects of educational practice in the Netherlands. A delegation of ten, including six teachers and school leaders from three of the four regional education consortia, were invited to meet with curriculum experts, representatives from the Dutch Ministry of Education and the VO-raad coalition of secondary school governing bodies. These were supplemented by tours of three schools – one primary and two secondary – and an introduction to a fledgling partnership model for initial teacher education.

The first and obvious distinction between Wales and the Netherlands is in international league tables. The

Netherlands' performance in the respected Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has been nothing if not stable, having remained one of Europe's high-flyers in all key disciplines since its inception. In the most recent PISA tranche, published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in December 2016, 15-year-olds in the Netherlands scored 512 points in maths, 509 in science and 503 in reading. By comparison, Welsh pupils scored 478 points in maths, 485 in science and 477 in reading. So what does the Netherlands do that Wales doesn't – and what can we consider emulating as we continue on our own journey of reform?

The short answer is 'a lot', albeit we would not necessarily wish to mimic everything Dutch education has to offer. In fact, there is a large amount the Dutch people themselves take issue with, cause for some considerable consternation among the country's own educators. Take, for example, the Netherlands' approach to compulsory education and the tracking of children at age 12. When pupils finish primary school they can continue onto one of three secondary pathways, depending on their academic ability and career prospects. The structure of the schools system in the Netherlands is designed to ensure learners are given an opportunity to find a higher education programme that best suits their skills.

However, that the performance of pupils in 'CITO' tests, the advice of primary school staff and learners' performance over time are such significant determining factors did not curry favour with the travelling Welsh contingent. From our perspective, the Dutch streaming system created a clear division between students of different academic ability and skillsets and, in some cases, led to schools being split into unintentional silos; in one school we visited, vocationally-orientated students

The Dutch streaming system created a clear division between students of different academic ability and skillsets and, in some cases... vocationally-orientated students spent time only in a certain wing of the building

spent time only in a certain wing of the building. But while socially divisive, the wing did offer precisely what it was intended to – a vocational haven boasting real-life professional experiences. These included a hairdressers with working booths and equipment, a kitchen with modern cooking appliances, and a functional wood workshop with endless tools and materials. The school, based in an area with high levels of deprivation, used the facilities to introduce learners to the range of career possibilities available in the region.

The perception of these students was not always favourable, however, and when I asked our young tour guide why those pursuing a vocational pathway were not inclined to stray from the designated vocational wing, she told me without hesitation that ‘this was where students with a lower IQ go’. I dare say her headteacher would have answered differently, but her interpretation spoke volumes for a fragmented system struggling to match equity with excellence.

The separating of young people in their formative years based on academic ability is, of course, in stark contrast to the comprehensive model of publicly-funded education employed in Wales. That said, there is certainly scope for developing alternative routes into employment at an earlier age and offering youngsters more bespoke vocational opportunities is worthy of exploration.

There is, without question, a much stronger alignment between education and business in the Dutch system, with a much clearer emphasis on employability and career development evident in schools. The same is true at primary level, with one school toured by the delegation sporting classrooms dedicated to different professions; children could spend time role-playing in dental surgeries or makeshift police stations. One wonders if we are doing enough in Wales to engage the business community and whether we could better link school-based provision with the world of work that learners will be entering.

But if academic streaming was one of the most striking differences, the most obvious similarity between Wales and the Netherlands is our ongoing and steadfast commitment to curriculum reform. Unbeknownst to many of the delegation, around 150 teachers have been working on proposals for a new national curriculum in the Netherlands since the spring of 2018. Nine ‘Learning Areas’ look suspiciously like the six Areas of Learning and Experience being championed in Wales, and 84

Netherlands v Wales PISA comparison



15-year-olds in the Netherlands

Maths	512
Science	509
Reading	503



15-year-olds in Wales

Maths	478
Science	485
Reading	477

Source: OECD (December 2016)



Yr Athrofa delegation

One of the primary schools visited by the delegation not[ed] that approximately 80% of its teaching staff worked part-time and job-shared with colleagues



One school [sported] classrooms dedicated to different professions; children could spend time role-playing in dental surgeries or makeshift police stations

'Development Schools' have been employed to test new arrangements as they materialise. Notably, the Dutch language is a stand-alone Learning Area in the Netherlands, unlike in Wales where Welsh falls under the banner of 'Languages, Literacy and Communication'.

Nevertheless, our Dutch colleagues were perfectly content to concede that countries and provinces like British Columbia, Scotland and Finland had provided inspiration for their curriculum blueprint, which they 'didn't invent, we stole'.

'Curriculum.nu' is the brand name (and web page) for the curriculum reform process, which is arm's-length from government and deliberately owned by teachers. While the profession has been integral to the evolution of the Curriculum for Wales, by virtue of Pioneer School input, the housing of draft documents and all correspondence relating to its development on platforms operated by the Welsh Government might in hindsight have been better avoided. After all, the notion of subsidiarity on which the new curriculum is built is heavily reliant on renewed teacher agency and professional ownership.

Another interesting nuance relates to the communication of said developments, and the approach taken by each country to keep the wider system informed of progress. In the Netherlands, the outcome of each development session (in the form of five, three-day teacher meetings) was made public for comment at regular intervals – so stakeholders further removed from the design process had opportunity to contribute to the curriculum's development from a much earlier stage.

When latest thinking was published, it was done so transparently, with 'Development Teams' having to justify their choices and/or actions. Crucially, any representation from across the system required formal acknowledgement, ensuring all respondents felt listened to. A systematic process of periodic feedback and refinement has seemingly helped the Netherlands build momentum and bring more people into the curriculum design process.

On the contrary, there was very little formal sharing of ideas emanating from Pioneer Schools in Wales prior to official publication of the new draft curriculum in April 2019. Curriculum developers in the Netherlands have been keen to construct a 'shared language' for teachers to use, and are now turning their attention to how best they can scale-up curriculum reform from the 84 Development Schools to the 8,000 other schools across the country.

Despite their best efforts to involve the wider profession from the earliest stages of development, it was startling that experts still estimate there are only approximately 5,000 of around 200,000 teachers currently engaged in curriculum reform in the Netherlands. Support, they say, 'is a mile wide and an inch deep' at present and the challenge of disseminating what has been achieved to the masses is certainly no different to that facing policymakers in Wales. Then again, there are some who believe the Dutch curriculum is doomed to fail regardless; one academic bemoaned its ambiguity and questioned whether or not the government was capable of seeing through such radical change.

The place of knowledge within the curriculum was a contentious issue, as it is here, although the so-called 'Dutch canon' of core content was something that resonated strongly with a number of our delegation. So too was there familiarity with the Netherlands' well-documented teacher recruitment and retention crisis. Where Wales is struggling to recruit more to secondary, the opposite is true in the Netherlands, where primary teachers are in shorter supply. The marked disparity in teacher salaries may well have something to do with that, however, with Dutch primary school teachers starting on a salary significantly lower than their secondary counterparts. Other possible reasons given for the difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers in the Netherlands included a lack of respect for teachers and the profession; teachers' own perception and negative portrayal of the profession; and increased teacher workload. All of these are as prevalent to the Welsh context as they are the Dutch, albeit the Netherlands has pursued more flexible working arrangements, with one of the primary schools visited by the delegation noting that approximately 80% of its teaching staff worked part-time and job-shared with colleagues. Whether this was a deliberate intervention or more of a legacy is unclear, but it is something to ponder nevertheless.

I don't think it irrelevant to comment at this point on the enviable infrastructure supporting the Netherlands and its people, with public transport seemingly poles apart from that available in Wales. The ease with which Dutch educators can travel around the country – whether by bike, car, bus, tram or train – doubtless makes collaboration and professional development all the more likely.

Two years ago, I was fortunate enough to take part

in a similar study visit to Ontario, Canada (see *the welsh agenda* 60). My abiding memory is of a province buoyed by impressively high levels of public confidence; there is an underlying pride in both Ontario's education system and society as a whole. By comparison, the Netherlands strikes me as a country that doesn't quite know what it wants. Streaming, testing, the curriculum; there is so much that divides opinion, although each and every one of the educators we came into contact with was firmly committed to doing the very best by the learners in their care. It was refreshing that they acknowledged their imperfections, and recognised well the issues and challenges still to be overcome.

The Netherlands, like Wales, has plenty of scope for improvement and it was reassuring to the delegation that we are not alone in working our way through shared problems for the better of all in education. All who participated in the visit benefitted from open and honest discussion with colleagues, and the opportunity to engage in professional dialogue with educators in another jurisdiction cannot be understated.

More generally, away from the day-to-day realities of life at the chalkface, the networking opportunities afforded by the trip allowed a fruitful sharing of experiences, expertise and solutions to common challenges. These practical exchanges should be encouraged and, having returned to their respective schools with 'a fresh pair of eyes', all teachers present on the study visit have spoken of the impact the trip will have on their own classroom practice.

Moving forward, it would be in Wales' best interests to retain oversight of developments in the Netherlands, and maintain contact with stakeholders in areas of mutual benefit. The knowledge and experience of practitioners and officials in a recognised world leader in education will be invaluable as Wales continues on its ambitious reform agenda and future collaboration between the two nations should be encouraged. ▼

Gareth Evans is Director of the Centre for Education Policy Review and Analysis (CEPRA) at Yr Athrofa: Institute of Education, University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Yr Athrofa's full report comparing education in Wales and the Netherlands is available on the Institute's website athrofa.cymru



Measuring the Mountain

In social care, what really matters to people in Wales?

Rachel Iredale *outlines a project that gives citizens voice on social care*

It is very difficult to measure a mountain. Some methods use geometric formulas, others look at atmospheric pressure. However, it is not necessary to cover every inch in order to get a sense of scale. There are other ways, often simpler and more elegant, that can give answers. In the 'Measuring the Mountain' project we are using this analogy to look at social care in Wales. We are trying to understand what really matters to people by capturing the experiences of citizens who need care and support and those who care for them.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 came into force in April 2016 and provided a new legal framework for social care. Welsh Government aimed to transform the delivery of social care by putting people at the heart of service delivery. There are a number of principles underpinning the Act: improving people's voice and control in their care; focusing on prevention

and early intervention; improving well-being, and offering enhanced support for carers, all underpinned by the values of co-production.

When he was Minister for Health and Social Services, First Minister Mark Drakeford made a formal commitment to evaluate the Act. Understanding the experiences of Welsh citizens in relation to social care is fundamental to the evaluation. Yet capturing these experiences as part of a formal process can be challenging so Welsh Government commissioned the Measuring the Mountain project.

In the first phase of the project we collected almost 500 stories from around Wales. Using a computer programme called SenseMaker we collected narratives verbatim, and then people provided detailed information about their experiences through responses to structured questions that contextualised those stories. More than

Overwhelmingly, carers had less positive experiences than service users

half the stories (57%) were negative, 8% were neutral and 35% were positive. Overwhelmingly, carers had less positive experiences than service users.

For some people, interactions with the social care system are characterised by difficulty, delays, frustration and confusion. Their stories referenced the need to fight or struggle for services:

‘Caring for my son is the easy part. The difficult part, the part that causes me so much stress and anxiety is interacting with social services and the local authority. In the last few months the stress of my son being transitioned from children’s to adults’ services has been so great that I have been put on medication for the first time.’

‘Throughout these processes, I was made to feel horrible. Even though I was asking for help, problems with my house were pointed out to me as though I had no idea they were there, and as though I should be the one fixing them. Whilst I do own the house, all of the issues with it had become much more urgent because Dad was living with me. All I wanted was some guidance, some advice and maybe some help with getting things fixed, getting the stairs made safer and keeping my Dad as well as could be.’

As one respondent put it: *Being offered support should not be contingent upon failure.* Many people who are utilising social care have to navigate multiple services and people but do not feel that they have any sort of voice or control, one of the main pillars of the new Act:

‘I have carers come to my home every day. I have no idea who they will be sometimes I have the same person a few times in a row but not always. And although they have set times to come, they don’t stick to them. I feel very unsettled all of the time.’

When the system works, and social care staff act as key workers, it can make a real difference:

‘My older daughter got a new social worker and he’s really good; both my daughter’s needs and mine are now being looked at much better. He takes a properly collaborative approach to supporting us. He discusses when and where is best for us to meet, and supported me to complete my own carers’ assessment, ensuring my needs were fully identified.’

A lack of appropriate information was one of the biggest issues we identified from the stories submitted. A number of people reported receiving no information at all. Those that needed information in alternative formats like large print, or in a format compatible with screen readers or Braille, reported particular issues with what they received.

As a second phase, we ran a Citizens’ Jury over four days with fourteen Welsh citizens, broadly representative of the Welsh population, in Swansea in September 2018. Analogous to a Jury used in a criminal trial, a Citizens’ Jury is based on the premise that any ‘ordinary’ person, given the opportunity, and enough time and support, can engage with complex policy matters. Jurors listened to evidence from witnesses; asked questions and debated before reaching a number of conclusions about ‘What really matters in social care’. They made fifteen recommendations that highlighted the need for ongoing debate and deliberation if the Act is to be implemented successfully. The recommendations were grouped under the principles of the Act and included some relating to Scrutiny and Review that were felt necessary to support the delivery of the Act. They included:

- Each person approaching the social care system and related sectors, whether child, adult or carer, should receive the support of an independent, well-trained and knowledgeable key worker who will advocate and stand alongside them
- Care and support plans need to respect an individual’s desired outcomes, and be more holistic, so that services fit the person and not the other way around
- Statutory bodies should provide clear information about their services and about the Act, ensuring it

is easy to access and understand, no matter what someone's circumstances, background or needs

- Citizens should be formally involved in greater and deeper scrutiny of the Act to build confidence in the sector and ensure the proper delivery of the Act.

Other practical suggestions focussed on facilitating diverse ways of communicating. Jurors argued that the 'focus should be on what people can do, and want to do, rather than on what they cannot'. Independent legal help should be available for those who wish to challenge decisions and platforms to share best practice should be developed.

Listening to ordinary people is vital. The Jury proposed a 'You Said, We Did' process for all social care agencies as well as an annual Citizens' Jury to be broadcast live to the public across Wales. Regional Partnership Boards which are supposed to promote collaboration and integration need to be more open to the public:

'I hope that people are finally listened to, that they are seen as co-producers rather than a drain on resources, and an acknowledgement that sometimes the best knowledge and ideas can come from service users/carers.'

The aim of the Act is to transform social care practice and Measuring the Mountain has revealed that the Act is not working as well as it should be for some people, particularly children transitioning to adult services; black, Asian and minority ethnic communities; and carers.

The experiences people have shared with us are extraordinarily personal in nature. We are gathering information and building understanding about social care in Wales and Welsh Government are to be commended for allowing such an open approach. We may not change services or experiences immediately but we have learned

Jurors argued that the 'focus should be on what people can do, and want to do, rather than on what they cannot'



how valuable it is to allow people to describe and share experiences, without the need to identify what should be better or different.

It is not difficult to engage with people when they have stories to share, particularly when some basic principles of good practice in public involvement are followed. These include things like involving people as early as possible; taking into account diversity and equality issues; allowing time to build relationships; offering people a choice of how they want to be involved and building in appropriate resources to support involvement. Measuring the Mountain is focused specifically on people, putting the individuals and communities that underpin much of the social care sector at the heart of this initiative. ▼

Dr Rachel Iredale is Associate Professor in Public Engagement, University of South Wales. She has written this article on behalf of the Measuring the Mountain Steering Group

Further funding has been given by Welsh Government to the Measuring the Mountain project which is now hosted by the University of South Wales. Stories continue to be gathered, with a second Citizens' Jury scheduled to take place in May 2020. If you have a story to share or want your organisation to get involved with Measuring the Mountain please log onto our website for more details:

www.mtm.wales / www.mym.cymru



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Digital Inclusion – *not digital confusion*

Karen Lewis outlines why equity and social justice must keep pace with technological change

Digital exclusion goes hand-in-hand with social exclusion. All the evidence demonstrates that people who are on low incomes, disabled, older, living in social housing or have long term health conditions are those most likely to have little if any access to the Internet and the benefits that can be gained from being online. These benefits include saving money, communicating with friends and relatives, accessing public services, benefitting from developments in digital health, securing employment, generally increasing life chances and, potentially, improving wellbeing

But it is becoming increasingly difficult to gauge who is truly 'included' in the digital world and who is being left behind. Defining and measuring levels of digital exclusion is rather more complex than stark numbers suggest. There is a wide range of terminology in use – digital inclusion, digital participation, digital literacy, basic digital skills – and many attempts to paint an accurate picture of progress being made in this area through published survey results that dazzle us with stats, stats and more stats. However, the questions asked are often different in each survey and sample sizes vary considerably, therefore the information

presented has to be scrutinised closely to get a true understanding of what the data is telling us.

Personally, I have given up poring over survey results, because what interests me more is the bigger, more nuanced story behind the numbers. The key question is whether people across Wales are able to access the internet as and when they need and want to, however they choose to, and are able to benefit from what that access can bring to improve their lives and livelihoods.

The digital divide is of course a matter of social justice and individual agency, but it is no longer enough to count as 'success' the increasing number of people who say they use the Internet; who are counted as being 'digitally included'. Of equal importance is how *effectively* people can use technology to navigate the online world, and how it improves their life chances, their health and their wellbeing. Digital literacy is now a key basic skill.

Whether this means being able to claim benefits online, book a GP appointment, Skype relatives, apply for jobs, access health information and apps, view archive footage that makes you happy – surely the most important indicator is that it does *good*. If accessing the Internet only means that you are bullied on social media, assaulted by pornography, fed falsehoods disguised as facts, or made to feel inadequate by Instagram then it is hard to justify a push to get more people online.

The prevailing narrative tends to portray Digital as a democratic, equalising force; and yet those who are most likely to be socially and economically disadvantaged are also those who are most likely to struggle to engage effectively with digital tools and the Internet. And not just because they don't have access to or can't afford



It is easy to forget that when talking to Alexa in your kitchen or scrolling through the Netflix menu on your TV screen, you are accessing the Internet

broadband, or the devices required, but also because they lack skills, confidence and knowledge to be able to navigate effectively and safely through an increasingly complex online world.

So, a digital divide also exists amongst people who *are* online – those with sophisticated critical thinking skills have the ability to identify ‘fake news’ and distinguish an independently verified fact from a cleverly placed subtle advertisement on their social media feed for example. People who do not have these skills are at higher risk of online scams, accepting unreliably sourced information as fact, and creating a ‘digital footprint’ that exposes them to cyber bullying and sometimes prevents them from being employed. Being digitally included surely should mean more than being able to simply get online – it should also mean being able to participate safely and comfortably in the digital world, in a way that is meaningful and beneficial and meets the needs of the individual citizen.

Technology is accelerating at a rate that is not matched by policy development to protect citizens. Regulation of the online space is challenging but has to be addressed or we risk technology doing more harm than good; the impetus must be to maximise its significant potential to impact positively on people’s lives, especially with regard to individual health and wellbeing. The UK Government’s publication of the *Online Harms White Paper* in April 2019 is a step in the right direction, but movement is sluggish and the need to appoint a regulator is now urgent if we are to ensure that the benefits of being online significantly outweigh the risks.

We know that, despite the potential for harm, there is much to be gained from active participation in the digital world, but that participation needs to be a safe and positive experience. We must therefore continue to encourage more people to access the Internet and benefit from the opportunities it offers whilst recognising, and wherever possible helping people to mitigate against, the accompanying risks.

To make things even more challenging, the lines between our online and offline lives are blurring. It is easy to forget that when talking to Alexa in your kitchen or scrolling through the Netflix menu on your TV screen, you are accessing the Internet. You are online, although you are nowhere near a keyboard or a computer screen. The Internet of Things and voice activation are increasing the complexity of understanding what digital participation, digital inclusion is today, and how well we all understand

the means by which we are accessing information, entertainment and services.

At the Wales Co-operative Centre we continue our strong commitment to promoting digital inclusion as a key component of social inclusion and we were delighted to be awarded the contract to deliver the Welsh Government’s next digital inclusion programme – *Digital Communities Wales: Digital confidence, health and well-being* – with its focus on widening digital participation in health and social care.

Working with a range of partners from all sectors across Wales we encourage and help public facing organisations to embrace the need to support their service users, patients, customers, citizens in developing basic digital skills in order to benefit fully from the increasingly digital interface between service provider and citizen.

We find our approaches are now often moving away from simply showing people how to use a mouse and sit in front of a PC, towards perhaps putting on a VR headset and virtually experiencing anything from a rollercoaster ride to a visit to a favourite beauty spot no longer physically accessible due to ill health or disability. Or using a voice activated device such as Amazon’s Alexa or Google Home to find out when your next GP appointment is or remind you to take your medication. This is not to say that the use of keyboards and PCs is obsolete – far from it – but we recognise the importance of finding the most accessible approaches to help people benefit from the online world, in a way that works for them. Working with our partners we continue to make every effort to bridge the digital divide by understanding its complexity and reaching people in a way that is meaningful to them.

We are all living in an increasingly complex world and technology is evolving so rapidly that is hard for any of us to keep up. But it is important to remember that it is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that no-one is left behind, however challenging that might be. Those of us who confidently and safely navigate the digital world must step up to the challenge of helping those who can’t, both in our professional and personal lives. This is the only way that we can really begin to address the issues of equity and social justice that lurk beneath the surface of the multifaceted digital divide. ▶

Karen Lewis is Director of Communities and Inclusion at the Wales Cooperative Centre

On the Red Hill

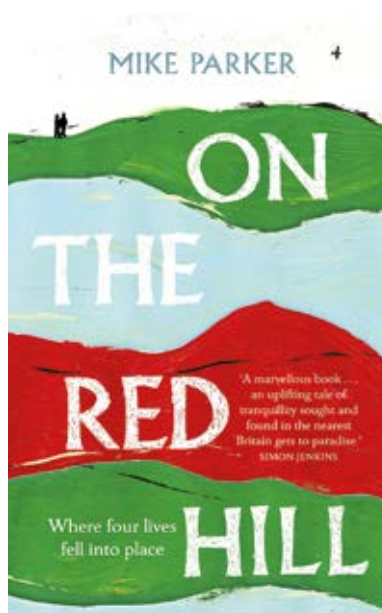
Mike Parker

William Heinemann, 2019

John Sam Jones

In 1972, just five years after the decriminalisation of homosexuality, George Walton and Reg Mickisch ‘upped sticks to the sticks’ and settled in a Welsh-speaking village in the Montgomeryshire hills, converting an old village pub into a B&B. George and Reg had already been a couple for almost a quarter of a century; for much of that time their relationship had, of course, been illegal – so they’d learned to be ‘discreet’, because openness would have meant arrest and imprisonment. Their first years in Wales were somewhat unsettled, but two moves later, in 1980, they moved into Rhiw Goch, an eighteenth-century farmhouse, where they lived for thirty-one years.

On the Red Hill is George and Reg’s story and, through their diaries, the story of a gay life in Britain from the Second World War to civil partnerships. It’s also the story of Rhiw Goch and its surrounding landscape, both cultural and topographical, through the seasons. It’s Mike Parker’s story too, a ‘gobby gay Brummie’ who moved to mid-Wales in 2000 and



met his future husband Peredur (Preds) Tomos – a boy who never had to come out because he was never in, so comfy was he in ‘his choice of *Ideal Home* magazine over the *Beano*, and asking for a peacock for his ninth birthday.’ Mike, Preds, George and Reg became good friends, the younger couple the only witnesses at George and Reg’s civil partnership in 2006. It was Mike and Preds who inherited Rhiw Goch in 2011 after George and Reg died – just five weeks apart.

As a writer myself, I’m fully aware that it’s the reader – reading through a certain pair of eyes and from a certain cluster of circumstances – who ‘completes’ the work of any author. My eyes are those of a middle-aged gay man who grew up not far from Rhiw Goch – and who, at the age of eighteen in 1975, when George and Reg were running their first successful B&B near Machynlleth, was incarcerated in the old asylum in Denbigh, not fifty miles away, and treated with Electric Shock Aversion Therapy to ‘cure my deviant sexuality’. Homosexuality may have been decriminalised in 1967, but it was still considered sick. That George and Reg found

...A boy who never had to come out because he was never in, so comfy was he in ‘his choice of *Ideal Home* magazine over the *Beano*, and asking for a peacock for his ninth birthday’

a welcome and made a home in the same Wales that put eighteen-year-olds in psychiatric hospitals to erase their gayness was both surprising and heart-lifting.

My circumstances are that my husband and I now live in Germany – his home, because of our disillusion over Brexit, and because his ageing parents needed our support. So I'm a *Cymro ar wasgar*. Reading *On the Red Hill*, I fell in love again with Wales, which is significant given how disappointed and betrayed I felt when Wales voted to leave the European Union.

Mike Parker writes the Welsh countryside, its textures and colours over seasons and generations, with a vivid beauty that betrays his own love of

That George and Reg found a welcome and made a home in the same Wales that put eighteen-year-olds in psychiatric hospitals to erase their gayness was both surprising and heart-lifting

his adopted home. The old farmhouse, Rhiw Goch, through Mike's well-crafted prose, becomes a rounded character at the heart of these four men's lives, and George and Reg smile and laugh and scowl through the decades of their long life together which unfold through Mike's skilful re-telling of their diary jottings.

On the Red Hill is a richly layered feast of a book to be savoured – so don't rush the read. ▶

John Sam Jones is the author of the story collections *Welsh Boys Too* and *Fishboys of Vernazza*, and the novels *With Angels and Furies* and *Crawling Through Thorns*.

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A Little Gay History of Wales

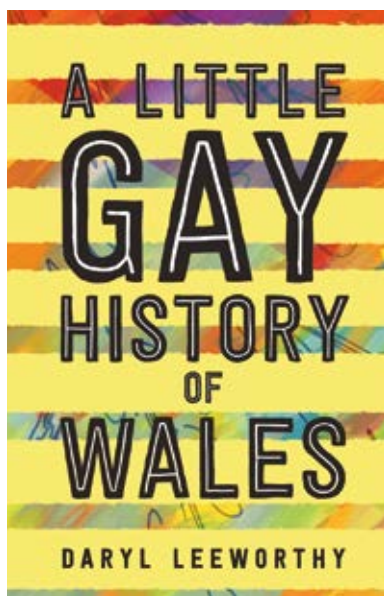
Daryl Leeworthy

University of Wales Press, 2019

Huw Osbourne

Despite a growing interest in the sexual history of Wales, there is still a need for more comprehensive historical discussions of the subject. Daryl Leeworthy's *A Little Gay History of Wales* is a welcome contribution to our understanding of the complexities of the social and political history of sexuality and Wales.

One of the most pleasurable and critically useful elements of the book is its resistance of a single historical narrative in favour of thematic chapters revisiting the history of gay Wales. This organisation exhibits Leeworthy's sensitivity to the challenges of 'constructing – or reconstructing – a social and cultural history of the Welsh past'. Questions of language, periodisation, recovery, tradition, and political progress complicate the endeavour, especially, he contends, with the developments of queer histories that are suspicious of coherent narratives of recovery and that question the very definition of sexuality. Judiciously sceptical of narratives of progress, Leeworthy identifies the period of the Second World War as the turning point from a more fluid and disruptive queer history to one of political activism, identity politics, liberation movements, and public gay cultures.



Leeworthy sets the scene through a discussion of recent film, before moving into a thoughtful historiographical positioning of his book within LGBT history, queer history, social history, and labour history. The first chapter begins at the end of the nineteenth century and focuses on the lives of gender-nonconforming cross-dressers, transvestites, and drag performers, and then moves to consider the earlier centuries of the gay Welsh past. From here, the book moves to its principal focus on the twentieth century, starting with the legal restrictions placed on mostly working-class gay men. The second chapter provides a 'collective biography' to examine the expressions and policing of these men 'at the local level', which prompted a liberalising agenda, through the work of Leo Abse, for instance, from the 1950s onwards. The book then traces

the emergence of LGBT networks, communication, and connection in periodicals, public toilets ('cottages'), bars, clubs, advice lines, and social and political organisations from the 1960s to the 1980s. These networks were supplemented by the LGBT spaces of sociability, especially bars and clubs, described in chapter four. As Leeworthy moves to the development of legal reforms and LGBT organisation in the fifth chapter, he makes much of the close connection between liberalising political work and Labour politics. The sixth and final chapter focuses on the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, which threatened to undermine the public gay culture that had taken shape in the previous decades. It then moves, however, to discussing the relationship between queer and national identities, which is developing into an LGBT national identity in the twenty-first century.

Leeworthy's book is accessible for a general readership while also based on sound scholarly and archival research, which makes it a valuable resource for academic readers as well. As such, general readers will find it engaging and informative, and academic readers will recognise new interventions into the LGBT history of Wales. The book is of particular value in two ways. First, Leeworthy's 'history from below' is primarily drawn from the lives of ordinary gay men and women (mostly men, it must be stressed and as Leeworthy acknowledges). This perspective provides the first such extended narrative of the LGBTQ experience in Wales. Further, it illustrates his balanced approach between queer uncertainties and historical narrative,

To date, much of the work on queer Wales has focused on prominent figures who typically share a class experience removed from the daily lives of many of the queer people living in Wales throughout its history

as these recovered experiences do not cohere into a single LGBT experience but instead demonstrate that sexual identities do not often settle into the sexual categories of a politically progressive narrative. Second, he notes the strong connections between LGBTQ history, social history, and labour history. This approach aligns gay Wales with Welsh labour history, indirectly queering one of the dominant political narratives of Wales. It also provides an important correction to the assumption that working-class Wales, especially South Wales, was generally hostile to gender difference, as seen, for instance, in the example of Billy Pugh's drag performances in Merthyr Tydfil.

As the title of the book suggests, Leeworthy deals more

with the 'G' of LGBT history, but provides a fascinating discussion of the 'margins within the margins' of gay Welsh working class experience. To date, much of the work on queer Wales has focused on prominent figures who typically share a class experience removed from the daily lives of many of the queer people living in Wales throughout its history. Leeworthy's book breaks with this trend to provide not only a concise introduction to the topic, but also to ground queer Wales in the lived social and political life of the nation. ▽

Huw Osbourne is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at the Royal Military College of Canada, where he carries out research on queer Welsh literature and culture

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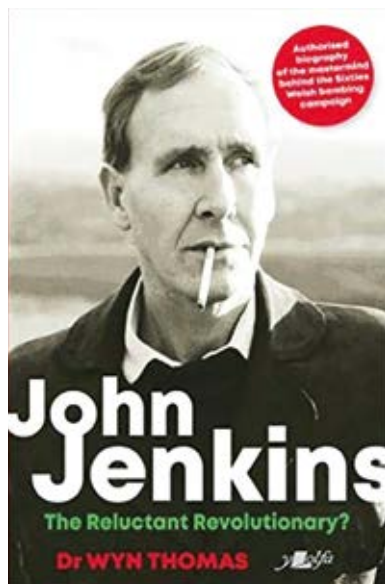
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John Jenkins: The Reluctant Revolutionary?



Wyn Thomas
Y Lolfa, 2019

Joe Atkinson

Take a stroll down your average Welsh high street canvassing public opinion of John Barnard Jenkins and responses might range widely based on the politics of the individuals surveyed. A principled freedom fighter and Welsh national hero? Or a fanatical terrorist and enemy of the British state? Militant activists in the mould of Jenkins invariably elicit contrasting, partisan and hyperbolic reactions.

However, in all likelihood the vast majority of your sample would simply ask *who?* For while he is undoubtedly one of the most influential figures in the Welsh nationalist movement, Jenkins has shunned publicity for half a century since his arrest for plotting the bombing of Charles Windsor's investiture as Prince of Wales.

In his new book, the historian Dr Wyn Thomas sheds new light on the life and motivations of John Jenkins, going far beyond the hyperbole to get to the truth of a man he hypothesises was a 'reluctant revolutionary'. Thomas' 2013 debut monograph, *Hands Off Wales*, chronicled the Welsh nationalist movement in the 1960s, which culminated in the bombing of the investiture by Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru (MAC), the 'Movement for the Defence of Wales'. In *John Jenkins: The Reluctant Revolutionary?* he digs deeper, presenting a meticulously compiled examination of Jenkins, the man who spearheaded the campaign as MAC's director of operations.

This authorised biography is set against more than a decade of interviews with Jenkins himself, as well as with his family, friends, associates, and those who don't regard him so warmly. The book is truly impressive in its scope and search for truth above all else.

Truth, and its manipulation by the ruling classes, is a theme that runs through the spine of this biography. Jenkins is fixated on the idea that authorities subjugate populations by misrepresenting history and peddling their 'truths'. Through Thomas, a now 86-year-old Jenkins lays out his own truth in minute detail, speaking candidly on not only how he did what he did, but *why*.

Perhaps inevitably, the book's headline-grabbing revelation is that MAC could have assassinated Charles Windsor at his Caernarfon investiture, the fiftieth anniversary of which passed in July. Jenkins insists that the group he led comprised individuals willing to die for the Welsh nationalist cause. He even divulges that he could have been the one to fire the bullet to end the young prince's life and change the course of history.

This disclosure is quite inconsistent with Jenkins' personality – he's not a man to dwell on what might have been and throughout the book seeks to avoid hypotheticals. The fact of the matter is that while MAC could have killed Charles, they did not. Nor did they pull a trigger for the cause. Jenkins talks of his commitment to a 'hearts and minds' campaign to win over the

Welsh public while leader of MAC and insists that the group never set out to kill or injure anyone.

But the campaign was not without bloodshed. Two MAC members died transporting a bomb intended to detonate at the investiture, while a 10-year-old boy's life was forever changed when he kicked a device that had failed to explode on the day. How heavy these facts weigh on Jenkins' conscience is unclear; he expresses remorse for the victims but remains convinced MAC's actions were entirely justified and in pursuit of a righteous cause.

Jenkins tells Thomas that he was inspired to the cause of Welsh nationalism and militant activism by the failure to protect Wales by political means. He speaks of the profound impact of the Aberfan disaster and the flooding of the Clywedog and Tryweryn valleys on his psyche and that of the whole nation. Targeting the pipes that carried Welsh water to English cities was a symbolic retaliation by a nationalist movement that found its voice in the 1960s, a decade of global revolution, rebellion and non-conformism.

Thomas does well to set Jenkins' story against this historical context. The book's structure is simple, a linear exploration of Jenkins' life from birth to the modern day, a 400-page personal, distinctly Welsh odyssey through eighty years of global revolution.

Delving deeper into the book, you realise that Jenkins lived a rich life outside of the movement that defined him. As a younger man in his mid-twenties, he got

Jenkins talks of his commitment to a 'hearts and minds' campaign to win over the Welsh public while leader of MAC and insists that the group never set out to kill or injure anyone

the opportunity to see the world with the British Army. Stints posted in Berlin and Cyprus not only provided a colourful departure from family life in the declining industrial south Wales valleys, but also give context to his transformation from moderate patriot to violent militant.

Jenkins' insights into the nationalist Cypriot movement EOKA are particularly fascinating; he discusses seeing first-hand how a small but organised group of revolutionaries can free a country in the grips of colonialism. These experiences heavily influenced the way Jenkins would go on to lead MAC – a small, tight-knit group of activists that had a profound impact on the road to devolution in Wales.

Through his interviews, Thomas allows his subject's personality to shine through the pages. He does not impose his own personal feelings about a

man with whom he developed a close enough relationship for the private and distrusting Jenkins to open up. Jenkins comes across as intelligent and principled, but also single-minded and often arrogant, insisting that he cannot engage in a task without being totally committed. Thomas explores the impact this single-mindedness has had on his life, in the breakdown of personal relationships and the struggle to build new ones.

He is also deeply idealistic, professing that his one true love got away at the tender age of fifteen. The way he dwells on this relationship – which he admits he has idealised – reveals a contradiction in the personality of a man who is otherwise unwavering and unapologetic about the actions he has taken.

This is a sympathetic deep-dive into the mind and motivations of a principled and emotionally rigid man who delivered some of the biggest blows in the name of Welsh nationalism. The reluctance with which Thomas characterises Jenkins is certainly true of his diffidence towards self-promotion, but the complete conviction with which he pursued his brand of militant nationalism shows he was certainly not reluctant to act. Thomas ultimately allows the reader to make their own judgement about John Jenkins, a much more complicated man than many would expect. ►

Joe Atkinson is Public Affairs and Communications Consultant at NUS Wales

Paul Murphy: Peacemaker – an autobiography

Paul Murphy, a Labour politician for more than fifty-five years, has held many distinguished positions in British politics. He was MP for Torfaen from 1987 to 2015 and twice Secretary of State for Wales. He was Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, having previously been Minister of State for Political Development there, during which time he was deputy to Mo Mowlam in the negotiations towards the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. He was a Privy Councillor, a Cabinet Minister and received a Life Peerage. There is every reason for the reader to expect the 'insider's story of a life in politics' which the book promises on its cover. However, that is not quite what we get.

This 'autobiography' reads more like an aide memoire, the brief headings listed to prompt recall from a well-stocked memory. To anyone not sharing that memory-bank, an aide memoire does not convey detail or depth. Paul Murphy has had the political experiences, and some have been profoundly important and influential ones, but he has chosen to give us only the headlines.

I read a politician's autobiography in order to get a ringside seat at some of the key

Paul Murphy
University of Wales Press, 2020

Angela Graham



events of the time. I want to know, from one of the protagonists, what those crises, those triumphs, were really like, both at the time and with the benefit of reflection and hindsight. I read in order to understand not only the motivations of the author but of his or her party, and indeed to gain some insight into the forces and pressures that had to be faced or harnessed. I read in order to have my empathy extended and my prejudices challenged by one who was not on the sidelines as I was, but actually in the ring.

This book has 'Peacemaker' in the title and the word is the header on every second page, so I hoped to learn something about peace-making, a skill that is incontrovertibly necessary at this time of turmoil. Having grown up during Northern Ireland's Troubles, I was also keen to share Paul Murphy's insights as I live out that on-going Process. Having lived in Wales for nearly forty years, I was looking forward to his take on its political development.

Time and again, it seems to me, he holds back from the telling detail or the insightful gloss on 'the story' as we know it. On news of his appointment to the Cabinet in 1999, Welsh

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Secretary, Rhodri Morgan said of him to the *Daily Mirror*, 'the most memorable thing which makes him stand out is that he is not driven by ambition and doesn't have an ego!'. Does this explain the striking reticence? I wish that someone had encouraged Paul Murphy to believe that the reader really would be interested to know more.

For example, he tells us that Holy Week 1998, the crisis of the Good Friday Agreement talks, was 'one of the most important weeks of my life' but also that it 'has been very well documented by others'. His job was to 'concentrate on Strand 1, relating to Northern Ireland institutions and related issues such as languages...'. Accounts such as Alastair Campbell's make it clear that contention over language issues nearly unpicked everything at the last moment and they remain a huge political problem.

With the same understatement, Paul Murphy writes that during his first stint as Secretary of State for Wales, 'Ron Davies resigned, which was a traumatic event'. He does not tell us why it was traumatic. I applaud any wish to avoid prurience or sensationalism, but it must also be possible to avoid depriving the reader of an understanding of the political context and ramifications.

Similarly, he writes, on page 162, 'I had gradually changed my mind on devolution, to which I had originally been opposed, but the Thatcher years had guided many of us to a different view.' I would love to know about that evolution of perspective.

As a representative of the leader of the opposition, he attended the memorial service for former First Minister of Northern Ireland, Ian Paisley. He comments, 'Ian had worked hard to make peace in Ulster, and his unique relationship with Martin McGuinness had been admired the world over.' Given that earlier he has mentioned being ordered by Mo Mowlam, during the last 48 hours of Good Friday Agreement negotiations, to 'deal with Ian Paisley and his supporters, who were at that point marching on Stormont through the snow (they stopped!)', it would have been fascinating to know how he stopped them and how such confrontational tactics squared with hard work for peace; never mind an insight into that 'unique' relationship between McGuinness and Paisley.

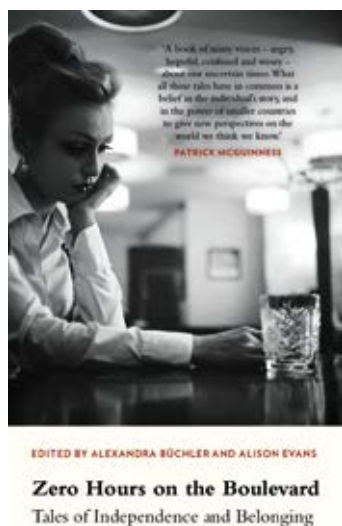
Baron Murphy is enormously respected in Northern Ireland, Wales and Westminster due to his personal qualities and his many political achievements. It is clear from his painstaking, generous

acknowledgement of family ties, of colleagues and friends, that he places a very high value on friendship and fidelity, on hard work and service. Therefore, I infer that these qualities, along with patience and persistence, inform the work of a peacemaker. Had he left less to inference and given us sharper examples of that skill in action the book would be more satisfying.

This autobiography contrasts with another one, recently published, also by a politician who could claim to be a peacemaker. Seamus Mallon, a founder member of the SDLP and former Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, was a key protagonist in the Peace Process. His book (with Andy Pollack) *A Shared Homeplace* is vivid and frank, without egotism.

I ended this book feeling grateful to Paul Murphy for his political commitment and admiring his personal integrity but judging that the qualities that informed his peace-making may have been allowed to hamper his effectiveness as an autobiographer. ►

Angela Graham is a broadcaster and writer, currently writing a novel about the politics of language in Northern Ireland



Notes from a Swing State: Writing from Wales & America

Zero Hours on the Boulevard: Tales of Independence and Belonging

Zoë Brigley
Parthian, 2019

**Alison Evans and
Alexandra Büchler eds**
Parthian, 2019

Polly Manning

'I am writing this in the aftermath of my fourth miscarriage.'

Zoë Brigley's introduction to 'Turtle Hatching', a personal essay meditating on pregnancy and child loss, serves as an apt distillation of the raw intimacy which charges her debut collection of essays.

Certainly, one of the most immediate and striking characteristics of *Notes from a Swing State: Writing from Wales and America*, is its boldness and lucidity of expression. Originally from Caerphilly, now assistant professor at Ohio State University, Brigley's publishing credits outside of academia consist of three poetry collections. Her poetic voice carries through into these essays with ease.

A criticism often levelled at the personal essay is its potential for self-indulgence. In the case of *Notes from a Swing State*, however, Brigley's maintained focus on critically relevant topics including gender inequality, mass shootings, and social deprivation prevent the essays from drifting towards decadence. Each narrative integrates the subjective with the objective in a

balance which illuminates the most crucial aspects of both.

Arguably, the greatest achievement of the collection is made in its first third, amongst a group of essays collectively labelled 'Girlhood, Motherhood, and Beyond'. The opening 'Arches' explores a reconciliation with grief in the wake of miscarriage, comparatively rendering the emptiness of a freestanding stone arch in Arches National Park, Utah, as a womb-like space. Marvelling at the beauty of the arch, Brigley muses that the visual and emotional power of empty space lies in its ability to conjure 'the spaces that most need filling in our own lives'. With a powerful poetry, she proceeds to interpret such emptiness as 'lack made beautiful' in a radical and moving transformation of grief into hope. Brigley slips with ease from this intimate psychology into sharp social criticism, spearing notions of the 'tortured male genius', and the 'nobility of suffering' in relation to art with her own vision of creative motherhood.

It is certainly no coincidence that Brigley's explorations of patriarchy and misogyny shine the brightest within the personal essay format, their power deriving from the acceptance or validation of women's subjective experiences.

The collection dips into remembrances of Brigley's Welsh upbringing and the often-troubled cultural heritage which that entails. In 'The Missing Line', she examines the socio-cultural loss entailed by the shortening of the Llynfi valley railway line (and others like it) – aptly, through overlapping reminiscences belonging both to her and her mother, in a demonstration of

the intergenerational legacy of economic deprivation. It is certainly not a new picture of Welsh valleys life, complete with 'dark, spidery pitheads', but Brigley's personal examination reminds us of the socio-emotional cost of a political and economic reality.

Notes from a Swing State – as the title would suggest – definitely claims American society as its central focus, and Brigley's Welsh background is largely sidelined. It is hard to feel too disgruntled by this imbalance, however, given the punch in her commentary on the US. The pithy 'Fright House' documents with urgency an ethical culture in which fascist acts of violence have been allowed to blossom into banality, meanwhile 'Nine Stories with Guns, and One Without' renders immediate the 'potential to end life instantly' represented by American gun culture in the space of ten concise portraits of day-to-day American life, and the gun's ever-presence within it.

Where *Notes from a Swing State* uses its non-fictional, personal format to colour reality with the emotional impact of fiction, *Zero Hours on the Boulevard: Tales of Independence and Belonging* brims with short stories whose fictional urgencies mirror those of our own reality.

This anthology from writers across Europe comes courtesy of Alexandra Büchler, an editor and director of Literature Across Frontiers, and Alison Evans, editor and creator of the Parthian Baltic series. In line with Parthian's internationalism, the stories come from writers across Europe, taking as their settings small nations as far-afield as Malta and Catalonia.

The collection opens with Albert Forns' 'The Infinite Demonstration', a timely portrait of the September 11th rallies for independence which take place in Catalonia every year. It is a comic and often self-derogatory critique of the authenticity and effectiveness of civic protest once it reaches the national scale and consumerism joins in – 'the quarter of a million T-shirts have to be bought from Made-in-Taiwan suppliers.' However, the story comes after the anthology's prefacing 'Lands of Mine', a poem by Hanan Issa which powerfully draws together reminiscences of violence 'of Fallujah, of Aberfan, of Baghdad, of Caerdydd', all of which find unification in her identity. In comparison, Forns' narrative reads a little flat. The story is too long, the 'Infinite' length of protest which he tries to convey drifting into genuine repetition and dullness.

Llŷr Gwyn Lewis' 'Autumn In Springtime' suffers from a similar problem: the usual meaty succinctness that make short stories such an entertaining genre is missing. What we read is an eloquent, occasionally thought-provoking account of a Welshman's holiday to Buenos Aires and Gaiman in Patagonia. The narrator lengthily muses over the nature of history and story, and Patagonia's Welsh colony in what resembles a fairly random line of focus, almost self-indulgently slack.

There are gems here, however. Uršul'a Kovalyk's 'The Garden' offers a moving portrayal of the social sterilisation brought about by the removal of urban green spaces, the capitalist transformation of 'a safe paradise on earth' into 'a grey concrete surface'. Eluned Gramich's

'The Book of New Words' captures with pin-point accuracy the emotional experience of an Othered teenager, whose experiences of racism, teenage angst and isolation serve as biting reflections of a political atmosphere in which difference is taboo.

It is telling that some of the most memorable pieces in *Zero Hours on the Boulevard* adopt an experimental form, as exaggerated portraits express most aptly the experiential consequences of our charged societal fractures. In 'GB Has Left the Group', Siôn Tomos Owen examines modern masculinity and the psychology behind industrial south Wales' 'Leave' vote in the Brexit referendum, all through the unsaid nuance of a WhatsApp group chat. Lloyd Markham's 'Mercy' – from the acclaimed *Bad Ideas/Chemicals* – imagines a near-futuristic figuring of indifference as benevolence, and in 'Split', Durre Shahwar searingly exposes the racist cruelty of the Home Office's requirements for citizenship: centred around a test centre which allows 'no time for guilt or empathy'.

Strengths and drawbacks aside, what unites both *Notes from a Swing State* and *Zero Hours on the Boulevard* as books worth reading is their ability to examine the various socio-political and economic structures which define and trouble today's Western societies with despair, beauty, greed, and – occasionally – enlightenment. ►

Polly Manning is a young writer based in Swansea, currently working on her first collection of poetry and a screenplay

Q&A

David Snowden is Director of the Cynefin Centre which focuses on the application of learning from the Natural Sciences to social systems, and Chief Scientific Officer of Cognitive Edge (the Cynefin Centre is the not-for-profit and research arm of that organisation). He has been working in the field since leaving IBM in 2004, and has developed a practice that covers four continents. His work ranges from counter-terrorism to understanding agency in health journeys and many other applications. **Noreen Blanluet** asks the questions.

What's your biggest achievement?

Anything that has been achieved has been achieved with colleagues – but the creation and subsequent evolution of the Cynefin Framework for decision making is one thing. Aside from making *cynefin* one of the most referenced Welsh words worldwide, it's made a real difference in a range of fields. It has been used in the Cabinet Office to explain the role of religion in the Bush White House, a whole range of health applications and many others. Making a difference to how people make strategic and operational decisions is rewarding. The other main achievement is the design of the first distributed ethnographic tool in SenseMaker®. We used that on a pioneering project in the Valleys using children as ethnographers to their own communities, a whole range of projects in Northern Ireland including one of the first fully functional patient journey systems, multiple projects to understand impact in the development sector, many others.

What are you excited about at the moment?

We've now got enough experience to scale up a lot of our work. The Citizen Engagement work that was pioneered in Wales has now been taken up in Singapore and Colombia, and we are looking at other European and US pilots at the moment. We have a big vision here: to get every 16 year old in every school in the world acting as a citizen ethnographer to their own community – giving real time feedback on the street stories and day to day concerns of their communities. We've also pioneered the idea of trans-generational teams working on local interventions to improve conditions. Linked to that we've been looking at issues on plastic waste, domestic violence and obesity reduction along with other projects. A common theme of all of these is to increase agency both in situational assessment and decision making on a local, regional and national basis. Letting people tell their story is one thing, but we



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also empower them to interpret what that story means. To adapt a quote *speaking reality unto power!*

If you could change one thing about Wales to improve people's lives over the next twenty years, what would it be?

We need to understand the little things that make a real difference and from which greater things can grow. We need to empower communities to do that within a wider governance framework and move away from grand schemes that make good press stories at the time but make little difference in reality. If all local authorities in Wales, along with voluntary groups took up the Citizen Engagement capability, we could achieve that. In short, make Wales a centre of excellence for new forms of governance and government.

Noreen Blanluet is Director of Coproduction Network Wales and a member of *the welsh agenda's* editorial group



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