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Falling out over money

Two weeks following the May election the new Prime Minister David Cameron visited the National Assembly and declared he wanted his relationship with it to be based on "mutual respect". He said he regarded the nations of the UK as a family which he wanted to keep together. And he added, "I don't want our family to fall out over money". However, unless things change pretty soon, and they show little sign of doing so, Cardiff Bay and Westminster will be doing just that.

In the Con-Lib 30-page document *The Coalition: our programme for government*, published in May, Wales gets just one specific mention, and it's not encouraging. It comes under the heading 'Political Reform' and states: "We recognise the concerns expressed by the Holtham Commission on the system of devolution funding. However, at this time, the priority must be to reduce the deficit and therefore any change to the system must await the stabilisation of the public finances. Depending on the outcome of the forthcoming referendum, we will establish a process similar to the Calman Commission for the Welsh Assembly".

Gerald Holtham, Chair of the Welsh Government's Independent Commission on Funding and Finance for Wales, described this statement as "surreal". Why? Because he has calculated that if the Treasury were to reform the way devolution is funded so that it relates to a needs-based formula rather than the present one that relies on a population count, it would save around £3.5 billion. So if the Westminster's priority is, as it says, to reduce the deficit, that would make a significant contribution.

But this is where politics intervenes. That £3.5 billion saving would come almost entirely from a reduction in Scotland's block grant. Scotland has benefited enormously since the Barnett formula was introduced back in 1979 because its population has declined. However, with the Scottish Parliament elections looming next May, the Westminster government is leery about touching its budget. Indeed, the Scottish threat in the form of the SNP has been the major reason why no Westminster government has been anxious to tamper with the Barnett formula.

Meanwhile, as Gerald Holtham's Commission has definitively demonstrated, Wales has been losing out by at least £300 million a year. This is the extra money we would be entitled to if devolution was funded on a needs-based system analogous to the one used by the Treasury to distribute money to the English regions. Wales would receive at least 114 per cent of average English expenditure per head compared with the 112 per cent it actually receives. This should be taken into account before any budget cuts are directed at Wales.

An analysis of Treasury figures by Holtham showed that between 1999-2000 and 2010-2011 Wales's relative expenditure per head on programmes covered by the Barnett formula declined from 125 per cent to 112 per cent of the corresponding level in England. Had expenditure growth in Wales kept pace with England, it would have meant an additional £1.82 billion, or 11.6 per cent of the block grant, being available to the Welsh Government this year. The Holtham Commission showed that Scotland is actually over funded on that scale, receiving 120 per cent of English expenditure per head, when needs formulae indicate the appropriate number is nearer 105 per cent – an excess approaching £4 billion a year.

When she addressed the National Assembly for the first time in June the Secretary of State for Wales Cheryl Gillan declared that the Barnett formula "was coming to the end of its existence". Whether the end is sooner or later expect some family rows across the UK.

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coming up...

Darlith Eisteddfod Lecture **Entry free**
3 August 2010, 1.00pm — National Eisteddfod, Pagoda, Ebbw Vale

Daniel G. Williams, Swansea University
Aneurin Bevan a Paul Robeson: Sosialaeth, Dosbarth a Hunaniaeth
Aneurin Bevan and Paul Robeson: Socialism, Class and Identity
Simultaneous translation provided

Coffee Shop Debate **Entry free**
Tuesday 7 September, 6.30pm-7.30pm — Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff

Ifor Thomas, performance poet, declares Stieg Larsson is the Tolstoy of our age.

Where is Wales Going Next? **Entry free**
Thursday 23 September, 5.30pm — Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay

Lecture by Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM. *In association with the Cymmrodorion.*

Creativity in Hard Times **£65 (£60 IWA members)**
Conference to launch Cardiff Design Fortnight. Friday 1 October 2010
10.00am to 3.30pm — Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay

Keynote speaker: Peter Lord, Wales's leading art historian
Cardiff Design Fortnight launch, Senedd, 4pm - 6pm

History, Heritage and Urban Regeneration **£45 (£40 IWA members)**
IWA Swansea Branch conference, Thursday 14 October 10.00am-5.00pm
National Waterfront Museum, Swansea

Regeneration in an Age of Austerity **£95 (£90 IWA members)**
Wednesday -Thursday 20-21 October — St David's Hall, Cardiff

Keynote speakers: Jocelyn Davies AM, Deputy Minister for Housing and Regeneration; Nick Bennett, Chief Executive, Community Housing Cymru; Professor Dave Adamson, Director, Centre for Regeneration Excellence, Wales; and Professor Kevin Morgan, Regeneration Institute, Cardiff University.
In association with the Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association, the Regeneration Skills Collective, and the Centre for Regeneration Excellence Wales.

Coffee Shop Debate **Entry free**
Tuesday 2 November, 6.30pm-7.30pm — Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff

Sustrans Director Lee Waters asks whether the time has come to get rid of the car.

Opportunities for a Confederal University in South West Wales
£65 (£60 IWA members)
Thursday 18 November 10.00am-3.30pm
University of Wales Trinity St David, Carmarthen

Keynote speakers: Dr Medwin Hughes, Vice-Chancellor, University of Wales Trinity Saint David; Professor David Warner, Principal and Vice Chancellor Swansea Metropolitan University; Dr Catrin Thomas, Pro Vice Chancellor Research, University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Adding Life to Years **£45 (£40 IWA members)**
Wednesday 10 November, 10.00am-1.30pm — Catrin Finch Centre, Glyndŵr University, Wrexham

Keynote speakers: Ruth Marks, Older People's Commissioner for Wales; Professor Odette Parry, Director Social Inclusion Unit, Glyndŵr University; John Osmond, Director IWA.

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Creating a Positive Business Environment for Wales
IWA Economy and Finance Group **£5.00**

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Wales 2010: year zero

Peter Stead says that, at the start of a new century for our country, we should break clear of our default position of whinging

The late Professor Emrys Bowen was one of our greatest lecturers precisely because he had the gift of bringing both the landscape and history of Wales alive. My memory of him always prompts the thought that all our best academics and politicians have first and foremost been romantics. You shouldn't bother meddling in the affairs of Wales unless you feel the thrill of the land and the sheer narrative power of the events that have unfolded in these western hills.

To hear Professor Bowen wax eloquent about the Cistercian monks tending their sheep gave one a fuller sense of Wales than any text-book. Above all though it was the Industrial Revolution that came to life in what can only be called his promotion of the Welsh past. The coming of industry was, of course, the most important event in our history. It allowed a mushrooming of our population, it gave them a considerably higher standard of housing and income, a much richer pattern of associational and cultural life and made them more fully global citizens.

By way of introducing the great and exciting story of the industrial and technological revolution that would take the name of Wales around the world, Professor Bowen would tell the story of how in 1767 John Guest travelled from the Midlands to Merthyr with a bundle of sticks which he had cut to the dimensions of the blast furnace he intended to build. Staying overnight at an inn, a servant had mistakenly used his sticks to light an early morning fire. Guest mounted his horse and went back to England to redo his vital measurements. The story ends happily, the blast furnace is successfully constructed, and Merthyr never looked back.

As soon as the recent General Election was announced I realised that an era was ending. In fact, more than an era, a century was ending and more significantly a new one, the 21st Century was only now truly about to unfold. Just as the so-called Edwardian era was essentially a celebratory postscript to everything that was Victorian, with the 20th Century proper only beginning in 1914, so from the perspective of May 2010, we seem to have been suddenly cut off from our past and plunged into a new dispensation. The landscape is so strange that quite simply we have to begin working everything out, our bearings, our language and possibly our values, from first principles. The old rhetoric and shibboleths suddenly seem hollow and irrelevant.

Two thoughts came to my mind. First the title and description that director Roberto Rossellini gave to his 1945 movie about Berlin: he just called it *Germania, Anno Zero*. I am in no doubt that for Wales, 2010 is best thought of as Year Zero. But my other thought was of John Guest for whose descendents my family were to work. As I consider the Wales of today, I just hope that somebody is riding into my country with a few technological and political blueprints.

The 2010 Election itself was almost entirely a matter of three debates in which most of the fundamental issues were avoided. Two men wanted change and more participation and one man bravely promised to protect the working class. After an excruciating weekend of horse-trading, Labour inevitably and deservedly lost office and an unholy alliance of those representing southern England and wanting change came into being. Where, one wondered, did this leave Wales? Presumably, on the barricades resisting cuts, cuts so savage one began to feel that the country as a whole might be obliterated. 'Let's do away with Wales' somebody is bound to say, 'that'll save a few bob'.

Inevitably, in Wales itself the Cameron-Clegg era has been dominated by the debates on funding levels and the referendum. These are major issues and provide useful rallying cries to enthuse the troops in the heartland. They help to cement that sense of a united front that we are going to need even as they serve to highlight the notion that Wales is altogether a different entity to England.

This is no time for petty party politics in Wales: we must speak as one. All of this, however, should not blind us to the fact that, to a degree, we are using these issues of funding and the constitution to disguise our lack of thinking on more fundamental issues. The whinge mode is the default position in Welsh politics. In the current dispensation it is a particularly useful mode for the Labour Party. We need never doubt Labour's commitment to defending the needs of its own people, but I see little signs of apology for having taken us into this mess.

Read Christopher Harvie's *Broonland* and John Lanchester's

"The coming of industry was the most important event in our history…" Pictured is a scene from the cradle of the industrial revolution, George Childs's 1840 painting, *Dowlais Works, Merthyr Tydfil.*

Whoops and consider the extent to which Blair and Brown fully conspired in sustaining the Thatcher legacy of closing down manufacturing, permitting casino banking, encouraging unbridled consumerism, drinking, gambling and the pop celebrity culture. I have little doubt as to where the bills now arriving should be sent. For the time being we need no lessons on either economics or ethics from Labour at Westminster.

Quite simply we need a new politics in Wales and thank goodness we have the structures and the individuals in place that allow us to make a start. We have all the information that reveals how relatively poor and underdeveloped we are as a society and economy. We need to confront those hard unforgiving facts and broadcast them openly. We should then explain them and to do this we need objective historians who have no time for either Nationalist or Marxist mythology. Wales had always been relatively poor compared to England: hill farming is tougher than that in open country. Industry brought us a well-paid and socially mobile labour force and a dynamic urban culture. However, for a complex number of reasons our industry has largely disappeared. History is like that. One day there is coal and steel, the next day rust. It is Year Zero. We must start again.

We start out with one great asset, for we have in place a class of prominent leaders with a considerable degree of political homogeneity. It is traditional in Wales to talk of a divided leadership and certainly it is easy to separate the respective admirers of Bevan and Gwynfor, or Gwyn Thomas and Emyr Humphreys. The fact is, however, that our leaders basically share the same values. They readily accept that Wales is a distinct entity and that it is a bilingual country. At the centre of their frame of mind and reference, and invariably thought of as a good thing, is what we call the public sector. This is the public life of Wales dominated by state administered or regulated institutions, including the educational system, the health service, the civil service and local government, quangos and the BBC.

Our leaders take this public sector to be the natural order of things. It is a social perspective remarkable for its degree of separation from business and industry. Of course, our leaders pride themselves on having friends and contacts in the private sector but it usually transpires that these friends work for legal, public relations, marketing and consultancy companies that exist to service the public sector.

We have all now realised that, as instructed by the First Minister, this public sector has to be rolled back. We need to completely redefine the nature of public life in Wales so that people are doing things other than administering the lives of others or, as is more often the case, recommending ways in which lives should be administered. After several decades in which the leadership élite in Wales has done very well out of incredibly high salaries and excellent pension schemes (cradle to the grave indeed) they now owe it to the people to come up with a new model.

It was this élite that persuaded voters that Wales was a distinct political identity. They now have to prove that

their Wales can fulfil the expectations of three million people. Early on they will need to devise a much slimmer system of local government services and a much less monolithic National Health Service. And all the while they will have to be stimulating economic growth and a new range of creative job opportunities. In the first instance those jobs will have to come from industries relating to food production, tourism, transport and energy. To an unprecedented extent we will need to exploit the fact that there are large English centres of population living just over the border. We are now here to service them. Meanwhile south Wales has never fully cashed in on its proximity to London and its high-tech western extension.

As our politicians begin to plan this revolution in the Welsh mind-set, it has quite clearly already occurred to them that the place to start is the educational system. 'The Knowledge Economy' has become a catch phrase. It now has to become a massive reality. Education, of course, has been fundamental in shaping modern Wales. It was the early 20th Century devolution of education and the excellence of our grammar schools in the first half of that century that engendered a real air of distinction in Wales and guaranteed the democratic and humane liberalism of our ruling élite.

We have since squandered a substantial amount of that distinction, partly because of economic decline but also because of political correctness and a profusion of misguided educationalists. Political correctness is invariably an excuse for avoiding tough decisions and the so-called social sciences have done little for the quality of life in Wales. Quite simply the time has now come for Wales to devise an educational system and curriculum that serves its needs.

Education Minister Leighton Andrews has already indicated how much has been achieved and offered a vision for the future. It is reassuring to see a Minister going on the offensive and giving the country a wake-up call. He is surely right to stress that we have every right to expect educationalists to think first of what they can do for their country. We should respond to his challenge by ensuring that everyone now accepts that schools and colleges are at the heart of Project Wales. All our efforts, and I would say funds, must be focused on these institutions.

We must once again create a Wales where qualified teachers are regarded with more respect than consultants and where schools are fully integrated into the lives of their communities. Wales should pioneer schemes to ensure that school and college premises are open 24 hours a day for seven days a week with pools, gyms, labs, libraries, studios, computers and canteens always available. We have just lived through an era that gave up chapels and youth clubs and opted for pubs. It is time to restructure the lives of young people. Private sponsors should be invited to participate in this 24/7 revolution.

We have become a nation of broadcasters. We should now encourage our very accomplished communicators to direct their industry towards servicing the young people of Wales in a more structured way. We should aim for regular daily courses of on-line educational programmes.

Leighton Andrews has already challenged our myriad universities (a new one is probably being created as I write) to collectively address the needs of Wales. Clearly we need to rethink the role of universities in Wales. At school and college level the trick is to balance the teaching of science, technology and business with courses in the humanities and arts. At university level the emphasis has to shift far more decisively in the direction of wealth-creating subjects.

In a brilliant analysis of the UK's plight, Sir John Rose of Rolls Royce argued that the country was not getting sufficient return for the millions it has invested in science. He called for a focus on technologies that could be commercially exploited. And he cited the case of MIT in the States whose graduates have established more than 25,000 companies with annual sales now estimated to be worth $2 trillion, the equivalent of the 11th largest economy in the world.

As from Year Zero our universities have to be at the forefront of regeneration. Arguably, no other sector in Wales is changing so quickly. However, as we aim for new kinds of courses, institutions and partnerships, we must avoid both excessive bureaucracy and the excessive jargon so-beloved by educationalists. Above all, we should be unafraid of ensuring that that there are fewer Chiefs than Indians.

As in local government and health there are too many institutional hierarchies. In the past Wales has been moulded by landowners, coalowners and Labour councillors. As of Year Zero power should be passing into the hands of entrepreneurial academics, on the one hand responding to democratic politicians and on the other prompting manufacturers and sales departments.

"It is reassuring to see a Minister going on the offensive and giving the country a wake-up call. He is surely right to stress that we have every right to expect educationalists to think first of what they can do for their country."

Inevitably, there will be howls of protest. These are difficult waters. Academic freedom and academic excellence are treasured concepts that need to be clearly understood and defended. Yet the USA has conclusively demonstrated that it is possible to devise a dynamic higher education system that combines choice, social mobility and academic excellence even as it promotes economic transformation.

For our leaders then it is pay-back time. Wales has nourished you, now you have to ensure that you can carry the country as a whole with you. This brings us to our second great asset - the communities of Wales of which, over the years, we have made so much. We are all products of villages or small towns which, in our hearts, we know to be uniquely blessed by the creator and vastly superior to the place five miles down the Valley. In truth our vaunting of our home patches has sounded a little hollow in recent years. Many of us have sat idly by or just gone for holidays in Spain as chapels, shops, pubs and cinemas have closed and satellite dishes vie with For Sale notices as forms of street decoration. As communities they have seemingly only been saved by satellite television, cheap pub meals, supermarkets and take-away restaurants. The Rhondda writer Rachel Trezise has been here to write the first draft of our contemporary history.

In the General Election David Cameron one minute enthused and then the next remained silent about his idea of the Big Society. In Wales it was perhaps rightly ridiculed as sounding hopelessly utopian, vague and fashioned exclusively for the Home Counties. On reflection, however, it is a vision that could be effectively transformed into a Welsh idiom. Of course, our 'deserted villages' in Wales are not quite as moronic and moribund as our own music-hall stereotype would suggest. There are still countless gatherings such as charity events, coffee mornings, history societies, exercise sessions, contact clubs (desperately seeking speakers for next year's programme) and choirs. All these groups will profess a great love and concern for the state of their community whilst for the most part feeling alienated from its formal politics, whether local or national.

Rachel Trezise has written "the first draft of our contemporary history". Born in Cwmparc in the Rhondda in 1978 she studied Journalism and English at Glamorgan University and Geography and History at Limerick University. She published her semi-autobiographical novel *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl* soon after she graduated in 2000. Described as "A child's Christmas in Wales where the only present you can hope for is that your Mam really does kill your Dad with the bread-knife this time", it won a place on the Orange Futures List. In 2003, Harpers & Queen magazine voted her their 'new face of literature'. Her short story collection *Fresh Apples*, describing life in the Valleys, was published in 2005 and won the inaugural Dylan Thomas Prize the following year. Screenwriter and judge of the prize Andrew Davies described the book as "easily compared to James Joyce's Dubliners". Her third book *Dial M for Merthyr*, published in 2007, is an account of her time on tour with the Welsh alternative rock band *Midasuno*.

Quite simply what we must do in Wales is reactivate our communities so that local pride and concern are effectively channelled into action. This sounds like Cameronesque do-goodery but I think it is taking us near to some social truths that have been buried during our decades of resting smugly in the bosom of the nanny state. Our sense that politicians are there to do everything has encouraged the rest of us to avoid responsibilities and to live lives in which we take the soft options. I believe that there are reservoirs of untapped talent, energy and idealism amongst all age groups waiting for effective means of local communal expression.

I began by saying that basically one's love of Wales is a matter of romance. For me it is also quite unashamedly a matter of nostalgia. In the great age of steam one would alight at any railway station, however humble, and once one had negotiated a way through the smoke and baskets of chicks and racing pigeons on the platform one would spot the well-tended flower-beds and sense the porters pride in the state of their kingdom.

Today one alights at some stations and immediately assumes that there has been a recent air-raid. Apart from anything else one has to look hard to find the small gimcrack sign indicating that you have arrived at the right place. In the old days the sign, the flowers and the uniforms left you in no doubt that you had arrived at the most important place in the world.

Of too many places in Wales it can now truly be said that 'there is no place there'. We are not often there ourselves. We sleep there but otherwise that beloved village of ours with its great choirs, boxers and outside-halves exists only in our minds and in that array of books of our place 'in old photographs'. If we could only reinvent our communities I venture to suggest (and this is not David Cameron speaking: or perhaps it is?) that we will begin to see problem issues such as youth discontent, family breakdowns, people needing care and company and homelessness in a different light. There is no escaping the fact that as from Year Zero we will all have to do more for ourselves and that is no bad thing. You never know we might just reinvent Wales (again) and in the process save it.

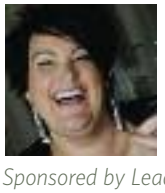
— Professor Peter Stead is a cultural historian based in Swansea.

IWA awards recognise active citizenship

The winners of the first Inspire Wales Awards were unveiled at a ceremony in Cardiff's City Hall in June attended by nearly 400 people. The awards, run by the IWA in association with the Western Mail, recognise the achievements of Welsh people in encouraging active citizenship and in promoting their communities on a local, national and global scale. In all there were ten winners who received their awards from S4C presenter Angharad Mair.

The awards acknowledge excellence across the fields of business, education, science, arts and media, the environment and sport, as well as seeking champions in citizenship and young achievers. The winners range from the founder of the internet company gocompare.com to the man behind a community market in Cardiff, and from a charity worker who has raised funds to save 13,000 lives in Africa, to a police force that has embraced bilingualism.

IWA Chair Geraint Talfan Davies, said, "We have always believed at the IWA that if we want Wales to be a strong, confident and progressive society, it has got to be one that doesn't leave everything to government, but one that takes action as a civil society. The terrific response these awards have received proves that we have tapped into a deep reservoir of agreement about that across the whole of Welsh life."



Business Leader:
Hayley Parsons

Sponsored by Leadership and Management Wales

As founder of internet comparison website gocompare.com Hayley Parsons has proved businesses can thrive even during a recession. In just three-and-a-half years the former office clerk has seen her website develop from an idea conceived around a kitchen table, to a small business where new starters had to assemble their own desks, to a company of 84 employees.

Hayley Parsons knows what it takes to succeed despite not having any formal training and having learnt most of her skills on the job. Since day one of gocompare.com she has attempted to instil an open and honest culture with every one of her employees and has created a thriving and relaxed environment. gocompare.com is the only comparison site recognised by the British Insurance Brokers' Association.

Global Wales:
Angela Gorman

Sponsored by the University of Wales

Cardiff nurse Angela Gorman was one of the founding members of the charity *Hope for Grace Kodindo* which was set-up following a BBC Panorama programme called *Dead Mums Don't Cry*. The episode shadowed obstetrician Dr Grace Kodindo at work in The Hôpital Général de Référence in N'Djamena in Chad. The risk of childbirth-related death at the hospital was one in eleven compared to the UK risk of one in 8,200.

Through her work with *Hope for Grace Kodindo* Angela Gorman saw deaths from eclampsia fall from 14 per cent to 2.3 per cent while newborn deaths fell from 23 per cent to 7.3 per cent. The United Nations Population Fund asked the charity to extend its support to Liberia and Sierra Leone. As a result of all the charity's work in supplying medication, around 13,000 women are estimated to have lived as a result.

Young Achiever:
Jessica Griffiths

Sponsored by Wales & West Utilities

Jessica Griffiths was nominated by her head teacher at Glyncoed Comprehensive School in Blaenau Gwent for her outstanding achievements in the life of the school, for her contribution to community life in Blaenau Gwent, and in representing the community on the European stage. The latter include representing the Wales at Youth Camps across Europe as part of Blaenau Gwent's twinning programme, visiting Germany, Italy, France and Belgium.

She represented the Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum at the TUC Conference in north Wales where she delivered an address on child poverty. All 10 GCSEs she is due to take this year are predicted at grade A or above. She is also studying for grades six in singing and piano and grades five in flute and violin.

Sport:
Lucy Powell

As community sports development officer for Newport City Council Lucy Powell is charged with providing opportunities for thousands of residents. These encourage at risk children and young people to take part in sport. One of her projects has seen anti-social behaviour drop by 48 percent.

She set up the *Friday Night Project*, which gets young people to attend a workshop in exchange for an hour of free sport. Many of the young people who have participated in the project have since become community volunteers and others paid workers. Lucy has also undertaken training to help her deliver education about substance abuse.

Active Citizen:
Adam Rees

Sponsored by UnLtd Wales

For the past six months Adam Rees has co-ordinated Step Up Cymru, a political mentoring scheme. The project, sponsored by the National Assembly, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Welsh Government, paired politicians with an individual from an under-represented group in Wales.

As well as providing mentoring experiences Adam also designed and facilitated a training suite about the Welsh political landscape. As a direct result of the scheme 15 of the 34 participants from under-represented groups are now seeking an opportunity to stand in next year's Assembly elections, and local elections in 2012.

Step Up Cymru has also persuaded eight other participants to set-up charitable organisations on issues of concern to their communities. Another ten are applying for boards and public appointments with organisations such as Welsh Women's Aid, the Design Council, and the Adjudication panel for Wales.

Environmentalist:
Steve Garrett
Sponsored by WRAP Cymru and South Wales Shredding

Steve Garrett established the Riverside Community Market Association in his native Cardiff in 1998 after being involved in similar initiatives in Canada. Aimed at bringing small sellers to city customers, the association has grown rapidly and several markets now operate in both Cardiff and Newport. As well as providing fresh produce they reduce the food miles travelled by local producers, minimising packaging and helping to ensure the financial security and viability of small-scale producers.

Steve, who sits on the Welsh Government's Agrifood Partnership Forum and the Food Standard Agency's advisory committee on community engagement, wants the initiative to make consumers more aware of local food and its role in enhancing the sustainability of Wales. The original Riverside Market, which started out with just 10 stalls twelve years ago, has grown so much it is now the largest farmers' market in Wales.

Welsh at Work:
North Wales Police

Sponsored by the CADCentre UK Ltd

Award received by Meic Raymant, Head of Welsh Language Services, and Sue Jones, Bilingaul Workplace Co-ordinator

North Wales Police have been steadily enhancing the bilingual capacity of the force. It first appointed a Welsh Language advisor in 2000, introducing officer and employee badges stating whether they are learning or are fluent in Welsh. Since 2004 police officer recruits have received mandatory Welsh language lessons as part of their two-year probationary training, and this now applies to all other employees.

The aim of making the force bilingual – as of 2005 all employees have to have Welsh language courtesy skills before appointment – is to establish a strong relationship with the Welsh speaking public. The force has worked closely with the Welsh Language Board and Llysfasi College in producing tailor-made courses.

Arts, Media and Creative Industries:
Olwen Moseley

Sponsored by Active Music Services

As director of enterprise at Cardiff School of Art and Design Olwen Moseley launched the Cardiff Design Festival. Over six years the festival has received much praise for its impact on the arts community. It has achieved so much positive publicity that Design Week magazine listed her as one of the 'Hot 50' most influential people in the UK in 2005 and again in 2009.

Science and Technology:
Professor Meena Upadhyaya

Sponsored by ISG Pearce

In her role as Professor of Medical Genetics at Cardiff University, Professor Upadhyaya carries out research into a number of life-threatening genetic conditions. She is head of the NHS research and development laboratory at the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff, which is developing new technologies to improve the identification of genetic abnormalities associated with inherited disorders.

As well as her research, Meena helps organise and chair national and international scientific and medical meetings. Despite the death of her husband in India, Professor Upadhyaya chose to stay in Wales to finish her PhD. It was a decision made more difficult because it meant she had to bring up their daughter single-handedly away from her extended family.

Educator:
Professor Judy Hutchings

Sponsored by ClickonWales

Professor Judy Hutchings, a researcher at Bangor University, studies children who are at risk of anti-social behaviour. A trained child psychologist Judy has developed effective ways of teaching anger management and problem-solving skills. She has been instrumental in researching and delivering the *Incredible Years* parent, child and teacher programmes across Wales through her Centre at Bangor University and her *Incredible Years Cymru Charity*.

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News

Creating a positive business environment

The private sector should play a far greater part in the delivery of economic development programmes if Wales is to rise from the bottom of the UK competitiveness rankings, says the IWA in its response to the Welsh Government's Economic Renewal consultation.

It says that the Welsh Government's ambivalence about the role of the private sector is preventing the effective application of business expertise. Central to a new approach should be the creation of a 'Welsh business embassy' in London. According to the report, "Establishing a business embassy would provide an ongoing Welsh presence close to the heart of UK Government". It would serve Welsh business interests by:

- Acting as a visible focus for Wales in a world capital.
- Promoting Wales to venture capitalists as an investment location.
- Promoting Welsh exports.
- Targeting businesses seeking inward investment opportunities in the UK.
- Lobbying for Welsh interests at the UK level.

The report concludes that "creation of one or more arm's length bodies, combined with outsourcing of certain delivery functions to private sector-led organisations, is central to the effective implementation of economic development strategies".

The Institute proposes the development of a 'hub and spoke' model to replace the current structure of the Department for the Economy and Transport. A slimmed down civil service hub should focus on policy creation, monitoring and evaluation, with delivery undertaken by a limited number of independent public and private sector organisations.

Other key recommendations include: focusing the Welsh Government's own resources on infrastructure and skills, and specifically on developing high-speed east-west rail infrastructure and ensuring that all school leavers achieve adequate basic skills; and using the £5 billion annual public procurement budget to prompt indigenous private sector growth.

This response draws on the extensive experience of the IWA's Economy and Finance Study Group, as well as on the views of providers of business support, business representative organisations and academics.

Creating a Positive Business Environment for Wales is available from the IWA at £5. The Welsh Government's policy *Economic Renewal - A New Direction*, published on 5 July, is discussed by Stevie Upton and Brian Morgan on page 25.

Resilient personality answer to ageing

The Older People's Commissioner in Wales should combine with the Children's Commissioner in advocating greater inter-generational awareness in schools across the country. This is one suggestion in a new IWA report *Adding Life to Years* which surveys Welsh policy approaches to ageing.

By 2030, 32 per cent of the population will be over 65, compared with 24 per cent today, and 5 per cent will be over 85 compared with just 2 per cent today. One in four children born today can expect to live beyond 100. The report's author, IWA Director John Osmond, said:

"Researchers at Bangor University have been investigating the concept of 'the resilient personality' whose ability to cope with difficulties and overcome problems is seen as being central to successful ageing. The question arises whether resilience can be learned or developed in young people in relation to their understanding of what life will be like in their older age. In studying resilient children and their families, researchers have identified protective processes and resources that make some young people more stress resistant and help them develop strength, courage and a positive attitude to life."

Among other suggestions put forward in the report are:

- Providing timely advice for older people. For instance, it is estimated that as much as £293 million worth of means-tested benefits are unclaimed in Wales each year.
- Finding ways to promote more positive attitudes towards ageing, for instance by publicising the contribution and achievements of older people.
- Promoting thinking on how future housing developments can incorporate design features more attuned to the needs of an ageing population.
- Encouraging a national debate on the problems around paying for care homes for those who need them.
- Expanding the annual Gwanwyn spring festival in May which celebrates creativity in older age.

The report says the establishment of the Older People's Commissioner is presenting a huge opportunity for developing a distinctive Welsh agenda on ageing policy. "The role is unique within the United Kingdom and is attracting a good deal of attention around the world," said John Osmond. "It reflects a determination on the part of the Welsh Government to devote more attention, and potentially more resources to the needs of older people."

Adding Life to Years is available from the IWA at £10. It is reviewed by Odette Parry, page 42

Simon Brooks

Ethnic cleansing in civic Wales

Obscure and unworldly as political theory can be, it does sometimes have policy consequences. A good example is the recent row about the expansion of Welsh-medium education in west Cardiff. This followed Carwyn Jones's controversial decision to block the Council's plans to relieve school overcrowding by relocating Ysgol Gymraeg Treganna to the site of an undersubscribed nearby English-medium school. I must declare an interest as my daughter attends Ysgol Treganna. However, I will not repeat familiar arguments condemning the First Minister's decision, but will explore issues surrounding the Welsh language and multiculturalism.

Although Canton Labour Councillor Ramesh Patel went out on a limb in his notorious description of Cardiff's school reorganisation as "ethnic cleansing", the basic tenet of his argument has been echoed by other Labour politicians, but in more subtle ways. English-medium schools in inner-city Cardiff are routinely described as 'multicultural', as in the oft quoted phrase that a particular school is 'a successful multicultural school'. This then invites unspoken comparisons with the Welsh-medium sector, which is subsequently constructed as being somehow mono-cultural, mon-ethnic and, in a favourite piece of terminology reserved for the Welsh language, 'exclusive'.

Playing to the gallery during her bid for the Wales Labour Party leadership last year, Cabinet Minister Edwina Hart stated controversially:

> "I want Welsh medium education to be genuinely available to all who want it and Welsh medium schools to be genuinely open to all who wish to attend. I worry that some schools do not properly reflect the communities in which they are located. Why do some Welsh medium schools in the centres of our biggest cities – Newport, Cardiff and Swansea – have so few black faces in their classrooms? The worst thing that can happen to the language is that it becomes the exclusive preserve of a self-appointed minority".

The tone employed here raises questions about how genuine the stated desire to make Welsh-medium education more ethnically diverse is. The 'exclusive' nature of Welsh education is blamed on 'a self-appointed minority'. Furthermore, there is a suggestion that an unnamed élite regards the language as a screen for the maintenance of ethnic purity. Yet ESTYN, the schools inspectorate, reports that 13 per cent of pupils at Ysgol Pwll Coch in south Cardiff come from visible ethnic minorities, and although this figure could be higher it is nevertheless significant.

In addition to their black and Asian pupils, Welsh-medium schools contain other forms of diversity. Only a minority of pupils come from what we might call their 'ethnolinguistic core' – that is to say, from Welsh-speaking homes. As well as children with English-speaking Welsh parents, a large percentage of pupils in Welsh-medium schools are of English background. Given the role of the English as the ethnic 'Other' in Welsh-language culture, this is a significant form of multicultural commitment. But none of this shows up in UK-centric diversity monitoring forms which subsume English and Welsh ethnic identities under the category of 'British'. This is not to say that Welsh-medium schools are not multicultural. Rather, the argument is that they do not conform to British models of multiculturalism in which language and sub-State identities like 'Welsh' and 'English' are deemed to be unimportant.

But the discourse connecting the Welsh language with ethnic exclusivity reflects a deeper malaise, and one which is in large part a product of post-devolution Wales. Welsh politicians like to present themselves as purveyors of a purely civic form of nationalism. The binary division of nationalism into 'civic' and 'ethnic' categories has meant that while devolution is lauded as a civic project, and hence good, language, with its link to national identity, is erroneously seen as ethnic and viewed more suspiciously. This false dichotomy has enabled the Welsh Government to ignore the problems of Welsh-speaking communities (an 'ethnic' problem in a 'civic' Wales), and now undermines the development of Welsh-medium education in urban south Wales.

This placing of various languages in civic and ethnic camps has been extensively criticised by academics who claim that the civic is often merely the ethnic in disguise. Civic nationalism is merely a situation in which the values of the majority group have become so normalised and hegemonic that people forget that the majority, too, has ethnic roots. The English language is the default language of civic identity in Britain – and thus imagined as multicultural and inclusive – because the British State requires everyone to learn it. It is exactly because the Welsh language has been marginalised and minoritised that it can be seen as exclusive and ethnic.

Obtruse theory indeed! But as the

school row in Cardiff shows, it has real consequences. What can be done to prevent this dangerous new racialisation of the language debate? In the first place, it would help if the Welsh language were to become more 'civic'. Moves to normalise Welsh – such as strong Welsh language measures which make it a language of the State – take the language into the realm of the civic. It is by making the Welsh language stronger that one can make it more inclusive.

Secondly, there needs to be a project which draws attention to the evidence for multicultural and multiethnic diversity in the Welsh language community. The Welsh language has always been a language of the non-Welsh as well as the Welsh in Wales. The Welsh-speaking descendants of English settlers in the Middle Ages, ethnic communities in the industrialising Valleys of the 19th Century, as well too as the Roma of rural north Wales in the 20th Century, are all examples of non-Welsh groups which became in part, or in whole, Welsh-speaking. No language is of and in itself more multicultural than any other, and the tendency to be 'multicultural' often means little more than the possession of enough cultural weight to assimilate others.

In Cardiff, developing a multi-ethnic Welsh-language community is best achieved by expanding Welsh-medium education. Hard to get into, taught in cramped and unsuitable buildings, and at the centre of endless political rows, it is hardly surprising that Welsh-medium education is less attractive to ethnic minority parents than it could be. The most effective way of addressing any ethnic imbalance in the intake of Welsh-medium schools is to make them more easily available in places like inner-city Cardiff.

— **Simon Brooks** is a Lecturer at the School of Welsh, Cardiff University and is currently writing a book about multiculturalism and the Welsh language.

Mark Rendell

Time for the Eisteddfod to bloom

Wandering around the Eisteddfod Maes in Bala last year it struck me that the event provides a wonderful opportunity to showcase the best work of gardeners and garden designers across Wales. A 'green pavilion', along the lines of the Arts and Crafts Pavilion, could showcase creative garden designs and provide a focus for horticultural enterprises and craftspeople.

A national garden design competition culminating in a winning design chosen at the Eisteddfod would be held. County-wide competitions would be open to anyone, according to an agreed theme. The leading three designs in each county could be selected via a county panel. These finalists could then attract a small seed-grant to work up their ideas and explore sponsorship.

The next stage would require an Adjudication Panel to select the final set, perhaps one per county, that would be built and shown at the Eisteddfod. Week-long voting at the event by visitors and via the web and television would result in the selection of the winning garden. All submissions in the competition could be uploaded onto a gallery page on the Eisteddfod website, providing a valuable showcase for all the garden designers and teams involved.

The second element of this proposal would be to identify a number of suitable outdoor spaces on the Maes that could be offered to designers and sponsors. These would include the entrance area to the Maes, processional spaces, a central 'breathing space' to rest and reflect, a play or fun space, and an interactive educational space.

Planning the entrance to the Maes provides an insight into how this proposal might work in practice. The space sets the scene for the Eisteddfod experience immediately beyond the ticket office. It is a greeting and meeting space and an ideal location to influence the mood and expectations of visitors. Details of the space (size, soil, access and so on) could be made available on the Eisteddfod website immediately after the layout had been agreed, with an invitation for sponsorship and garden design proposals.

An Adjudication Panel would select the winning design, according to criteria agreed beforehand. As this is possibly the most prominent outdoor space on the Maes - everybody has to pass it at least twice - it could also be an opportunity for the Eisteddfod's host county to provide a welcome and greeting statement expressed through the medium of flowers, shrubs, artwork and other garden features.

> "Planning the entrance to the Maes provides an insight into how this proposal might work in practice."

Alongside the final set of gardens selected from across the country, a 'green pavilion' could comprise stands representing garden design and horticultural professions in Wales and related businesses and organisations such as outdoor leisure and furniture

companies, garden art suppliers and makers, hard landscaping materials and tools stockists, plant stockists, nurseries and garden centres, garden groups and societies, training schemes, college courses and scholarships, garden visitor attractions, outdoor play equipment and sensory gardens, school and community gardens, books and guides, to name but a few.

The August timing of the Eisteddfod means that a national horticutural event of this kind would not clash with other UK-wide gardening shows. Meanwhile, the intiative would result in many benefits for the Eisteddfod including:

- A promotional tool for the Eisteddfod, with sponsorship opportunities and new income streams, with a new constituency of visitors.
- Connect the Eisteddfod with the land, via gardens and development of outdoor spaces on the Maes.
- Provide a high profile platform for garden organisations, garden designers and horticultural industries to demonstrate their work, products and services in Wales.
- Strengthen the garden design and horticultural sectors by providing a valuable opportunity to network, collaborate, market and promote their work.
- Provide an opportunity for articulating ideas around our national identity.

Bringing gardens to the Eisteddfod, and showcasing innovative work of the best that Wales has to offer, would be an entirely natural development in the evolution of the National Eisteddfod. Populating the event's outdoor spaces with horticultural excellence would provide another means for articulating our relationship with the place we call 'home', with the wider landscape and, ultimately, with each other.

— **Mark Rendell** is a gardener and garden designer, based in Garndolbenmaen, Gwynedd, www.thegrowingcompany.co.uk

Judith Kaufman

Subtleties in translation

Recent developments in the law courts show that simultaneous interpreting has been accepted as a central part of language policies in Wales. New court centres like the one in Caernarfon have state-of-the-art interpreting booths and equipment incorporated in their chambers. The ongoing consultation on bilingual juries in criminal court cases is also a sign that the use of Welsh in trials is being taken seriously, and that interpreting is a resource people should be able to rely on. Nonetheless, it is a resource that should only be used when no better ways of conducting a trial in Welsh are available.

These developments bring us a step closer to recognising an important part of the identity of Welsh speakers. But if we want to get even closer to our ideal of Welsh and English being treated equally we might have to accept that English needs to be de-normalised in some situations. Interpreting can play a role in doing this which means that those who happen not to be able to speak and understand Welsh are not excluded.

A number of linguistic norms become obvious in meetings where the services of an interpreter are sought. People tend to speak more Welsh when the Chair of the meeting does as well. People tend to ask their questions and discuss a presentation or contribution in the language the contribution or presentation was made in. And the smaller and the more personal and familiar a meeting, the likelier it is that people address English speakers in English in order not to lose direct communication with each other.

Interpreting can be an opportunity to question those norms. International studies of translation and interpreting internationally have examined how dominant languages and cultures assimilate lesser-used languages (or languages considered to be subordinate) into their own ideological principles. They have also shown that translation and interpreting can be a focus for resisting such ideologies.

It is an interesting question how interpreting could make a stronger case for the use of Welsh. No-one should be afraid of losing out here. At its best interpreting is an inclusive activity. By establishing new norms for Welsh in a number of social contexts, this is about improving the participation of Welsh speakers rather than reducing the input of English speakers.

Interpreting (and translation) needs to be looked at from the point of view of democracy and ownership, not only in terms of financial cost. If the suggestion to stop translating the Assembly's *Record of Proceedings* last summer was acceptable to some, this shows that the close involvement of translation in improving a democratic society has not yet been understood.

For interpreting to be successful in that respect, it is not enough to have accomplished interpreters in all the meetings where potentially someone might be speaking Welsh. We need to make sure that people who can speak Welsh will do so. With the symbolic value attached to the National Assembly, that is the first place where Welsh speakers should be expected to use the

language, as a sign of the vision of a bilingual Wales. Organisers and Chairs must be made aware of the requirements of interpreters in terms of preparation and room layout for instance. But even more important than that, they need to be aware of their own role in making meetings more bilingual.

The best encouragement to speak Welsh in a meeting is a Chair who speaks Welsh as much as possible, thus indicating that an interpreter is trustworthy, that bilingual meetings are nothing to be scared of, and that Welsh is a language of communication for business and politics. However, to give this message more effect guest speakers and persons holding a role within the group should be encouraged to speak Welsh. This is not always easy. Many Welsh speakers feel it to be a matter of courtesy to ask questions and discuss a point in the language in which that point was made (of course, monolinguals do not have to think about courtesy). If more speakers spoke Welsh, it would then be regarded as polite to respond to them in Welsh.

"Talking of 'language choice' does not seem to take into account of the way that relationships grow and develop."

The relative formality or informality of a meeting might be an indicator of how much Welsh will be spoken. It is generally assumed that interpreting works better in relatively formal meetings, where interchange is not too much disturbed by translation. Such meetings, it is assumed, allow forms of discussion where repetition, rephrasing and generally informal speech are not seen as an obstacles to the flow of discussion.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the more formal a meeting the more difficult it is to rely on the interpreter. When every word had to be weighed and every sentence put together carefully, an interpreter can constitute an additional layer between one speaker and another that inhibits frank discussion.

This underlines the importance of the overall atmosphere in a group. The atmosphere of a discussion can be influenced by the use of Welsh/bilingual documentation, but more even by people's habit of using Welsh in other contexts. Where people know each other in Welsh, they will find it easier to continue talking in Welsh in a meeting, even if there are English speakers present. On the other hand, in work-related meetings where Welsh speakers have got used to discussing their work in English, then English will tend to be part of their work-related comfort zones (and of their identities relating to their position at work). Speaking Welsh in a work meeting will be much more of an effort for them, especially if their close colleagues are in the meeting too.

Of course, these are not conscious mental processes. The confidence to speak Welsh publicly is not only a question of fluency in different registers of the language or familiarity with the appropriate terminology. Much more than that, it is a matter of the relationships we form with others when the language we speak is an essential component. Talking of 'language choice' does not seem to take into account of the way that relationships grow and develop. In some cases choosing to speak Welsh might profoundly disturb a relationship. Even the thought of having to choose a language each time we communicate can bring a lot of pressure to bear on all but the most assertive Welsh speakers.

It is evident, therefore, that simultaneous translation is about more than 'merely' transporting meaning from one language to the other. It is a crossroads where the two cultures of Wales come into direct contact with each other, and where her people are reminded of the fact that language and identity form a close relationship. This relationship is not necessarily one-to-one. We all behave and speak differently according to the different contexts of our lives.

With the language policies of recent decades it has become possible and desirable to give more room to the Welsh-speaking part of our identities, and this is why more meetings are held with the use of an interpreter. It is more democratic to allow Welsh speakers to express themselves in Welsh. But this is only one side of the coin! In Welsh areas the interpreting services are provided not to give a majority of Welsh speakers the right to speak Welsh, but to give those without fluency in Welsh the opportunity to take part in meetings and events. Every area's linguistic reality is different. Interpretation not only makes people aware of this reality, but it is also a means of coming to terms with it.

Translators' and interpreters' experiences must be taken on board in designing language policies. For centuries they have been specialists involved not only in the creation of standard forms of languages and of new terminology, but also in observing relationships between people and cultures. By the nature of their job they have a wealth of social and intercultural insights. Yet too often, translation is a bone of contention within language policies, and its cost is often seen as a safe argument for dismissing it as an undesirable side-effect of bilingual policies.

When people argue that translation should be cut in favour of spending on stronger second language teaching, they do not realise that without translation and interpreting, professionals would find it difficult to get used to new terminology, to writing in Welsh (because translators are also often proofreaders and correctors), and to develop the use of different registers in the language. We need to make sure that the new strategy for a bilingual Wales takes the translating and interpreting profession seriously.

— **Judith Kaufmann** works at Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru (the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters) in Bangor.

Carl Cooper

Powys tries combining cultures and the back office

In early 2009 a set of circumstances came together that made it opportune for Powys County Council and the Powys Health Board to consider the feasibility of merger. Co-terminosity of both bodies, together with a developing cooperation between the two prompted consideration of greater collaboration.

There was much excitement in Powys, not least among third sector organisations, at the possibility of developing a public service organisation that was truly innovative, resulting from creative thinking and ingenious ideas. In July 2009 an option appraisal report was produced. This outlined the difficulties both bodies were facing and three options for greater collaboration:

- Full merger.
- Shared structures, functions and services.
- Increased cooperation and certain shared appointments.

It is to the credit of the governing bodies of both organisations that they opted to explore the most ambitious option. Yet, as everyone foresaw, the devil would be in the detail. Moreover, excitement began to wane as potential innovation gave way to a bureaucratic, statutory sector-led reorganisation that prioritised organisational need over citizen focussed services.

It had been hoped that the process would begin with a holistic assessment of need, involving all sectors and all sections of society. The emphasis would have been on collaboration and integration of service delivery, bringing together different parts of the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Nonetheless, a merger board was established to take forward the process. At first, it was mooted that it would be open to the input and contribution of non-statutory partners and stakeholders. It was of particular interest that the board would include third sector membership. This was seen as an opportunity to throw open statutory doors to the creativity and ingenuity of others.

It was hoped that space would be secured for new thinking and fresh ideas, that experimentation would be encouraged and that risks would be taken. Hopes were dashed as statutory partners decided to close their doors to others and restrict membership of the merger board to their own kith and kin. The result is that the third sector, along with others, now looks on with interest but from afar.

> "It was hoped that space would be secured for new thinking and fresh ideas, that experimentation would be encouraged and that risks would be taken."

This is particularly poignant considering that Powys boasts the most significant third sector in Wales. It is the second highest employer in the county, deploys in excess of 52,000 volunteers and generates an annual income of over £57 million.

There are major issues facing the local authority and the health authority as they contemplate merger. It is undeniable that efficiency savings will result as a consequence of sharing premises, back office services and posts. The integration of front line services, particularly within health and social care, can only mean improved and more cost effective services for the citizens of Powys.

However, significant hurdles need to be overcome before any of these benefits can be accrued, particularly in the spheres of governance and finance. As its name indicates, a local authority is a locally elected body accountable to the electorate and responsible for the delivery of certain statutory responsibilities. It has tax raising powers, can invest and borrow money, but is required to balance the books. It can neither budget for a deficit nor negotiate a deficit position.

On the other hand, a health board is an appointed body accountable to the government. It too has certain statutory requirements placed upon it. However, it has no tax raising powers and it is not allowed to borrow or invest money. In the event of an over spend, a health board can agree a financial recovery plan with central government. Powys teaching Health Board operates an

underlying deficit of £11m.

Some might conclude that the reconciliation of such divergent systems is akin to mixing oil and water. From the council's perspective, the risk of merger with an organisation that has significant debt is substantial. Throw into the mix the ubiquitous and pervasive resistance to change and defensive nature of all human organisations, and one could be forgiven for thinking that all is lost before it begins.

Nonetheless, local authority members in Powys, together with health board colleagues exhibit a genuine and impressive commitment to the realisation of merger and surmounting obstacles. Powys county council and the health board have recently commissioned consultants KPMG to report on progress thus far and chart a way ahead for the proposed merger.

The third sector is eager to be part of a participative process that agrees a suite of integrated, collaborative services responsive to the need of citizens and communities. Why not try to imagine a public service organisation that is neither statutory, private nor voluntary? It would be unique, ground-breaking and, in the true sense of the word, innovative.

It would need new and primary legislation. However, if it is possible to legislate for collaboration between local authorities and between statutory bodies, is it too much to imagine an extension of this legislation to include non-statutory partners? I can already hear third sector colleagues argue that this would threaten our independence. This may be true, but ingenuity will be stifled by protectionism from whichever quarter it originates.

Meanwhile, central government is preparing us for a public spending squeeze. In their slightly different ways, governments and administrations are planning for a smaller state and a bigger civil society. The third sector is being looked to play a bigger role in the delivery of statutory and discretionary services.

Powys has a great opportunity to break new ground and to rise to the challenge of post recession Britain. For this to be achieved, the public sector needs to let go of public services and fling open its doors to inclusive participation. It's not too late to rekindle the excitement that the early stages of the merger process engendered and realise a shared dream.

— **Carl Cooper** is Chief Executive Officer with the Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations.

Double coalition land

Roger Scully anticipates the outcome of next May's Assembly election when all the parties will be in government

Noel Coward's classic *There are bad times just around the corner, and the outlook is absolutely vile* seems appropriate for Wales in the wake of George Osborne's first budget. Our large public sector and weak entrepreneurial traditions make his cuts agenda likely to hit us disproportionately hard. Devolution gives us some flexibility to decide where and how the cuts are implemented. However, there seems little escape from the pain that lies ahead.

The age of austerity raises many questions for analysts of politics and government. One of the more immediate ones is how the onset of serious cuts will affect the May 2011 National Assembly election. How will a relentless diet of bad news shape the way people think about the election, and how they cast their ballots, or at least those who bother to vote?

It is difficult to say, and not simply for the usual reasons which make long-range election predictions as hazardous a business as long-range weather forecasting. We are in wholly uncharted territory in ways that take us beyond the usual uncertainties of politics. Devolved elections have never previously occurred during a period of cuts and austerity. They have never occurred with anything other than a Labour government in London. And we have never had a devolved election where *all* the major parties competed as parties of government.

However, the last of these factors may give us some clues as to what we should expect to transpire in the election. In 'double coalition land', as BBC Wales political editor Betsan Powys has appropriately termed Wales, both Labour and Plaid Cymru will be compelled to fight the election at least partly on their record as the *One Wales* Cardiff coalition. Likewise the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats will doubtless be called on to answer for the performance of the UK governing coalition. In a situation where there is unlikely to be much good news around, to whom will most blame be directed?

Table 1:
Public Perceptions of Change, 2005-10 (%)

	Health	Education	Standard of Living	Law and Order
Improvement	41	24	18	20
No Difference	27	28	31	34
Decline	22	20	43	32
Don't Know	11	28	9	14

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Lord Richard of Ammanford
Chairman of the Richard Commission

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Lord (Kenneth) Morgan
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Baroness Ilora Finlay of Llandaff
Professor of Palliative Medicine, Cardiff University

The work of the IWA depends on the support and contribution of individual members across Wales and beyond who share our determination to mobilise the nation's human and social resources in order to face the challenges ahead. By bringing together partners in business, academia, and the public and voluntary sectors, the IWA is helping to shape economic, social, educational, environmental and cultural policy across Wales.

☐ I wish to become a member and enclose a cheque for £40.

☐ I wish to become a member and pay by credit/debit card the sum of £ .....

Account Number
_ _ _ _/_ _ _ _/_ _ _ _/_ _ _ _

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Evidence from the 2010 Welsh Election Survey shows an important pattern in public attitudes that is directly relevant to answering this question. Among the many questions asked in this survey were several enquiring into respondents' perceptions of changes in key policy areas since the previous general election in 2005. People were asked about Education and Health, largely devolved areas of policy, and Standard of Living and Law and Order, ones where most responsibility remains with the UK government. In line with other recent surveys, the balance of opinion is generally positive about the record on the NHS, less so with regard to the Economy, while opinion leans to the negative on Law and Order (Table 1).

Most important, however, are the results from a follow up question. For each policy area, anyone who thought that things had changed *either* for better *or* worse over the previous five years was also asked about where they attributed credit or blame. Was it mainly down to the policies of the UK government, those of the Welsh Government, both equally, or some other reason? We found a clear and consistent pattern. Among those who perceive improvement, far more people credit the government in Cardiff than the one in London. This can be seen in Figure 1, which shows results for the NHS. This might seem fairly logical since most responsibility for the Welsh NHS is now wielded in Cardiff. And yet among those who think standards have declined, far more blame the UK than the Welsh government.

Moreover, this disparity in attributions of credit and blame not only occurs for devolved matters like health, and also education where we see an almost identical pattern. We see very much the same pattern of attributions on the largely non-devolved functions Standard of Living and Law and Order. Welsh people are more willing to give credit for any improvements to their own level of government. However, when there is blame to be attributed, it tends to be directed at the government in London, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

The implications of these findings do not look good for any prospective Conservative or Liberal Democrat candidates next year. At a time when there will be plenty of blame flying around, it seems that most voters will be inclined to pin it on the level of government that their parties control. And there will doubtless be plenty of Labour and Plaid politicians and activists encouraging people to see it this way. For the *One Wales* coalition partners, bad times may at least reap an electoral reward.

Figure 1:
Attributions of Policy Credit/Blame: NHS

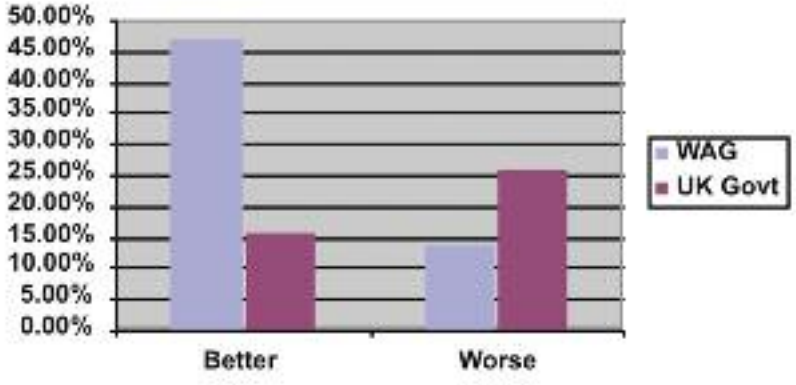
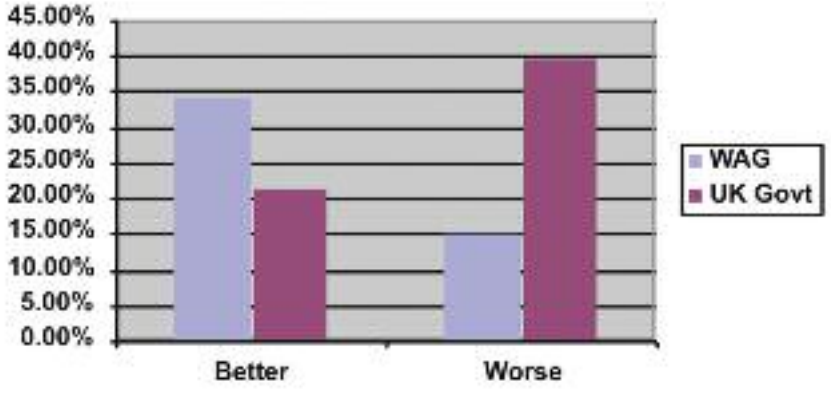


Figure 2:
Attributions of Policy Credit/Blame: Standard of Living



— Professor Roger Scully is Director of the Institute of Welsh Politics at Aberystwyth University. The statistics are taken from the 2010 Welsh Election Survey, conducted by YouGov for the Institute of Welsh Politics and the Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University. A representative sample of 1,475 respondents were interviewed via the internet in the period immediately after the May 2010 UK general election. Further details about the survey are available from the author rgs@aber.ac.uk

Back to drawing board on social care

Joseph Carter urges the Welsh Government to examine the tools at its disposal for reforming paying for social care

Radical reform of the social care system in Wales could be one of the first casualties of there now being different governments in Westminster and Cardiff Bay. Andrew Lansley, the new Conservative Secretary of State for Health, has a completely different view on social care and the role of the state to the Deputy Minister for Social Services in Wales, Gwenda Thomas. This could pull the rug from under the Welsh Government's Green Paper on reforming the funding of social care. Does it have to be this way?

Social care is poorly understood, undervalued and under funded. If you were involved in a sudden accident or developed a serious condition, you would expect the NHS to look after you and nurse you back to health. Regardless of whether you were living in Bangor or Barry, Pembrokeshire or Prestatyn, your assumptions about the health service would be the same. You would expect it to be free and for professionals to do everything they could to make you better.

But, what if you are not going to recover? What if you develop a long term chronic condition or are elderly and need help at home? In these circumstances a local authority can provide you with a package of care. However, it can be extremely difficult to know what you are entitled to. Each local authority has different charges and a different assessment. Someone could be judged to have moderate care needs and be given a care package in one local authority, whilst in another the same person might not be given anything. In Wales 82,000 people receive local authority funded social care.

In Summer 2009 the UK Government Green Paper on reforming social care in England ruled out using general taxation to fund free personal care. Instead, it considered voluntary insurance, compulsory insurance and a partnership model where the state would pay a percentage of the costs, if the individual paid the rest.

Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister for Social Services in Wales, has a completely different view from Andrew Lansley, the new Conservative Secretary of State for Health in London.

However, this Green Paper only applied to England. When the Welsh Government began to consult on its own Green Paper in November 2009, the message from Ministers was that they wished to link in very closely with what was being proposed in England. The Welsh Green Paper states:

> "Whilst the Welsh Government is responsible for the social care system in Wales, the levers to change the system for paying for care are largely the responsibility of the Westminster Government, and the existing legal framework covers England as well as Wales."

The Green Paper only considered the funding options already being put forward by the UK Government. There was no attempt to explore any specific Welsh ideas. It also proposed that a new social care system should be an England and Wales model.

The future of social care in Wales was therefore tied to the success of proposals in England. While they were supported by the outgoing Labour Government, in the run-up to the election the Conservatives branded the compulsory insurance option a 'Death

Time to go back to the drawing board on social care reform in Wales.

Tax'. Instead they suggested giving people the option of insuring themselves against the costs of residential care by paying £8,000 on retirement.

Where does that leave social care reform in Wales? It is time to go back to the drawing board. In the first instance we should unpack the statement from the Welsh Green Paper about the 'levers of change' in the system resting with Westminster. Social Care is a devolved area, with 'Social Welfare' one of the 20 devolved fields in which the National Assembly has competence. In order to exercise these powers the Government would have to introduce a Legislative Competency Order or legislate directly following a Yes vote in the forthcoming referendum. Nonetheless, if it wants to, the Welsh Government can make laws in this area.

If significant reform is not going to be developed on a UK basis, then it is time the Welsh Government examined the tools at its disposal to reform the funding of social care. There are broadly two options:

- **Insurance**
  The Welsh Government could pursue the voluntary insurance option considered in the Green Paper. It could encourage multi-national insurance companies to develop specific social care insurance packages for Wales, perhaps with a degree of subsidy or underwriting from the state. As long as the insurance industry was supportive, this could work.

- **Social Care Precept**
  Although the Welsh Government is not permitted to raise its own taxes, it could introduce legislation to reform Local Authority finance, and introduce a 'Social Care Precept' on top of the normal council tax bill to fund social care. Such a precept would operate in the same way as the Police Precept and would be collected by local authorities. Households could be charged a uniform rate or the precept could incorporate council tax bands with people in larger houses paying more.

The Welsh Government's own advisory group reported in June 2009 in favour of the second option. As it stated:

> "Our strong preference for a new model of paying for care is one which is funded by payments from everyone in society, according to their ability to pay, primarily over the course of their working life. We recognise that the main options for achieving this would be increasing general taxation, or establishing a new social insurance fund or National Care Fund to which most people would be expected to pay."

If it went down the line of a social care precept on council tax, the Welsh Government would need to establish a

National Social Care Authority, independent from Government, to manage the spending of the funds raised by the precept. The Authority would be tasked with funding the social care needs of the population. It would manage the level of the precept, raising it if social care needs increase and lowering it if costs go down. Based on council tax figures from 2009 a 10-15 per cent precept on council tax would raise between £100 and £150 million to fund free personal care for everyone who needed it, regardless of age.

Whereas at the moment individuals are assessed by their individual local authorities for support, in this model, it would the National Social Care Authority that was responsible for assessing and funding social care, leaving individuals to purchase services from their local authority, the voluntary sector or private sector.

Such a move would be controversial. However, if politicians are serious in their aspirations to give free personal care to everyone in Wales, then there has to be a cost. If the scheme were funded out of the Welsh block grant, substantial savings across existing Government programmes would have to be found. The only alternative is to bring additional funding into the system. In the absence of powers to raise income tax, VAT or Corporation Tax, a Social Care Precept would be the only realistic way of bringing new money into the system.

Over the last 11 years the social care systems in Wales and England have gradually diverged. Personalisation, encouraging individuals to manage their own care packages with personal budgets was a major priority for the last UK Government. However, in Wales the vast majority of people let their Local Authority manage their care package.

At the same time the Law Commission for England and Wales has been consulting on proposals for a new statute codifying decades of overlapping pieces of legislation. The resulting draft bill could make the social care system less complex for service users, local authorities and private agencies, and recognise the important role of carers. However, desirable though these proposals may be, they do not take into account diverging social care policy in Wales. In its Review of social care the Law Commission argues:

> "We provisionally consider that the vehicle for our reform should be a unified adult social care statute covering both England and Wales. Whilst there are difference in the law that applies in England and Wales, we do not believe they are currently such as to require separate statutes for each country."

"While they were supported by the outgoing Labour Government, in the run-up to the election the Conservatives branded the compulsory insurance option a 'Death Tax'."

This simply ignores that social care is a devolved field and the Welsh Government has already started to reshape the law in this area through the *Social Care Charges (Wales) Measure 2010* and the *Proposed Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure*. The Law Commission's Social Care Statute would simply overwrite Welsh Laws and replace it with a unified system for England and Wales.

The Welsh Government needs to defend the diverging social care agenda in Wales and work with the Law Commission to implement a separate social care statute for Wales, rather than one for England and Wales. The prospect of a single Welsh piece of legislation, passed by the Assembly, that would encompass previous Acts and Measures would greatly improve a complicated system setting out the role of service users, carers and the state.

The Law Commission has failed to take into the account the fact that both governments are committed to a referendum on primary law making powers next year, and if successful, the National Assembly will have the power to make laws in every area covered by its Review. Following a referendum the Welsh Government should take on board the recommendation by Professor John Williams of Aberystwyth University of establishing a separate Law Commission for Wales set out in the Spring 2009 edition of *Agenda*.

Whilst many people would broadly accept the recommendations of the Law Commission, it is essential that the outcome is a single statute for Wales resulting from a Measure passed by the Assembly, rather than an English statute with Wales 'bolted on'.

Schedule 7 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 allows the Welsh Government to reform both the funding and the structure of social care. The solutions we need will require politicians to take bold steps that some will find controversial. But it Wales wants to see the state fund social care then the money would have to come from either a reformed council tax or through substantial savings elsewhere in the Welsh block grant. A precept on the council tax is surely the best way forward.

— **Joseph Carter** is the Policy, Press and Campaigns Manager with the MS Society Cymru.

Legislating between equals

Iwan Davies says London cannot continue treating the Welsh Government as though it were another Whitehall department

In the dying days of the last Westminster Parliament the Welsh Affairs Committee published a report on Wales's relationship with Whitehall which showed how devolution has dramatically changed the political landscape of the UK.

The asymmetrical nature of the devolutionary settlements in the UK has been commented upon in all the recent reports examining devolution and the Welsh Affairs Committee's *Wales and Whitehall Inquiry* is no exception. A major contrast is that while the powers of the Scottish and Northern Ireland legislatures were defined by exclusion, in Wales the opposite is the case. That is to say, everything is devolved to Scotland and Northern Ireland except certain defined functions like defense and foreign affairs, while all of Wales's functions are specified on the legislation. It is little wonder, therefore, that Wales has a different rleationship with Whitehall than the other nations within the UK. As the former First Minister, Rhodri Morgan put it in evidence, Scotland is always accepted as another country whereas the problem for Wales is that it is not seen as another country at all.

The *Wales and Whitehall Inquiry* is significant because of the wide scope of its terms of reference. The report has sections dealing with the following:

- Awareness of the devolution settlement within the Civil Service.
- Role of the (then) Wales Office and the Ministry of Justice.
- Extent of communication between Whitehall, the Welsh Government, the National Assembly and Welsh MPs.
- Whitehall guidance on devolution.
- Impact of the findings of the Justice Select Committee in its report *Devolution: a Decade On*.

> "What we have now is a period of cohabitation between the UK Government and devolved administrations. As a result, inter-Governmental relations are at greater risk of coming under strain."

The Report's transcript of evidence is important, too, because it includes a large number of the principal political and other personalities involved in the recent devolution story in Wales. The Inquiry demonstrates the lack of understanding generally of the devolution settlement and also its complex nature. Raising awareness within Whitehall is a particularly thorny issue and there are recommendations on training for all senior civil servants as well as on secondments of civil service staff between Cardiff and London and vice versa. In turn this suggests that devolution should be incorporated as part of the civil service code the next time it is reviewed.

Much emphasis was laid within the Inquiry on the need for structural changes to promote knowledge and understanding between elected politicians, Ministers, civil servants and officials and the two legislatures. The focus over the next few months of the new Parliament should be on promoting such inter-Governmental relations. The structures for inter-Governmental relations between Wales and Whitehall were developed during a period when the same political party was in power in both places. What we have now is a period of cohabitation between the UK Government and devolved administrations. As a result inter-Governmental relations are at greater risk of coming under strain. It is not enough to rely solely on the strength of informal relations. Machinery must be developed to enable extensive negotiation and conciliation to occur between Wales and Whitehall.

At the Senedd in Cardiff Bay soon after the May general election, Prime Minister David Cameron and First Minister Carwyn Jones discuss the 'mutual respect' agenda. But "awareness of the devolution settlement is patchy across different departments within Whitehall."

The approach of the Welsh Affairs Committee was that a broad review of inter-Governmental relations was necessary and that an updated Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and devolved administrations was long overdue. As part of this process the status of Devolution Guidance Notes need to be strengthened and they should be clearly established as bilateral agreements. This is necessary if cohesion between the two legislatures is to be maintained. It should be a priority for building up understanding between Wales and Whitehall.

Awareness of the devolution settlement is patchy across different departments within Whitehall. There needs to be a strong centre in relation to devolution within the UK Government to coordinate activity more effectively instead of lines of communication being spread across three departments, as was the case for example in the last Parliament.

A critical finding of the *Inquiry* was the need for Whitehall civil Servants to avoid treating devolved administrations as if they were another set of Whitehall departments. This is an important finding because it will touch upon the time it takes for the National Assembly's Legislative Competence Orders to receive Whitehall clearance. There is a need to ensure absolute clarity of the role of the Secretary of State for Wales in this regard. In addition we need a mechanism to track the progress of proposed orders within Whitehall Departments to improve the practical delivery of the current constitutional arrangements set out in the Government of Wales Act 2006.

There are many issues in the *Wales and Whitehall Inquiry* which are left unanswered. For example, what is the relationship of the Welsh Affairs Committee with Welsh civil society? There are relational and leadership issues arising out of the role of MPs and AMs and how Assembly Committees deal with Parliamentary issues.

There are also legislative questions which need early consideration. One example is the possibility of applying the Scottish Sewel Convention to Wales. Under this Convention it was agreed that the Westminster Parliament will not normally legislate on a devolved matter (which it retains the power to do) unless it has obtained the consent of the Scottish Parliament. The means by which the Scottish Parliament signifies its consent is the passing of a legislative consent motion. In a 2006 Report on the operation of the Convention, the Scottish Affairs Committee recommended that it should be endorsed by the House. The Commission of Scottish Devolution recommended in its Report in 2009 that a Convention should be entrenched in the standing orders of the Commons.

At that time it was considered that, because of the quite different nature of the devolution settlement in Wales, there was no need for a Convention along similar lines. However, the Legislative Competence Order process and the granting of powers in primary legislation

through framework powers have similarities to the position in Scotland. In this regard it would be entirely appropriate for the National Assembly to seek the consent of Westminster to a request for powers without depending on the Welsh Government to put forward such a request. It is not appropriate for two legislatures to be entirely dependent upon their executives in order to converse formally. The National Assembly for Wales should have the opportunity to signal its consent to any proposal to legislate at Westminster in relation to devolved matters.

The adoption of such a Convention for Wales should be relatively straightforward and could take the form of amending the standing orders of the House of Commons to provide for the Speaker to lay before it any form of communication from the National Assembly for Wales conveyed to the Speaker by the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales. This approach could then be contextualised by the issuance of a statement by the Secretary of State for Wales that the UK Government will not normally legislate on a matter devolved to the National Assembly without its consent. In many respects the adoption of a Sewel-type Convention would be an immediate practical response to the legislative status of Wales, not least because the devolution settlement now needs to work better.

While the *Wales and Whitehall Inquiry* did recommend a number of structural changes to improve the administrative relationship between Cathays Park and and Whitehall, the implications for the two legislatures is only touched upon. So, while the Inquiry makes reference to the need for the law in Wales to be accessible and supports the creation of a single comprehensive reference of legislation impacting on Wales, important issues still remain. These include:

- Development of Legal Wales such as the Court Structure in Wales.
- Revision of Welsh legislation through a review body such as a Welsh Law Commission.
- Further development of the Public Service Ombudsman service in promoting standards in public life in Wales.

These are important issues which have implications for the development of policy and legislation in Wales.

— **Professor Iwan Davies** is Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Hodge Chair in Law at Swansea University.

Jury out on Ieuan's new direction

Stevie Upton and Brian Morgan assess the Welsh Government's response to private sector views on economic renewal

The private sector response to the direction the Welsh Government's economic policy should take demonstrated remarkable unanimity. CBI Wales, the Institute of Directors, Venture Wales, the South Wales Chamber and the IWA all sang from a very similar hymn sheet in their views. Following the launch of Welsh Government's new policy in early July *Economic Renewal: A New Direction*, to what extent has it listened?

The foremost demand was for the Government to start focusing its efforts on policies and objectives that drive economic development. There was widespread agreement that the business support function, delivered until now by FS4B, the so-called 'flexible support for business', should be drastically slimmed down and its main services delivered by an arm's-length, private sector-led, delivery model. Why? Because the private sector genuinely believes that a focus on economic growth offers the only solution for Wales's social problems. And it remains unconvinced that FS4B's overly bureaucratic business support model will be able to deliver the step change in competitiveness that Wales needs to improve prosperity levels.

In answer to the first two points, the Welsh Government is certainly making encouraging noises: a commitment to a "whole-Government role" in relation to economic renewal was underpinned at the new policy's launch by the presence of Jane Davidson, Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing and Lesley Griffiths, Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills. Ieuan Wyn Jones also categorically stated that the "culture of direct business support has run its course". However, he was not so fortcoming on the third point. *A New Direction* is clear that "this is not a task that can simply be delegated to an arms-length agency".

Deputy First Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones at the launch of his Economic Renewal strategy at Cardiff's Panasonic factory in early July. He is flanked by Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills Lesley Griffiths (left), and Environment Minister Jane Davidson

Private sector responses to the consultation also emphasised the need for a focus on:

- Streamlining procurement and planning and reducing regulation.
- Providing more resources for education and skills.
- Investing in infrastructure.
- Developing important sectors like the creative industries and renewables.

Here again the Welsh Government claims to have listened, with chapters devoted to each of these important areas. But how does *A New Direction* match up in detail with the private sector's recommendations? The short answer is that it is too early to tell. It is high on vision but low on action points. – not to mention hard facts and figures. It does not provide sufficient detail for firm conclusions to be drawn about the potential of the Government's intended new direction. As a result, at this stage it is only possible to make a number of headline comparisons.

The call to radically improve procurement practices reflects Wales's reputation as the most difficult place in the UK for public procurement. To make it more effective, and to support the private sector, procurement should be integrated into other business support functions with the aim of capturing long-term benefits and supporting small companies in Wales.

But to make headway, and to more effectively support small companies, the Welsh Government will need to raise the skills of staff working in this area. There is a suggestion that the Government's *Transforming Procurement through Home-grown Talent* project will act to increase capacity and skills in both the private and public sectors, including through an increase in the numbers of trained procurement professionals.

Another crucial area is education

and skills. Calls have been made for the Education Department to be streamlined and given a new objective to allow businesses direct access to funding for skills development. There has been a lack of innovative thinking on skills development, while independent evaluations of previous policies are almost non-existent. Where evaluations have been undertaken the results have often been unduly 'influenced' by the Government or not been made available to outside scrutiny.

The Welsh Government therefore needs to involve private firms in determining investment spending on skills for their areas and sectors. Such a partnership is proposed in *A New Direction*. However, there is a disappointing failure to foreground the urgent need to raise basic literacy and numeracy for school leavers, over half of whom fail to achieve 5A*-C grades including English or Welsh and mathematics at GCSE.

Finally, every organisation is pleading for the Government to invest in 21st Century infrastructure and transport networks. Extensive research by the OECD and World Bank has highlighted the direct impact that infrastructure investment has on economic growth. The cancellation or postponement of major projects like the new M4 relief road around Newport means that devolution is failing to create the competitive business environment that Wales desperately needs. Even more worrying is that current transport plans have not focused on connecting Welsh companies to their major markets.

While the Government has made a firm commitment to improve access to high speed broadband – so-called 'next generation' broadband should be available to all businesses by 2016 and to all homes by 2020 – the future for transport infrastructure is less clear. It is not certain to what extent transport will benefit from the promised increase in resources that will result from the abolition of the £100 million Single Investment Fund, half of which will be reinvested in infrastructure.

The remaining half of the Fund will be allocated to six priority sectors – a reduction from the 14 previously supported – identified as offering particular potential for competitive advantage in Wales. These are:

- Information and communcations technology
- Energy and environment
- Advanced materials and manufacturing
- Creative industries
- Life sciences
- Financial and professional services

One immediate cause for concern is that the Government will also provide support on a case-by-case basis for additional 'anchor companies' that fall outside these key sectors but are of regional importance. This risks a dilution of focus against which the IWA counselled in its consultation response, *Creating a positive business environment for Wales*.

How this sector-based approach will play out in practice will depend largely on the outcome of the restructuring of the Department for the Economy and Transport, which is due for completion by the end of 2010. International Business Wales will be abolished, with its functions subsumed within new sector-based groups. A reduction in employee numbers is expected, but unlikley to be close to the 150 presently employed. Less certain is the extent to which private sector bodies will be involved in the planning and/or delivery of policy, although *A New Direction* implies that input might be more welcome in the former than the latter.

Conspicuous by its absence is any reference to ensuring accountability in the delivery of this new strategy. This is particularly concerning. In the decade since the National Assembly was established, about £5 billion has been spent on 'economic development' but with no discernible improvement in economic performance. The lack of evidence produced by the Welsh Government on the allocation of economic development expenditure, and even less produced on the effectiveness of this spend, has long been a cause for concern (see Agenda for Summer 2005 and Spring 2010).

Internal performance measures used so far have too often been undemanding. Moreover, they were used to assess activities rather than outcomes. If the new direction for economic renewal is to represent the step change that is promised, the Welsh Government will need to be both rigorous and reflective in its assessment of outcomes. It is therefore a welcome development that, at the launch of *A New Direction*, Ieuan Wyn Jones anticipated the announcement of further detail on accountability measures in the autumn.

In summary, business advice was to eschew the usual lengthy strategy document that strives to be all things to all people and to produce instead a short sharp action plan. This should encourages us to stick to the knitting, to stop inventing new things on which to spend money, and to make growing the economy the overarching aim of the economic renewal programme.

It is this action plan that is now needed. In *Economic Renewal: A New Direction*, the Welsh Government has taken an important first step in acknowledging the priorities of private sector organisations in Wales. It must now follow through with real detail on how its new vision will be delivered. Much of this is promised before the end of the year. Until then, the jury will remain out.

— **Dr Stevie Upton** is Research Officer at the Institute of Welsh Affairs and **Professor Brian Morgan** is Director of the Creative Leadership and Enterprise Centre at UWIC.

Entrance to the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, an initiative which, built up over 30 years, now generates a GDP equivalent to the economy of Wales, and seeded by money channelled through America's credit union model.

How to capitalise on the payroll

Chris Jones says we should emulate American-style Credit Unions to kick-start business finance in Wales

Capitalism is built on the flow of money, as Karl Marx acknowledged. In turn, this puts the 'levers of power' in the hands of the bankers who are in a position to control the flow. How money is used, and how it flows is key to unlocking our economy and enabling the social and public service agenda to which we aspire.

An over-riding constraint on the Welsh economy is the inability of money to flow to business, the so-called 'credit squeeze'. This lack of 'business finance' is due to business's over reliance on globalised high street banks such as Lloyds TSB, HSBC, Barclays and the like. Nobody in their right mind should consider banks to be 'business friendly'. They may spout the fine words but, in the last two years, their actions - and inactions - have spoken volumes.

So what can business do? What suitable finance models are there for the businesses of Wales? I believe that a better model exists in the USA where business is routinely financed by Credit Unions.

During the Great Depression in America Credit Unions were established to act as conduits for New Deal federal funds used to build dams, roads, electrification and other forms of basic infrastructure. Some of these have flourished and still survive. The basic fact is that many businesses in the USA get their finance, not from high street banks, but from various types of Credit Unions.

A crucial dimension of American-style Credit Unions is that they are 'locality', or regionally based. They are professionally managed, and often capitalised by Federal and State payroll money flow. Although their interest rates and credit scoring are comparable to those of high street banks, the difference is that, being regionally based, credit union managers have more knowledge of local economic situations and much more responsibility and discretion about how they manage their lending.

Critically, a highly beneficial aspect of US credit union lending to business is that it is generally tied some form of turnover model of repayment. This means that repayments are geared to the performance of the business. At its most basic, if there is no turnover there is no loan repayment. For example, a business may have a bad month of trading where its turnover goes below an agreed threshold that would normally trigger a loan repayment. In this case, the loan payment is rescheduled

> "I believe that a better business finance model already exists in the USA where business is routinely financed by Credit Unions."

automatically until the agreed threshold is reached. Alternatively, the loan term period is extended. A variety of penalty-free agreements can be negotiated.

In contrast, UK businesses that borrow from a high street bank have to meet their monthly repayments come what may, regardless of their economic situation. In addition, the penalties for default are often sufficiently onerous to cause business failure.

Of course, the Credit Unions we are familiar with in Wales bear no comparison with US-style Credit Unions. Welsh Credit Unions are fine for the purposes for which they have been set up, to provide small loans and act as a savings' vehicle for a local populace. However, they are not designed for a business finance role as they are in the US.

It is the case that national business support organisations such as the Federation of Small Business, the National Farmers Union, and even the Post Office have a Credit Union entity associated with their organisation. However, the fact remains that very few businesses are aware of their existence or use their services in the same way as is done routinely in the US. Yet, there are no legal or constitutional impediments to converting an existing Credit Union or those attached to organisations like the Federation of Small Business into one that uses the more 'business friendly' American model.

The main barrier to be overcome is the scale of capitalisation. In order to lend to business, a Credit Union needs to have a capital base that is much larger than currently available to small Welsh-style Credit Unions. How can this be achieved? This is where the Welsh and local government needs to play a part and where the concept of 'money flow' needs to be understood.

To illustrate how a Credit Union can be 'capitalised' so that it can afford to be managed professionally and have sufficient funds to lend on a business scale, let us look at the following - highly simplified - example. In America, it is often a 'condition of employment' for federal or state employees to have a Credit Union account in addition to their ordinary high street bank account.

A large institution, such as a health authority or police force, will have a monthly payroll amounting to many millions of dollars. This payroll is paid into an employee's Credit Union account. Before the employee can withdraw it the Union has 'sight' and nominal use of this money. As a result it has funds to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars regularly channelled through its systems each and every month. Money earned from this 'money flow' contributes to the Credit Union's lending fund availability. Over the past year 14 per cent of Americans have moved their bank accounts to credt unions.

The other side of the coin is the turnover-based model for business lending. Assuming that a Credit Union is sufficiently 'capitalised' by money flow from institutional payrolls, it then has a fund to lend to businesses. The business asks for a loan for whatever a business purposes (in rural areas for instance it may be a farmer buying seed against a future crop). A condition of the loan is that the business turnover must be passed through the Credit Union. This requirement enables the borrower to benefit from favourable and structured repayment agreements geared to turnover. Meanwhile, the lender can monitor the financial performance of the business and the day-to-day risk involved.

The financial model provided by US Credit Unions has made an important contribution to the astounding success of the area in North Carolina known as the Research Triangle Park.

Some 30 years ago, this area, incidentally the size of Carmarthenshire, was a huge snake-ridden swamp containing legions of insects, flotillas of monster large-mouthed bass and populated by a few banjo playing gun touting residents who wouldn't have been out of place in the cast of the movie *Deliverance*.

Today, this small area generates more wealth and GDP than the entire economy of Wales. We should study this model. Federal and State governments 'seeded' the area with their institutions, channelling payrolls through the local Credit Unions. Roads and basic infrastructure were built across the swamp. A business environment was created that has led to a transformation from wilderness to economic powerhouse in just three decades.

All it needs is for just one Welsh County Council to pass its payroll through one properly constituted US-Style Credit Union to initiate a fundamental and beneficial change in Welsh business financing at the local level. Wales could be part of the quiet 'Move your Money' revolution currently sweeping America. Instead of stringing the bankers up, Americans are bypassing Wall Street and Main Street and returning to financial systems that survived the Great Depression and are far more suited to their individual localities. Here is a model for Wales to follow.

— **Chris Jones** manages the Llandeilo-based e-commerce firm ClickBridge Solutions.

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Rural Affairs Minister Elin Jones pictured near Aberystwyth in her Ceredigion constituency.

Whole food system

Elin Jones explains the thinking behind her emerging food strategy for Wales

Food is an issue on everyone's lips. Whether it's health gurus, celebrity gardeners or TV chefs, our lives are permeated by advice on what to eat, cook and grow. If we want to support the local economy or to save the planet, we're urged to make a difference through the food we choose to buy. Food marketing tantalises us whilst rising prices put pressure on already squeezed family budgets.

It's not just in our personal lives that food is gaining a more prominent place. It's also an important area of debate for public policy. Whether it's about health and well-being or climate change, our economy or our biodiversity, our local communities or our international role, food is now very much at the heart of it.

Since becoming Minister, food policy has been one of my priorities. In order to respond to the complex and changing context for our food system today, government has been working closely with our Food and Drink Advisory Partnership, academics in Cardiff University and others, to identify what this means for future public policy.

Wales needs a radical new approach to food policy. We need to consider 'food' in the round, from production right through to consumption. For the first time, we're understanding the need to set a policy direction not just on food *from* Wales, but also food *for* Wales. We need to consider not only implications for our food sector, but also our food system.

How our food system works goes far beyond government, but government also has an important role to play. If we are to achieve the food system we all want, we need a strong government, strong industries and a strong civil society with each playing their distinctive part. As Minister, it's my role to set a clear direction and steer public funds to ensure there is a national framework within which we can all achieve a positive food system for Wales. That's why the Welsh Government is developing a new food strategy.

One of the challenges that this new approach to food policy poses for government is collective working across departments. Officials in my department have not only been working with a range of external partners, but internally across all the relevant government departments as well.

If we are to develop a radical new approach to food policy in Wales, we need to understand what Welsh society wants from its food system. Answering this question has been part of the work that we've been doing with the Food and Drink Advisory Partnership and Cardiff University to develop the strategy and something on which we want to consult widely.

Competitive and profitable businesses throughout the food sector are vital for a strong food system. Government can't do this for business and we wouldn't want to, but we can provide an

environment that does more to enable businesses to be innovative, to add value to products as well as develop new ones, to make the best use of new technologies and to reach new markets. This is as true for co-operatives, mutuals and community enterprises as it is for other business models.

We also need a framework that builds resilience into our food system. I will always remember the Fuel Blockade in 2000. Not only were our ambulances in danger of not being able to run, but our food shelves were within hours of being completely empty. An extra 24 hours would have exposed the vulnerability of our food supplies. We need to plan for a system that is resilient to increasing global uncertainties as well as the threats that climate change brings. Maintaining food production in Wales, developing local economies, and encouraging a more diverse agricultural base, including horticulture and community and urban food production, is all part of developing this resilient food system.

Sustainability cuts across all our policy work and should also be at the heart of our work on food. We need to provide food that is healthy, safe and affordable. We also want a strong food economy at its centre and we must achieve all of this whilst reducing our environmental footprint and our carbon emissions.

We have identified a number of key drivers that will take us towards a more sustainable, resilient, competitive and profitable food system. These will again be subject to full consultation and I hope that as many people as possible will engage in the debate so we have a shared understanding of these key drivers.

I believe our work should focus on strengthening relationships across different parts of the food system, whether it's between producers and consumers, rural and urban areas, different parts of the food sector or simply reconnecting people with the food they eat. Transforming our food system will demand improved market development, a more efficient supply chain, developing a more discerning food culture, integrating food policy with other policy areas and of course, ensuring that all of this is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

With the UK government already slashing public budgets, it's not an easy time to be developing ambitious strategies. However, tight public finances make it even more important that we have the right policies in place so we target public resources to best effect. I hope the consultation on our new national food strategy will provide a space for all those with an interest to contribute to a shared vision for our food system.

— **Elin Jones** is Minister for Rural Affairs. She spoke on the themes addressed in this article at the IWA's *Food in the City* conference in Cardiff in June.

Kevin Morgan argues that food planning is one of the most important new social movements of the early 21st Century

The political economy of food

Among the basic essentials for life – air, water, shelter and food – planners have traditionally addressed them all with the conspicuous exception of food. This was the 'puzzling omission' that provoked the American Planning Association to produce its seminal *Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning* in 2007. It was a belated attempt to make amends for the fact that the planning community, academics and professionals alike, had signally failed to engage with the food system.

Customers at the Riverside Farmers' Market in Cardiff.

Urban planners might justify this neglect of food policy by claiming that it is largely a *rural* issue and therefore beyond the scope of the urban planning agenda. There are two reasons why this argument fails to provide a convincing explanation.

Firstly, the multifunctional character of the food system means that it has profound effects on a host of other sectors, including public health, social justice, energy, water, land, transport and economic development. These are all sectors in which planners are deemed to have a legitimate interest.

Secondly, the notion that food production is an exclusively rural activity fails to appreciate the significance of *urban agriculture*, an activity that never disappeared in the hungry cities of the global south. Today it is re-appearing in the more sustainable cities of the global north, where urban designers are re-imagining 'the city as a farm'.

Whatever the reasons for it, this 'puzzling omission' is now a matter of purely historical interest. For the foreseeable future, food planning is set to become an important and legitimate part of the planning agenda in developed and developing countries alike. Planners now find themselves addressing food policy because of the *new food equation*. This refers to a number of new and highly complex developments, the most important of which are the following:

1. **The food price surge of 2007-08**, when global wheat prices nearly doubled and rice prices nearly tripled, forcing hitherto secure social classes into food insecurity, a condition which already afflicts some 2 billion people.

2. **Food security has become a national security issue** after the food price surge triggered food riots in more than 60 countries around the world, forcing the G8 leaders to convene their first ever food summit in 2009.

3. **Climate change effects**, in the form of water and heat stress, damaged eco-systems and rising sea-levels, are expected to be worse in the poorest countries, the very countries that have done least to cause the problem of global warming.

4. **Land conflicts are escalating** as rich but food-stressed countries (like Saudi Arabia and South Korea) seek to buy up fertile land in Africa and Asia to ensure their own food security, fuelling charges of a new colonialism.

5. **Rapid urbanisation** means that cities are becoming more conscious about how they feed themselves because, given their sensitivity to food shortages, they are the most politically combustible areas in every country.

If food planning is on the rise, who are the food planners? They are a profoundly diverse and multi-dimensional community, composed of every profession which has a food-related interest as well as NGOs that focus on social justice, public health, food security and ecological causes. All are striving to make food policy-making a more open and democratic process.

Once confined to a narrow range of producer interests – like agri-business, farmers and the state – food policy is slowly but surely being prised open by food planners in the broadest sense of the term. Although people come to food planning from a bewildering array of backgrounds, straddling professional associations, consumer protection groups and citizen-based organizations, it appears that public health, social justice and ecological integrity are the principal concerns. In other words, food policy morphs into these wider causes because food has a unique status in our lives. Far from being just another 'industry', like autos, steel or software, the agri-food sector is unique because we ingest its products. For this reason the sector is critically important to human health and well-being. This is why it is *intrinsically* significant to human functioning rather than being merely instrumentally significant.

It is one thing to recognise the significance of food to health and well-being, especially in crowded urban planning agendas, it is quite another thing to give it political effect. To overcome this problem, smart food planners in cities as diverse as Toronto, Amsterdam and Kampala have woven a food policy dimension into existing urban plans - for example, health, education, transport and climate change - to illustrate how it can help city governments to fashion more sustainable communities. Among other things, this strategy requires urban planners to reach out to, and build alliances with, like-minded people in the city, not just in local government but in local civil society too.

Such alliances could help the food planning movement to connect to some of the most important campaigns underway in cities today, not least the World Health Organization's *Healthy Cities* programme, which addresses a set of core themes every five years. The overarching goal of the 2009-2013 Phase V of the programme is health equity in all local policies which is being addressed through three core themes:

- Caring and supportive environments
- Healthy living
- Healthy urban design

As a global movement promoted in all six WHO regions, *Healthy Cities* provides an ideal opportunity to get city governments all over the world to include a food policy dimension in their urban plans, especially if they want to secure the imprimatur of 'healthy city' status.

Though they may not be aware of it, urban planners are arguably the key players in the campaign for healthy cities. For instance, modern diseases like obesity will not be solved by the medical profession, which is largely geared to treating illness rather than promoting health. On the contrary, long term solutions to such conditions are more likely to be found in health-promoting planning measures. These include creating more sustainable urban environments where people feel safe to walk, run and cycle; public spaces where healthy food is readily accessible and affordable by everyone, especially in poor neighbourhoods; and where citizens are actively involved in shaping their built environment. In short, the healthy city agenda creates two important opportunities:

- It gives urban planners the chance to play a more innovative role in nurturing sustainable cities.
- It creates political space for the broader food planning community to put food on the policy agendas of *every* department in the municipal government.

Weaving food into local planning policy is well underway in North America and the rest of Europe. So much so that in its broadest sense food planning is one of the most important social movements of the early 21st Century in the global north. The multifunctional character of food means that it connects with, and lends itself to, a wide range of community campaigns. Indeed, such is the *convening power* of food that Rob Hopkins, founder of the Transition Towns movement, advises new campaigners to focus their efforts on local food issues if they want to garner interest and mobilise support.

Another sign of the popular resonance of food planning is the growth of Food Policy Councils in North America, where there are now more than 100 in various cities and counties.

In Europe, too, the food planning movement is beginning to register its presence. While small municipalities have been the real pioneers in getting high quality food into schools and hospitals, larger city authorities have recently produced urban food strategies under the banners of public health, social justice and sustainability. Two of the most prominent examples are London, which launched a sustainable food strategy in 2006, and Amsterdam, where the food strategy has multiple objectives, one of which is to help the city to re-connect to its regional hinterland for both economic and ecological reasons.

However, the greatest food planning challenges are to be found in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where least progress has been made in combating the problem of chronic hunger. Significantly, the locus of the problem is changing fast. With the burgeoning of African cities, we are witnessing the urbanisation of poverty and hunger to such a degree that cities will increasingly be in the forefront of the food planning challenge.

Paradoxically, urban planners in Africa have been part of the problem of food insecurity. Until recently they saw it as their professional duty to rid the city of urban agriculture. The rationale for ridding the city of urban farmers and street food vendors varied from country to country, but it was often animated by a combination of sound concerns about public health and less than sound notions of urban modernity. Thanks to

Volunteers at the Riverside Community Allotment project in Pontcanna Fields, Cardiff.

the pioneering efforts of the food planning community in cities like Dar es Salaam and Kampala, urban planners are now trying to integrate local food production into the fabric of the city, helping the African city to foster rather than frustrate urban food security.

The growth of the food planning movement in developed and developing countries has undoubtedly helped to humanise and localise the food system. The stress is on such quality control mechanisms as provenance, traceability and trust, all of which have been debased by the 'placeless landscapes' of the agri-business sector. Yet, however laudable it may seem, localisation creates two big political problems for the food planning community.

The first concerns the *localism* of the movement. If local focus is one of the strengths of the food planning community, it is also one of its weaknesses. In terms of the politics of power, highly localised campaigns cannot leverage political support at national level as their influence is too fragmented and thus too diffuse to register. To overcome this problem, local food planning movements need to orchestrate themselves in such a way as to secure the twin benefits of a federal organisation – that is to say, being *small* enough to control locally, yet being part of something *big* enough to make a difference beyond the locality.

The second concerns the equation of local food with sustainable food, a problem that some critics have labelled 'the local trap'. In highly localized conceptions, the reasoning tends to run as follows: locally produced food is the most ecologically sustainable because it has lower food miles and the latter are assumed to be an index of a product's carbon footprint.

However, the truth of the matter is that product lifecycle analysis is the only rigorous way to measure the carbon footprint of a product, and transport is just one factor in the total carbon count. If carbon is the metric of sustainability, then local food may not be as 'sustainable' as food imported from afar. Being a more capacious concept than some green activists would have us believe, sustainability cannot be reduced to a carbon metric because it has social and economic as well as environmental dimensions. Indeed, the social justice dimension of sustainability suggests that our greatest moral obligation today is to the poor and hungry of the world. This is why globally-sourced fairly traded produce should be treated as a legitimate component of a sustainable food system.

What this means is that the food planning movement needs to embrace a *cosmopolitan* conception of sustainability in which locally-produced seasonal food and fairly traded global food are given parity of esteem. Otherwise this new social movement could degenerate into a parochial form of green localism.

The Welsh Government strives to do justice to the local and the global in its new food strategy because, as well as calling for more locally-produced food, it also champions more fairly-traded produce. Indeed, Wales is a good example of cosmopolitan localism in action because it is the world's first Fair Trade Nation.

If food can help to build bridges between developed and developing countries around the world, it can also help cities re-connect with their rural hinterlands at home. Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham ought to seriously consider forming food policy councils to help them design and deliver sustainable food strategies. It would enable these cities to create new markets for the produce of their rural hinterlands. Food planning should be seen as helping to transform the image of the city's relationship with the countryside from parasite to partner.

— **Kevin Morgan** is Professor of Governance and Development in the School of City and Regional Planning at Cardiff University.

First ploughing takes place at the Coed Hills Market Garden project near St Hilary in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Market garden venture reduces carbon footprint

Steve Garrett describes the creation of an organic food-growing cooperative outside Cardiff

Riverside Community Market, which each Sunday runs the largest farmers' market in Wales across the road from the National Stadium, is creating its own ten-acre market garden at Coed Hills near St Hilary in the Vale of Glamorgan. The project has arisen from concern that Wales may soon face a real challenge in accessing enough food. Over the next decade our food systems will need to adapt to become more resilient to climate change. Meanwhile, we'll be less able to rely on imported food as fuel prices rise. Most importantly Wales needs to produce more fruit and vegetables to meet local demand.

Horticultural and growing skills need to be nurtured and our countryside managed carefully if our children are to enjoy eating fresh healthy food produced locally. We need new models for small food producing enterprises which are controlled and owned by local people, keep money in the local economy, have a low carbon footprint, and minimise packaging and other waste.

The new venture will enable members of our existing community allotment to develop their skills, and to learn how to produce more significant amounts of fresh produce for themselves and their community. Demand for fresh local food is increasing against a backdrop of statutory requirements that food be purchased from sustainable sources. As a result there is increasing interest amongst public sector procurement managers in schools, hospitals, and prisons in sourcing more fresh food locally.

Increasing demand and supply for locally produced food will help reduce the carbon footprint of food shopping in Cardiff. It will also support the development of local food businesses, particularly in the horticultural and sustainable food-processing sectors. This is particularly relevant in view of the current decline in conventional agriculture in Wales and the vulnerability resulting from an over-dependence on livestock-based activities. Small scale entrepreneurship is also a key economic development and regeneration tool.

> "Increasing demand and supply for locally produced food will help reduce the carbon footprint of food shopping in Cardiff."

The Coed Hills Market Garden fits well with all these aspirations, with its focus on education, training and the development of a sustainable business model in horticulture. We hope that as a pilot project it will inspire other small-scale social food enterprises across Wales.

According to the business plan, within five years the Riverside Market Garden will become a self-financing community-owned business producing a modest profit. The site will produce a wide range of organic vegetables, with a focus on higher value crops such as salads and fruit. Some of this produce will be

First fruits from Coed Hills in Spring 2010.

processed into soups, sauces and other products. Polytunnels will also allow us to grow Asian vegetables to meet the needs of Cardiff's diverse communities.

Most of the produce from the project will be sold at farmers' markets or as 'veg boxes' delivered direct to local consumers. Some higher value salads will be sold to local restaurants. We also plan to make links with the local food cooperatives which are emerging in some of the poorer communities in south Wales, and be part of a move to encouraging them to source more of their produce locally. Overall a key aim is to try and ensure that fresh local produce is available to everybody, and not just seen as the prerogative of a small number of well-heeled 'foodies' who have the inclination to attend farmers markets.

We will also offer training and care placements, with educational visits for schools and colleges, and fun days out for community supporters. The social enterprise will initially employ one full-time and two part-time growers plus education and training staff, and will collaborate with other local food producers on marketing and delivery.

The new company has been set up as an Industrial and Provident Society for Community Benefit. This legal model offers a simple way to raise capital through a community share offer. It has a democratic structure in which all members have one vote irrespective of the size of shareholding. Shareholders will be welcome to visit the site, and will receive invitations to special events and activities, including picking their own fresh produce, according to the season. Individuals and families will be able to work on the site and to support the project in any other way they choose.

We have established a best practice model for how we will measure and record our progress in this respect, and aim to generate 'social returns' in the following areas:

- **Community:** involving local people as owners and participants; building a stronger community through events and informal networking; encouraging healthy diets through easy access to fresh organic produce; and offering informal and formal training opportunities in organic horticulture.

- **Economy:** creating up to three new jobs; building a supply chain which keeps money in the local economy; offering the structure of the project as a model for others, with mentoring support; and collaborating with other small rural businesses.

- **Environment:** managing land according to organic principles; conserving and improving the distinctive features of the rural landscape; saving energy and the requirement for external horticultural inputs; minimising waste through on-site recycling and re-usable packaging.

Prospective shareholders can invest anything from £50 to £20,000. For the first five years we will offer no financial return and shares may not be returned. After that we anticipate offering a modest interest rate and the option to withdraw shares. However, we hope that people will support us for more than just financial reasons. This is an investment which is primarily geared to offering a 'social dividend' in the sense that investors' money is helping make a socially useful project happen.

— **Steve Garrett** is Chair and Founder of the Riverside Community Market Association. Shares in the Riverside Market Garden can be bought on the website: www.riversidemarketgarden.org.uk

How we could run our own rail service

Stuart Cole explores the opportunities that might arise from Germany's acquisition of Arriva

What could the £1.62 billion take over of Arriva trains by the German state railway Deutsche Bahn (DB) in May mean for bus and train services in Wales? The takeover makes DB owner of a large part of Wales' public transport network. In addition to the Wales and Borders rail franchise, Arriva's cross country franchise between Cardiff, Birmingham and Nottingham will become a part of *DB Regio* which already own the successful Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone Railway open access service (that is non franchised, non subsidy) into London's Marylebone station.

On the buses side Arriva Buses Wales dominates the bus market in north Wales and is one of the oldest, through its antecedent, Crosville. On the rail freight side readers may have noticed the DB Schenker brand on rolling stock following EWS Railways takeover by DB.

The Wales and Borders rail franchise was poorly negotiated by the English Department for Transport with Arriva in December 2003. There was complete disregard for expansion of capacity, the need for new trains or increased services. Consequently the £104.6m planned for the current financial year will cost an extra £36m in service contract and subsidy payments alone, with additional sums in capital expenditure spread over several years.

The franchise was negotiated to the end of 2018 and during that period Arriva will receive over £2 billion from the Welsh Government, including payments for enhanced new services, longer trains and increased frequency following the inadequate deal brokered in 2003. In the short to medium term, therefore, DB could just bank the cash. However, it might take the view that such an approach would damage its global image as a high investment company. So is there an opportunity to persuade a big player to invest heavily in the railways of Wales as part of an investment agreement with the Welsh Government?

> "But might the issue of branding give the Welsh Government an opportunity to move forward on developing its own brand on the Wales and Borders franchise to indicate which services and tickets are part of an integrated whole?"

DB has an impressive public image through its high speed ICE train investment, grand new stations such as Berlin Hauptbhanhof and airline code sharing within Germany. But this has begun to suffer with under investment and elderly, 'tired' rolling stock requiring refurbishment on its regional services. Even its ICE tilting trains have suffered from technical problems and replacing them with older trains has meant timetable unreliability and extended journey times.

DB Regio takes over the Welsh rail contract and cannot change the train provision Arriva has agreed with the Department of Transport and subsequently with the Welsh Government. The new parent has also indicated that it expects to leave Arriva's existing management in charge of the British operations as it has done with other recent franchise acquisitions including the London Overground and the Tyne and Wear Metro where there has been no sign of change in investment or management policy. Looking also at the *DB Regio* attitude to Chiltern Railways and Wrexham and Shropshire, little change can be expected on the railways in the short term.

But might the issue of branding give the Welsh Government an opportunity to move forward on developing its own brand on the Wales and Borders franchise to indicate which services and tickets are part of an integrated whole? Apparently DB has indicated that it wishes to retain the Arriva brand in Wales, as with the Wrexham and Shropshire and Chiltern Railways

brands. Although DB's chief executive, Dr Rudiger Grube, claims the Arriva brand is "very, very valuable", he might be persuaded of the benefit to Welsh public transport users of joint branding.

Perhaps DB might not want to continue a franchise into which it is locked for another eight years. Although it provides a guaranteed income, it reduces its flexibility. So rather than pay large sums to the operator there may be an opportunity to buy out DB from the Wales and Borders franchise and create a management contract similar to the UK Government's East Coast Directly Operated Railways. The Welsh Government has procurement powers under the Transport (Wales) Act to do this.

"One also wonders the extent which DB will allow Arriva Trains Wales to put forward its proposed Aberystwyth to London Euston open access, no subsidy service."

One also wonders the extent to which DB will allow Arriva Trains Wales to put forward its proposed Aberystwyth to London Euston open access, no subsidy service. Wrexham and Shropshire objected to the new service, claiming it would take away customers in a small mid Wales and borders rail market, and lead them to closing down their service to London Marylebone.

On the buses, the largest contracts financially are the Welsh Government's national bus pass and county tendered services together with the three Traws Cambria long distance bus services. These are features of other countries where the company operates and it has franchise contracts with Transport for London.

As the management is to remain then it is unlikely that DB will become involved in micro management, so long as profit margins remain at the norm of about 15 per cent. So, little change is expected there.

So long as Arriva is seen by DB as a key part of its expansion strategy then short term change is unlikely. But there are opportunities for the Welsh Government to explore changes in the national train and coach networks rather than the local operations.

— **Professor Stuart Cole** is Director of the Wales Transport Research Centre at the University of Glamorgan Business School.

One of Deutsche Bahn's high speed ICE trains negotiating the Black Forest in Baden Wurttemberg. Could we see something similar one day on the Valley lines?

Dual sector revolution comes to Wales

John Osmond reports on a transformation of the Welsh education system

A revolution is underway in the organisation of universities and further education colleges across Wales that will transform the whole of the country's learning system within five years. The aim is to radically reduce the number of institutions, promote collaboration, increase subject choice, give greater emphasis to vocational qualifications, enhance Welsh medium education, and put more of the education budget into frontline delivery. What is happening is the realisation of the objectives set out in the Welsh Government's policy document *For our Future, the 21st Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales* published last November.

Education Minister Leighton Andrews has announced he wants to see fewer but larger Universities in Wales.

A two-tier university system is emerging. Some universities, no more than four – Cardiff, Swansea, Aberystwyth, and Bangor – will concentrate on being academic, research-led institutions, although some will also extend their links into futher education. The remainder will become 'dual sector' universities and will connect in new ways with further education colleges and schools in delivering courses more related to vocational skills and engaging with their local economies.

Three new regions are emerging for the dual sector universities: south west Wales, the Heads of the Valleys and north and mid Wales. It is likely that rationalisation will also take place in Swansea Bay, and the south-east Wales coastal belt involving Glamorgan University, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, and University of Wales, Newport. In some places change is being resisted by institutions anxious to cling on to their autonomy and identity. However, the 'transformation agenda', as it is known, is being driven vigorously by Education Minister Leighton Andrews. In a remarkable speech delivered at Cardiff University in June he made it clear that unless progress was speeded up he would seek more powers to direct universities to move in the direction he wants. He hinted that, if necessary, legislation could be sought to bring the Higher Education Funding Council within the control of the Government as happened to the Welsh Development Agency (see www.clickonwales.org, 1 June).

Even so, remarkable changes are already happening. The most advanced and one which is providing a potential template for the rest of the country, is in south west Wales. Here a confederal 'dual sector' university is being created, led by the newly merged Trinity St David University that has brought together Lampeter and Trinity College, Carmarthen. In June it announced that it would be merging with Swansea Metropolitan University and forming an alliance with Coleg Sir Gâr in Carmarthen, Pembrokeshire College and Coleg Ceredigion. This will bring together more than 170,000 students (although not all will be full-time equivalent) making it the fourth largest higher education institution in Wales.

Meanwhile, a new University of the Heads of the Valleys is being established as a result of collaboration between the University of Wales, Newport and

Glamorgan University to focus on the needs of economically inactive and unemployed learners. The Welsh Government is providing £10 million over the next three years which will complement European Social Fund funds to deliver new foundation and work-based Higher Education routes. The new University will have two purpose built main campuses, the Merthyr Tydfil Learning Quarter and a Learning Zone on the site of the former Corus steelworks at Ebbw Vale. Each will also involve a rationalisation of post-16 tertiary education, entailing collaboration between secondary schools and further and higher education.

A longer-term prospect is a confederal dual sector university for north and mid Wales, including Bangor University, Aberystwyth University, Glyndŵr University, Coleg Llandrillo Cymru and Coleg Meirion Dwyfor which merged in April, and other further education institutions and schools in the region.

A dual sector university is defined in the *Transforming Education Transforming Lives* mission document that launched the south west Wales initiative in June as, "a group structure which brings together both further and higher education institutions within a geographical region. It establishes a dual sector configuration to take forward shared resources, planning, academic and research activity and single management structures to deliver tangible benefits for learners".

Research continues to be part of a dual sector university's mission, but the activities are vocationally orientated and closely linked to the needs of the local economy. So, for example, in the south west Wales region the following research priorities have been identified: professional development for those working in the public sector, heritage and tourism, rural health and social care, the creative industries, rural sustainability and landscape management, and education.

All this chimes with a Welsh Government statement presented to the National Assembly's Enterprising and Learning Committee at the end of April reporting on progress with the 'transformation agenda'. It says that by 2012 all 14-year-old pupils in Wales should be able to choose from a minimum of 30 subjects, including at least five vocational courses. There will be minimum course requirements for learners at post 16.

The Welsh Baccalaureate, it says, combines the personal and generic skills with vocational or academic qualifications and learning: it "helps learners achieve more, be better equipped for further study and the world of work and to be better informed, more active citizens". This September 80 per cent of schools and FE colleges in Wales will be offering the Welsh Baccalaureate, to some 53,000 learners in 217 centres.

> "Overall the objective is the creation of a learning network that puts the interest of learners before the institutions."

The Government is establishing three regional forums to facilitate cross-county border co-operation for delivering Welsh-medium and bilingual 14-19 education in north, south west, and south Wales. It is also establishing a framework for co-operation between Higher Education and post-16 provision to enhance progression pathways into post-19 education and training.

Underpinning these developments is a remarkable programme of mergers of institutions across Wales designed to reduce overheads and release money for frontline education:

- Coeg Llandrillo Cymru and Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor merged in April creating a combined budget of £45 million budget, and delivering education and training to 45,000 students. The intention is that the new organisation will eventually also merge with Coleg Menai.
- Deeside College and the Welsh College of Horticulture in Northop merged in August
- Deeside College and Coleg Llysfai will merge in August this year.
- A new campus, part of a city regeneration project is planned for Swansea and Gorseinon Colleges which will merge and become Gower College in August.
- A merger between Barry College and Coleg Glanhafren in Cardiff will begin this summer and is planned to be completed by 2013.
- Blaenau Gwent, Coleg Gwent and Newport University are working on plans to deliver integrated tertiary education in the new Learning Zone in Ebbw Vale.
- The Workers Educational Association in south Wales and Coleg Harlech (WEA North) have undertaken a feasibility study and are planning to merge next year.
- Mergers between Glyndŵr University and Yale College in Wrexham, and between Ystrad Mynach College and Coleg Gwent are being considered.

One way or another such enhanced collaboration, often leading to mergers, is being pursued in every corner of Wales. Overall the objective is the creation of a learning network that puts the interests of learners before the institutions. The aim is a more integrated and flexible higher education system to allow access by a wider range of people. As *For our Future* puts it, "We expect to see more visibility and choice of ways to access higher education, including through systematic progression pathways from post-16 learning and the workplace. We want many more people in Wales to experience higher education, and be equipped with higher level skills. For many this will mean an experience of higher learning which will be shorter, more timely, and fitted more flexibly around their lives and livelihoods".

— **John Osmond** is Director of the IWA.

Innovate or decline

Marcus Longley explains why to survive the Welsh NHS must speed up change

As we all know by now, the public sector will soon face its most serious and protracted squeeze on spending. Before we become blasé about this, and assume that the doom and gloom has been over-hyped, consider what it will mean for the NHS in Wales. Projections range from a best-case scenario of annual real increases of 2 per cent for the next three years, followed by 3 per cent for the following three, to a worst case of annual real reductions of 2 per cent for three years followed by 1 per cent reductions for the following three. The best case perhaps doesn't sound too bad, until you realise it's just a third of what the NHS has had for the last decade. The worst case is a more prolonged and deeper cut than the NHS has ever faced.

How can the NHS in Wales emerge from the next few years, not just still intact, but actually healthier than it is now? Certainly, it will not emerge stronger if it just hunkers down and talks of trimming 'waste'. Survival requires change, not digging in and defending.

Let me highlight two of the key areas where big change is needed. First, the 'outcomes' of the NHS in Wales do not always bear comparison with the best in the world. We sometimes fail to prevent unnecessary and premature death, and Welsh patients sometimes suffer avoidable adverse consequences of their illness. For example, of the four most common cancers, Wales has the lowest survival rates for two and amongst the worst for the other two, when compared with the other countries of the UK. Wales also has the highest death rate for coronary heart disease and stroke.

Second, there is unjustifiable variation in performance across the Welsh NHS, which must mean that some patients are not getting the best possible care. Making improvements in these areas is self-evidently desirable, but requires new thinking and new approaches. Marginal change simply takes too long and is insufficient given the scale of the challenge. Paradoxically, a harsh financial climate may just help. Improved quality of care usually saves money as well as lives.

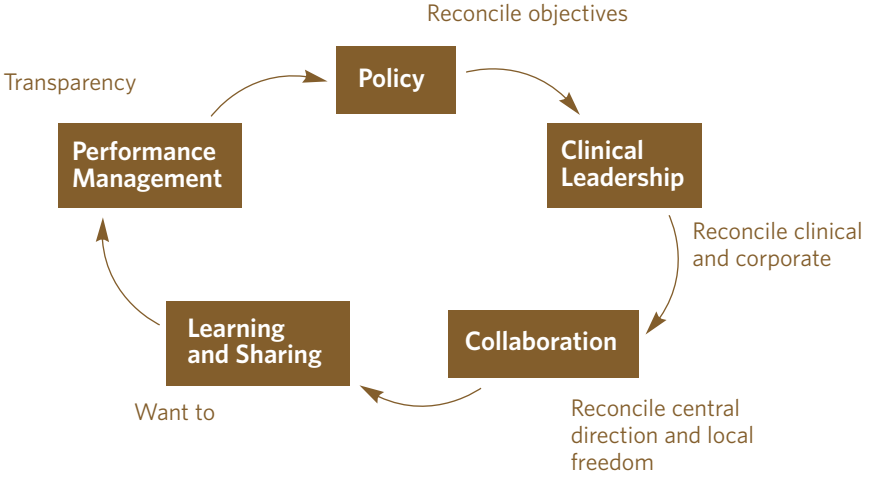
Looking at the history of innovation in the Welsh NHS reveals lots of change and improvement, often triggered by individual experts and enthusiasts. It also reveals innovation which has not been widely adopted, and innovation which has initially flourished but then withered, leaving little trace a few years down the line. The current *1000 Lives Campaign*, to save 1,000 lives in Wales by eradicating health care associated infections, and the work of the National Leadership and Innovation Agency, are excellent, but not sufficient. The problem seems to lie mainly with a system which still does not stimulate, support, evaluate and adopt big changes in a sufficiently determined and rigorous way.

What would such a system look like? There is a Virtuous Circle of Innovation to be created here (see **Figure 1**).

Five elements need more attention:

- **National policy-making** needs to be clear that innovation really is essential, and to make it happen consistently.
- **Clinical leaders** are often the key catalysts and champions of innovation: NHS Wales needs more of them, and a clear place for them in the managerial hierarchy.
- **Collaboration** in change is vital, if unacceptable local variations in practice are to end, and we need to resolve the age-old tension between individual clinicians' freedom to do what they think is best for their patients, with society's interest in stopping sub-optimal practice.
- Clinicians need to **share and learn**

Figure 1: The Virtuous Circle of Innovation



from each other. The sharing sometimes works well, but often people seem unwilling to learn and act differently.

- Finally, all of this needs to be **managed**, in a way which is sensitive to the complexities of service improvement, but intolerant of change at the pace of the slowest. We should be clear about what good practice looks like in key areas, and how well local services are performing against that standard.

All of this throws up some interesting paradoxes:

We don't gather the evidence

We advocate basing practice on evidence of effectiveness, but we seldom gather the necessary evidence about what works, and whether best practice is being followed. It has been estimated, for example, that only about 20 per cent of what the NHS routinely does is of proven effectiveness.

We take the horse to water

Quite a lot of time and effort is spent disseminating good practice, but there always seem to be good reasons why 'it couldn't be adopted here', and we need to invent another solution. Thus we see lots of useful innovations springing up all the time in the NHS, but rather less copying of other people's good ideas.

We need to cure 'Pilotitis'

We've got lots of innovative pilot schemes, but when the money runs out the case for continued funding just doesn't seem to be compelling enough. There are examples of this in every part of Wales – ranging from initiatives to help people manage their long-term conditions, to interventions to tackle health inequalities. It is a case of severe 'pilotitis'.

We want managers and innovators on the same side

Clinical staff with bright ideas, and others in the Third Sector and elsewhere, don't always seem to be well-connected to the people who make decisions. The world of healthcare is notoriously hierarchical and fragmented into various silos. The power and territorial tensions that create such divisions are manifest when the tribe of managers talks of targets and maximum gain for the maximum number, and the tribe of clinicians talks of effectiveness and the best for the individual patient. There is actually a lot of potential common ground between the two – for example, patient safety is a rallying cry that should appeal to all – but there is decades of history yet to overcome.

> "For many Welsh citizens, there's a yawning gulf between the promises of their politicians and public services, and the every-day reality of the service they experience."

Doing better sometimes means doing less

The biggest gains often come from doing less, not more by stopping unnecessary and ineffective processes. Unfortunately, the practice of defensive medicine ('do that extra test just in case we might be sued') is entrenched; but there are promising examples of people (managers and clinicians together) redesigning 'patient pathways' and cutting out tranches of unnecessary activity.

Innovation doesn't always depend on new ideas

It's often just about doing sensible things consistently and universally. The use of very simple checklists in operations, for example, ensures that supplies are available when they are needed and that all the routine checks have been carried out. Ticking the box can save lives.

Many people in the NHS in Wales – from the Welsh Government down – are seriously addressing these issues. Let's hope they succeed. If they do, it will probably be because we get four key things right. First, we need to focus unflinchingly on what matters most. Is the NHS preventing premature death and avoidable harm at least as well as the best in the world? Second, are we harnessing professional pride to best effect? No-one wants to be second rate, or part of a second rate team? Third, do we help the best get better, or waste time trying to coax improvement from the worst?

Finally, the greatest lever of change should be the patient. Who, after all, has the greatest stake in success? But are they being encouraged to demand the best possible? For many Welsh citizens, there's a yawning gulf between the promises of their politicians and public services, and the every-day reality of the service they experience. If wards are dirty, receptionists rude, and medical records lost, the 'jam tomorrow' promises of innovation will ring rather hollow. The result: a poverty of expectation. Instead, why don't we routinely collect patients' views on the outcomes of their treatment – all patients, not just an occasional few - and build that into future performance?

During the 1930s, a campaigner was canvassing against German re-armament on a housing estate in London. One man opened the door and asked him: 'Did you come up in the lift? Did it smell of pee?' The visitor replied that it did. "Can you stop people peeing in our lift?" He admitted he couldn't. "Then how are you going to stop Germany re-arming?"

The NHS in Wales doesn't need any more excellent strategies and fine-sounding intentions. Rather, it needs to concentrate on making some simple improvements to routine practice. Thankfully, the current leadership of the service is on the case.

— **Marcus Longley** is Director of the Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care and Professor of Applied Health Policy, University of Glamorgan. This article draws on a seminar organised by the Institute of Welsh Affairs and Health Academy Wales.

Adding life to years

Theatre dance company Striking Attitudes performing during the making of their film *Remains To Be Seen* at Dunraven Bay, Southerndown, in the Vale of Glamorgan. The short film celebrates the grace, vitality, inner strength, spiritual poise and experienced physique of the older dancer.

Odette Parry agrees with a new IWA study that we need to change the way we think about ageing

Many of the issues highlighted in the *Adding Life To Years* study by IWA Director John Osmond resonate well with a *Voices of Older People* survey our Social Inclusion Research team at Glyndŵr University carried out last year. While our sample of respondents comprised older people themselves, the *Adding Life to Years* report draws on the experiences and knowledge of a broader range of experts, including academics and representatives from the voluntary and statutory services. The report forms part of a wider project for the Older People's Commission for Wales, which is exploring inter-generational attitudes to ageing and how they might shape appropriate policy responses.

The crux of the IWA report is that changes to the demographic profile of the population in Wales reflect the fact that most people are living longer. This surely should be good news. However, as the report points out, rather than perceiving this as a matter for celebration, services tend to construct it as a problem. Ageing is regarded as adding just more pressure on health and social services already financially over-stretched by demands on their dwindling resources. This, in turn, filters down to older people, who unsurprisingly pick up the regrettable message that they are a burden on society.

The report explores Welsh policy responses to the aging population, since the launch of the Welsh Government's ten year *Strategy for Older People* in 2003. In its first phase, to 2008, it led to the formation of a National Older People's Partnership Forum for Wales, the appointment of a Minister for Older People, and most notably a Commissioner for Older People.

In the second phase (2008-13) the strategy is concentrating on mainstreaming policy. Key indicators and targets have been identified around inclusion, material wellbeing, active aging, social care, health care and health and wellbeing. While progress on older people's policy in Wales during the first decade of devolution is commendable, future targets are highly ambitious, given a budget allocation of only £12 million pounds, as the report points out.

So how can they be realised? The main issues, identified by services themselves, are accommodation and care. Unsurprisingly, the majority of older people want to remain independent and in their own homes. Indeed, some older people who find themselves in hospital or residential homes could be more appropriately treated and cared for in their own homes by community-based services. However, to achieve this a fundamental shift in the balance towards more care in the community is required.

It will also need more multi-agency seamless provision, particularly between the NHS and social services. An important message is that, rather than treating them as an homogenous group, we need to understand and addresses the physical, social and psychological needs of older people as individuals. For those unable to stay in their own homes, the need is to provide accommodation and care which enables older people with a dignified existence as well as realising their full potential.

Of course, the major problem is funding. On top of pensions, which as

the report points out many people in Wales are under-provided for, there is the issue of services for those in the community, and accommodation for those older people where needed. Here, policy appears to focus more responsibility for management of care, whether its local authorities or people themselves.

Payment is a thorny problem, not least of all to those owning their own homes, or with savings. They regard themselves as being punished, or victims of their own thriftiness. While currently the Welsh Government appears to favour provision based on pooling risks across lifespans, the report urges a new approach in which care is funded by payments from everyone in society, according to their ability to pay, primarily over the course of their working life. However, this would necessarily entail increases in general taxes, or a new social insurance/care fund to which most people would be expected to pay.

The message of the report, is that focusing overly on the issue of who is going to pay, and how much, misses the main point. As it convincingly argues, the sheer magnitude of the demographic changes we are about to experience in the coming decades are changing the terms of the issue. Currently, we are underestimating the scale of the demographic shift and consequently the extent of the resources that will be needed to tackle it. To deal effectively with the increase in older population in Wales we must therefore fundamentally change our thinking about aging, older people and our responses to them. First, we must stop seeing older people as a problem, or aging as a negative process. We must promote more positive images of ageing, which must be grasped as an opportunity to add to the fulfillment of life. We must also stop seeing, or responding to, older people as an homogenous group. Older people are not all the same. They differ, for example in terms of their gender, health, financial circumstances, social support and psychological needs.

Moreover, while older people may respond differently to the different stages of aging, the fundamental importance of the promotion of their respect and dignity, quality of life and opportunities for fulfillment remain paramount. To achieve the changes in thinking and approaches we need, the barriers between generations will need to be broken down. This will entail innovative engagement of younger people to counter-act the overwhelmingly negative images associated with ageing.

This task necessarily requires a champion. Given the financial constraints on the Welsh Government, particularly in respect of benefits and pension provision and the funding of long-term care, the report urges that the Older People's Commissioner could most usefully emphasise her advocacy role in highlighting the concerns of older people, and take a lead in changing the attitudes of the people of Wales towards ageing.

— **Professor Odette Parry** is Director of the Social Inclusion Research Unit at Glyndŵr University.

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Economic growth's collateral damage

Katie-jo Luxton bemoans the loss of our biodiversity hard drive

"Does it really matter if lapwings go extinct in Wales?" someone once asked following a presentation on the failure of agri-environment schemes to halt declines in wild bird populations in Wales. There has been more than an 80 per cent decline in the last twenty years.

Lapwings are part of the landscape of my upbringing and I feel deeply saddened by their disappearance from most parts of rural Wales. My children will not grow up, as I did, inspired by the graceful flight of these beautiful creatures, or write poems about their clever strategies against predators. I feel both a cultural loss and a sense of failure in our moral duty, as a nation, to protect our wildlife.

Of course, the wider answer to the question is that biodiversity represents the natural wealth of our planet and provides the basis for all life, including our prosperity. The alarming decline of our biodiversity has been likened to wiping nature's hard drive, even before we know what data it contains.

It would appear there is an intention to address the problem. We have more than a decade of commitments from every level of government - from the Rio Johannesburg World Summits of 1992 and 2002, to the meeting of the European Heads of State in Gothenburg in 2001. Meanwhile, Wales launched its own Environment Strategy in 2006, which not only committed to halting biodiversity loss by 2010 but also to seek its recovery by 2026.

But this year, when we should have been celebrating, not only have these commitments failed to produce anywhere near the action needed to halt biodiversity loss, the dream itself seems to be lost. Like all other countries, Wales has not only failed to reach its target but has also failed to lessen the decline of most species placed on the biodiversity action list.

Gwent Levels Futurescape

The Gwent Levels are an extensive area of coastal floodplain, salt marsh and inter-tidal mudflats. For many years, they were seen primarily as flat land ripe for development. Yet the area is of huge importance to south Wales, particularly for its rare and special wildlife, water quality, flood risk management and quality of life.

Here there is enormous potential to create a Futurescape that local people can enjoy, which also supports sustainable farming and natural flood protection. This in turn will help species such as bittern, lapwing, water vole, and otter survive in the face of climate change.

A partnership between RSPB Cymru, the Countryside Council and Newport City Council has been working to protect and improve the Levels. So far this partnership has:

- **Created** of 153 hectares of lowland wet grassland.
- **Restored** 50 hectares of reedbed.
- **Built** a £2.8m Environmental Education and Visitor Centre at the Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve.
- **Produced** 60 volunteer opportunities at Newport Wetlands
- **Increased** the number of visitors to Newport Wetlands from 18,000 to 59,000 - more than 7,000 school children visits to Newport Wetlands since 2008.
- **Defended** the Gwent Levels against development, including airstrips and the new M4.

So why has it been so hard to halt the decline in wildlife? It boils down to the simple fact that the exploitation of our natural world – the land, water, air, and mineral resources – is part of our economic rationale. Wildlife is the collateral damage. We are living as though there is no limit to our resources, when in fact the economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment.

One example, which has cost our wallets and lapwings dear, is agricultural subsidies. These have driven intensification and specialisation of our farmland to produce more and more food from even the most marginal land. Only a few years ago these subsidies paid our farmers to 'improve land', meaning to drain and fertilise it, without thought for the value of the hills and blanket bogs as a sponge, or the likelihood of flooding down stream.

Our failure to factor the wider public goods and environmental services provided by habitats into the economic equation has cost us. We have paid for the food the Welsh mountains have produced three times over – in the supermarket, through taxes that paid the subsidy, and through water rates to clean the water rushing off the mountain unfiltered and full of suspended soil. Moreover, our hill farmers have been left with depleted land dependant on subsidies, our water resources are increasingly precarious, and the public finds it harder to understand or engage with the systems that produce and control food.

The need to work with nature rather than against it was the rationale for the duty to promote sustainable development that was placed within the founding legislation of the National Assembly. However, we are far from living within the capacity of our ecosystems. Birds, such as lapwing are, quite literally, the canaries in the coalmine, indicating all is not well with the environmental systems underpinning our society. We have continued with the same economic model, which has failed to account for many of the services nature provides and has depleted and degraded these services.

Now a major new study being published this summer, *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity*, based on the thinking of leading economist Pavan Sukdev, is aiming to do for biodiversity what the Stern report did for climate change (www.teebweb.org). The Welsh Government has also made tentative steps to address the perversities of our agricultural subsidies and it is hoped that *Glastir*, the new better-funded, agri-environment scheme, will encourage a more focused suite of wildlife measures.

However, all this could be too little too late, certainly for birds like the lapwing, which now only breed on a handful of sites outside nature reserves. For even despite more than doubling the resources available to the *Glastir* scheme, the investment is still small in governmental terms. At £90 million a year, it is still less than a third of the overall farm subsidy coming to Wales.

To halt biodiversity loss we need to tackle the root cause of the problem. Rather than seeing the environment as an 'add-on', to be managed after the real business, we need to invest in our natural world and use it to drive economic regeneration. The Welsh Government should test this approach in areas that are facing the greatest challenges caused by the failure of our current economic model. It needs to find ways to harness and align its existing resources from all sectors. It should be investing in high quality management of our protected landscapes to create a 'green infrastructure'. We should improve the quality of upland bogs and lowland flood lands to retain water, and provide improved visitor access and engagement so that people can enjoy wildlife as part of a healthy, high quality life.

The Welsh Government should pay for this new approach with receipts from wind farms on government land, and by extending the 'polluter pays' principle so that the biodiversity impacts of developments are fully captured.

Conservation charities are creating these 'green infrastructures' by working at a landscape scale, what RSPB Cymru calls 'Futurescapes'. They aim to create more resilient wildlife populations outside reserves and protected areas, in a more connected and restored landscape and ecosystem. They will make space for wildlife especially helping it to adapt to a changing climate. They will also help people to reconnect with nature, boost our quality of life and offer rewarding, highly skilled jobs in the environmental management sector.


Young bird watchers at the Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve.

'Futurescapes' can only work as partnerships between people and organisations, bringing the public, private and voluntary sectors together to pool resources. The shared aim is to create landscapes where people and nature co-exist to mutual benefit. This is the true meaning of sustainable development. We must strive to achieve it if we are to keep lapwings, our biodiversity and safeguard our children's future.

— **Katie-jo Luxton** is the Director of RSPB Cymru.

View of Castlemartin Corse, looking upstream to the east. Photo: Richard Ellis

Coastal flooding prevention without relying on concrete

Richard Ellis describes how the National Trust is coping with sea incursion at Freshwater West in Pembrokeshire

Freshwater West has long been known as one of Wales's premier surfing beaches, and more recently as a location for two Hollywood blockbusters *Robin Hood* and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. It is rather less famous as a focus for the National Trust's plans for adapting to rises in sea level caused by climate change.

Freshwater West lies at the seaward end of a narrow catchment reaching six miles inland to the hamlet of St Petrox. The catchment is drained by the stream and wetland of Castlemartin Corse, and is barely more than a mile wide for most of its length. Ridges to north and south carry B roads connecting the villages of Castlemartin and Angle to Pembroke.

The beach is backed by a magnificent dune system, with the Corse draining through a man-made channel and culvert onto the beach. Castlemartin Corse, with its tenanted farms, was part of the vast Cawdor Estate until it was broken up in 1976. In the early 19th Century it was subjected to a land drainage scheme, carried out by Dutch engineers, to improve the land for agriculture. The result was a system of channels and ditches which drained the land sufficiently for the lowest part of the basin to be used for pasturage for much of the year. The drainage was maintained by the Environment Agency until the 1990s. So, while the Castlemartin Corse Site of Special Scientific Interest is the best example of a calcareous fen in Pembrokeshire, it is but a 20 hectare relic of a once mighty wetland.

Another man-made obstacle to the natural functioning of both the hydrology and the geomorphology of the site is the B4319 road, which cuts through the foredunes and principal dune slacks, in places just metres away from the top of the shingle beach. Climate change and rising sea level present a challenge to the status quo. The lowest part of the valley landward of the dunes is a mere 3.5 to 4.5 metres above sea level, in places level with the shingle ridge at the top of the beach. Mean high water spring tides as measured at Milford Haven are currently 3.29 metres above sea level. Only the culvert and bridge structures and the dunes - which in the area around the culvert and outfall are 7-8 metres above sea level - stand in the way of inundation of the basin by high spring tides.

As it is, the basin is subject to extensive flooding, as high tides and the limited capacity of the culvert prevent fresh water escaping through the outfall. One current farming enterprise upstream runs 500 cattle on 550 acres, up to 80 acres of which are subject to flooding and therefore unsuitable for grazing for weeks at a time.

In 2005 the National Trust began to develop a vision for the future of Castlemartin Corse which would accommodate sea level rise and climate change. This was always going to be complex because of the divided ownership of the site post-1976 and the multiplicity of stakeholders. Most of the beach above mean high water and the foredunes are in the ownership of the Angle Estate. The National Trust owns the remainder of the dunes and the catchment for about one mile inland, the distance of the lowest part of the basin from the beach. The land subject to flooding is divided between three farms, with the intensive dairy operation upstream being most affected.

Our first step was to commission a study and stakeholder engagement exercise by Halcrow Group. This included a technical geomorphological, hydrological and ecological study, as well as individual consultations with the farming stakeholders to ensure their views were fully taken on board. An important part of the study was the LiDAR map which indicated the area likely to be tidal by the end of the century, which corresponds to the one that is currently subject to flooding by fresh water.

The process ended with a report, a degree of agreement about what was

likely to happen in the future, and one important action – the immediate demolition of the outfall structure on the beach, which was both a maintenance nightmare and a serious health and safety hazard. This was undertaken by the National Trust and Environment Agency in April 2009. The culvert under the road and shingle beach remains, but removal of the outfall pipe was the first step towards a reversion to natural hydrological processes.

In the meantime initiatives from other quarters began to focus wider attention on Freshwater West. Consultation for the Shoreline Management Plan 2 for the Lavernock Point to St Anne's Head coastline (which includes Freshwater West) began in 2008. The Plan will set out a 100 year policy for planning coastal flood and erosion risk management along this stretch of coast. Our detailed work on this section was able to form part of the consultation. With its emphasis on policies for the short, medium and long-term, the Plan offers the ideal vehicle for a staged approach to coastal adaptation here.

In 2009 the Countryside Council for Wales circulated ideas for consultation for restoring the mobility of ten of Wales's finest dune systems, including Broomhill and Kilpaison Burrows, the dunes along the northern flank of the Corse. In response to the Council's proposals for mechanical disturbance, our suggestion was that the biggest obstacle to dune mobility was the B4319, which severs the beach and foredunes from their hinterland, cutting off opportunities for the transport of wind-blown sand and the maintenance of the bare sand so critical to dune invertebrate and plant species.

The best way to reconnect the dunes and at the same time restore their natural dynamics was, we suggested, the closure of this section of the B4319. This is not as drastic as it sounds, as our proposal would still enable the beach to be accessed from north and south. Most journeys are to Freshwater West rather than through it. It would add slightly over three miles to a journey between Castlemartin and Angle villages, but make no difference to journeys from either to Pembroke. Indeed it was the temporary road closure during the filming of *Robin Hood* in June 2009 which showed just how well this could work.

Aerial view of Freshwater West. Photo: Sid Howells

Road closure would also allow the extension of current grazing regimes onto the seaward dunes, currently confined to the area east of the road. Grazing is critical to the maintenance of a diverse dune flora and insect fauna. Our plan would also see the northernmost car park closed and restored to dune, with a replacement just up the hill past the war memorial, out of line of sight of the beach, on the field used as a unit base by *Harry Potter*.

Addressing the parking, congestion and camping issues which currently bedevil the area in the summer months form an important part of our vision, and underline the importance of working closely with our neighbours and partner agencies. These include the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority which is also the planning authority, and Pembrokeshire County Council which is responsible for the road. Together with the Countryside Council, who have responsibility for the SSSI, and the Environment Agency, we are all partners in the shoreline planning process.

Our vision is to revive a once-great dune and wetland system by restoring the natural hydrology and dune processes to Freshwater West and Castlemartin Corse. The prospect of sea level rise heightens the need for a new approach to managing coastal flooding which does not rely on building more and more concrete defences. There is a need for a new toolkit of innovative adaptation approaches. We believe that our approach of understanding risk and planning its management should be applied to all of Wales's coast, allied with work to fully engage the public and coastal communities.

— **Richard Ellis** is National Trust Head Warden for Pembrokeshire. More information on managing coastal change can be found in *Shifting Shores: Living with a changing coastline* downloaded at www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Alzheimer's break-through in Cardiff

Julie Williams asks why mental health remains the poor relation in medical research funding

Ignored and misunderstood, mental illness remains one of the key health questions yet to be answered. Poor mental health affects some 16.7 million people in the UK today. And, according to a report prepared for the All-Wales Mental Health Promotion Network the total annual cost to the the Welsh economy is a staggering £7.2 billion. In this new 'age of austerity' is it really an illness that we can continue to ignore?

As a society we draw inspiration from the achievements of medical science in tackling diseases like cancer and heart disease. However, when it comes to our understanding and treatment of diseases of the brain we lag behind.

Covering the full lifespan - from autism and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder in children, to psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder in adults, to neuro-degenerative disorders like Alzheimer's, Huntington's and Parkinson's in the elderly, mental illness will surely affect us, our family or friends during our lifetime.

Improving care and treatment for people with mental health problems requires the same rigorous research as demanded for tackling physical illness. Yet, despite the huge burden that poor mental health represents to society, mental health research remains incredibly underfunded. Only 5 per cent of medical research in the UK is into mental health, despite 15 per cent of disability resulting from disease being due to mental illness.

However, Wales is playing its part. Welsh universities are key players with my own, Cardiff University, already recognised as a world-leader in identifying the genetic origins of such diseases as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and Alzheimer's Disease. At the last Research Assessment Exercise, Cardiff University ranked among the very best in the UK for Psychology, Psychiatry and Neurology and Clinical Psychology. In my own area of research, we've secured widespread recognition for the largest-ever joint Alzheimer's disease genome-wide association study (see Panel) involving 16,000 individuals. The study, published in *Nature Genetics*, uncovered two new genes associated with Alzheimer's disease. Previously only one gene, APOE4, had been shown to be a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease. The study revealed, for the first time, that two further genes, CLU and PICALM, are related to Alzheimer's disease. More recently, as part of an international collaboration of scientists, we've uncovered evidence for four additional susceptibility genes for Alzheimer's, opening up new avenues for research into the disease.

Two of the new susceptibility genes regulate how large molecules are taken into and are transported within cells. Together they highlight a process that was not previously known to be involved in Alzheimer's disease. Others support the involvement of cholesterol processing and inflammation in the brain, as triggers

of disease. This is exciting news as it gives us new lines of enquiry.

This research provides valuable new leads in the race to find treatments and possibly cures for the devastating conditions. We have a responsibility to do more – but, this can only be achieved if we are given the opportunity and more importantly, the funding necessary to take our research to the next level. Last month, a review by the Medical Research Council, the UK's major research funder, showed that UK-funded mental health research is world-class and that we are well-placed to lead the way in this area.

The review concludes that there are several opportunities to fund more research that would help accelerate progress in developing new treatments, or lead to better ways of preventing mental illness in the first place. We at Cardiff University are committed to this challenge.

In June we launched the new Neuroscience and Mental Health Research Institute draws together expertise from across the University – from medicine, psychology, biosciences and optometry to take new discoveries and translate them into greater understanding and diagnosis of mental illness.

Under the Directorship of Professor Mike Owen, who also leads Wales' first Centre for Neuropsychiatric Genetics and Genomics, this means putting the breakthroughs I've desxcribed to work to help establish Cardiff University and Wales among the very best of the world's universities in this field.

Finding better ways to treat - or preferably prevent - poor mental health as early as possible will bring enormous benefits to individuals, their families and society as a whole. It was the Welsh icon Aneurin Bevan who talked of the "language of priorities". When it comes to mental health research, his words are as relevant today as they were when he first uttered them all those years ago.

Austere times require us to identify our priorities, to direct our finite resources at what will help us achieve the most. Research funding is no different and must *mean* targeting research at what is most likely to help.

> "Many other areas of research are important, yet in the medical field mental health research is last in the queue."

Many other areas of research are important, yet in the medical field mental health research is last in the queue. Can this be justified when an estimated one in four people will experience a mental health problem this year? That is substantially more people than will have a heart attack. Yet twice as much research goes into heart disease than is carried out in mental health.

Over the coming months, Cardiff University's new Research Institute will develop new projects to help build on our existing work. The strength and success of our research and activities will be rightly judged on what impact it has on people's lives. Our aim is extremely ambitious: to translate the breakthroughs in fundamental science into improved diagnosis and treatment of brain diseases affecting people from childhood to old age.

The Neuroscience and Mental Health Research Institute will help consolidate Cardiff University's position as an international leader in the field of neuroscience and mental health research. However, in an ever increasing age of priorities and dwindling resources is our work a priority that our decision makers and funders will share?

— **Julie Williams** is Professor of Neuropsychological Genetics at Cardiff University.

Genome-wide association study

This is an examination of genetic variation across a given genome, designed to identify genetic associations with observable traits. In human studies, this might include traits such as blood pressure or weight, or why some people get a disease or condition.

The completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003 made it possible to find the genetic contributions to common diseases and analyse whole-genome samples for genetic variations that contribute to their onset.

These studies normally require two groups of participants: people with the disease (cases) and similar people without (controls). After genotyping each participant, the set of markers, or DNA sequence variations, are scanned into computers. Then bioinformatics (the application of statistics and computer science to molecular biology) is applied to survey participants' genomes for markers of genetic variation.

If genetic variations are more frequent in people with the disease, the variations are said to be 'associated' with the disease. The associated genetic variations are then considered as pointers to the region of the human genome where the disease-causing problem is likely to reside. Since the entire genome is analysed for the genetic associations of a particular disease, this technique allows the genetics of a disease to be investigated in a non-hypothesis-driven manner.

The Deutsche Museum at Munich in Bavaria, arguably the most illustrious science museum in the world – something for Wales to aspire to.

Wales needs a science museum

John Tucker says our scientific heritage should be collected and celebrated

Ideas of national identity, heritage and history are intellectually difficult, hugely influential and very practical. Who do we say we are? What do we know about ourselves? What might we become? In Wales since the 1960s, historians and museum curators have lavished attention upon a few dominant themes, including: medieval and early modern history; folk history in the west and north; industrialisation and urbanisation in south; the making of the working class. But there are neglected themes: global copper and Welsh industries other than coal and steel - power, chemical, automotive, computing; business and finance; military history; the middle class; arts, leisure, shopping and sport. And there is probably the most neglected theme of all: Wales and science.

The late Professor Phil Williams proclaimed that Wales was a nation of scientists. In a terrific speech during a National Assembly debate on *Science in Wales*, in May 2001, he surveyed Wales' scientific heritage, naming 15 people together with a short comment on their achievements. He was the first person I heard celebrating Wales' scientific heritage as if it was big and as if it mattered.

I am a scientist. Like most scientists I am interested in the history of science. History is a part of the culture of working scientists. Earlier ideas, technical milestones and even biographies form part of scientific explanations and are *essential* in the education of scientists. For example, GCSE science draws attention to the emergence of ideas and past difficulties, such as Einstein's 1905 solution to the 1827 problem of explaining Reverend Thomas Brown's observations of the motion of pollen on the surface of water. This established atomic theory in the modern age. However, for scientists, history tends to be international, heroic and Whiggish.

Unlike most scientists I have long been interested in the history of science *and Wales*. It has been a difficult hobby to pursue, mainly because knowledgeable people and literature are scarce. It took years to gather names and to understand and appreciate achievements. Fortunately, there is plenty to know and there is something addictive about collecting.

Thinking about Welsh science and its place in our history and cultural heritage is rewarding. The very nature of a national history of science challenges the scientists' orthodox views. It introduces large doses of intellectual and historical context by mapping the social networks of scientists, recovering the purpose of investigations, and embedding the ideas, achievements and failures of the scientific community into local histories. Surprisingly, national histories expand the scale and complexity of our conception of the scientific enterprise. In particular, such detailed rooted histories are closer to the experience of today's scientists. There are four simple reasons why the subject is fundamental and relevant to pressing contemporary issues in Wales:

1. For scientists and science teachers, a deeper understanding of the nature of science leads to improved scientific practice, better science education and better public engagement and trust in science.
2. Science is a source of inspiration and a practical driving force in the creation of European modernity from the 17th Century. Science needs to be rediscovered as a fundamental component in the heritage of modern Wales.
3. Science is essential for the economic competitiveness and sustainability of Wales, especially for small companies and organisations. Invention, innovation and change is inherently historical.
4. Science is essential in policy and decision making in contemporary Wales, which is infected with dogma and received opinions, especially about technological and energy issues.

There are dozens of policy areas and

£100 millions of investments in projects where science and technology are prominent. The historical record is a vast storehouse of useful insight and hindsight, and cautionary and inspirational tales, of great value to contemporary Wales.

It is encouraging that National Museum Wales has also been thinking about our scientific heritage. It has excellent credentials in research, collecting and exhibiting natural history and geology and plans to improve upon them. However, there is little to be seen of the rest of science. Of course, in its storerooms there are all kinds of items to be found that would belong in a science museum. One example is their Stantec-Zebra. This is a wonderful old computer made by STC in Corporation Road, Newport in the 1950s, an object that brings alive the early days of a great revolution. More pressingly, across Wales there must be all kinds of scientific items worthy of collection, or in desperate need of rescue. What's out there? What stories are there to be told about them? If only we knew.

What Wales needs is a Science Museum. A problem is that ignorance of Welsh scientific history and heritage is wide and deep. We need researchers to discover our history:

- Historians who know about periods, places, events, people, networks, and historical methods.
- Scientists and engineers who know about the theory and the practice of their subject and are interested in its history.
- Keepers and friends of industrial heritage who have a rounded picture of developments at a particular time or place.

Such research thrives on the amateur and professional. To construct Wales' scientific heritage, we have to share knowledge and educate one another. What would help to get things moving? Academics across the Universities of Wales should:

- Initiate a lecture course on the history of Welsh science.
- Grow the number of learned papers and scholarly books.
- Organise conferences and publish proceedings.
- Write monographs on topics in the history of Welsh science that improves our understanding of its origins.
- Write a popular introductory book on the history of Welsh science that shows the subject exists.

We should mark anniversaries. For example, 2010 is 500 years since the death of Tenby-born Robert Recorde who invented the equals sign. It is also 200 years since the birth of John Dillwyn Llewellyn, Swansea born botanist and pioneer photographer.

We should put up statues, like the one of Swansea's William Grove in energy conscious Woking. We could also start local museum collections and archives of documents, ephemera, interviews, and antiques. We should certainly mount hundreds of blue plaques. There are great possibilities for websites, documentaries and dramas and simply making available what the media has already created.

The Robert Recorde Memorial, at the Department of Computer Science, Swansea University, was designed by the artist John Howes and carved by the calligrapher Ieuan Rees in 2001. Born in Tenby Robert Recorde (c.1510-1558) wrote the first books on arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and algebra in English. He introduced the Hindu-Arabic numbers, the ideas of Copernicus and invented the equals sign "=". He espoused a philosophy of knowledge firmly based upon quantification and practicality that was to become the characteristic of modern science a century later.

National Museum Wales should

- Convince themselves that science is all around them in their collections.
- Create an inventory of artifacts in Wales.
- Make a new classification of scientific objects available in collections.
- Collect internationally.
- Create local networks of knowledgeable people.
- Start collecting the oral history of science.

In short we should be integrating the history of science into the study of Wales and Welsh history. We should be connecting professionals and amateurs from the historical and scientific communities with museum curators, collectors and archivists.

Virtually all the great institutional collections are based upon private amateur collections. A fundamental requirement will be to avoid the paralysis and hypnotic blight of public spending cuts. The true strength of amateurs is the freshness and freedom that comes from doing something one wants to do and knows is worth doing.

— **John Tucker** is professor of Computer Science at Swansea University and Chair of the IWA's Swansea Bay Branch.

Banality of the border

Simon Gwyn Roberts investigates the annonymity of north-east Wales' psychogeography

A decorative 'Welcome to Wales' sign once marked the border outside the Anchor pub in the Flintshire town of Saltney, where the Chester suburbs spill over into the industrial landscape of Deeside. Not any more. Now, the confidence of upwardly mobile Wales is celebrated by a utilitarian grey pole topped with the corporate 'Flintshire' logo.

Without the sign, there is nothing to mark any kind of meaningful boundary. No welcome, indeed not even a mention of Wales. It seems a perfect metaphor for the anonymity of the Welsh border in the industrialised north-east. For the motorist, cyclist or pedestrian - disorientated by this dreary landscape of marshy fields, wasteland and industrial estates - it is often impossible to know where England ends and Wales begins.

Yet the peculiar banality of this area, which lacks any defining physical characteristics, has been invested with a new significance by the advent of devolution: it is no longer merely an 'administrative' border. And herein lies a fascinating political conundrum. For devolution to succeed, there is an inevitable tendency to accentuate the most coherent and identifiable national narratives as the devolved nation takes the opportunity to define itself more clearly, both culturally and politically. Which all means, equally inevitably, that those areas on the geographical fringes of the nation, which singularly lack the stereotypical Welsh identities of the industrial south or rural north-west, are marginalised.

The geographical reality of the border here cannot be divorced from the wider political picture. It is my contention that the suburban nature of the border landscape in the north-east contributes to, and accentuates, the political reality of disengagement from the processes of devolution - and arguably feeds an alienation with devolved Wales itself. This expresses itself most clearly in an unwillingness to vote. Only 35.5 per cent of the Alyn and Deeside electorate bothered to turn out in the 2007 Assembly elections, though this was a substantial increase on the 25.9 per cent turn-out in 2003.

Although misused and occasionally ridiculed over the years, the term 'psychogeography' strikes me as apt and ripe for application here. Coined by Guy Debord in the 1950s, it refers to the effects that landscape and geographical context can have on human emotion and behaviour. Debord attempted to articulate the nascent 'discipline' thus:

> "The sudden change of ambiance in a street within the space of a few metres; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres; the path of least resistance which is automatically followed in aimless strolls (and which has no relation to the physical contour of the ground); the appealing or repelling character of certain places - all this seems to be neglected."

Consider, then, the implications of the north-eastern border of Wales in terms of contemporary devolved politics. Is it far-fetched to suggest that the anonymity of the landscape feeds into a more general ennui with the processes of devolution and disengagement with Welsh politics in what is surely the very definition of Denis Balsom's 'British Wales'?

Recently I made a short journey along the border in an effort to come to terms with the reality of this landscape. I walked from the boggy fields marking the extreme south-western edge of Chester (known, rather mysteriously, as the Lache Eyes) north and west to the extraordinarily bleak mudflats of the Dee Estuary, where Wales meets the Wirral peninsula.

Like much of the landscape here, the Lache Eyes was reclaimed in medieval times from an earlier (and more natural) hybrid zone of water and marsh. The River Dee was canalised centuries ago, and the floodplain reclaimed, Dutch-style, from sodden obscurity into reasonably productive farmland. But the ensuing flat functionality renders the landscape deeply dull and anonymous. The border passes through these fields - frisian cows grazing on one side, horses on the other, both species oblivious to the significance of the drainage ditch that marks the border - before dissecting the western suburbs of Chester, where it runs down the middle of Saltney's Boundary Lane.

And it is here that the implications of devolution get really interesting. But you could be forgiven for not grasping those implications, as the context and the ambience is entirely suburban. The border is marked by the white lines and cat's eyes in the middle of a small road through a nondescript housing estate, with Barrett-home boxes on both sides. There could hardly be a less prepossessing gateway to a dynamic devolved Wales. It is instructive to note that the name, Boundary Lane, is a recent construct, and a very rare nod to the geographical and political significance of the area (it was originally 'Foundary Lane' until someone with a map realised - yes, realised - that it followed the border between England and Wales).

Just a road, and yet, consider the increasingly stark implications: one side of the road retains the traditional social democratic model of public service delivery with its free prescriptions, cheaper residential care and university tuition fees. The other side of the road doesn't. But despite this widening political gulf, there is no visible sign that there is any kind of border here, let alone an internal UK border that has recently been invested with more significance that at any time since the Acts of Union in the 16th Century.

Tracing the border beyond Boundary Lane requires an OS map. It is a geographical reality only in the mind of the walker equipped with the knowledge of its location. Moving north, this invisible boundary crosses the River Dee before penetrating an industrial/retail complex of the kind that blights the outskirts of so many historic cities, where Chester loses its identity and its touristic 'USP' in a morass of malls, park-and-ride car parks, housing developments and cavernous garages.

The border marks the edge of Chester City's football ground ('pitch in Wales, office in England'), and runs right through the 'Chester West business park', marking the outside edge of a road with offices and small industry on either side. An uglier landscape would be hard to imagine. But it transcends mere ugliness. It is also entirely without character, without an identity of its own. Hard to imagine that this point will ever be celebrated as a border between two countries: it will continue to seep without fanfare into the flat post-industrial landscape.

Although the border runs north west from here, skirting and delineating the isolated compound of Blacon ('Chester's most deprived suburb'), I chose to head south along Ferry Lane via a cycle path which leads towards the open countryside surrounding the River Dee and crosses the border further upstream. Almost entirely treeless, the foreground is a wilderness of agrobusiness - hedgeless fields and indeterminate crops. Early experiments with genetically-modified food took place here, and the setting seems appropriate. The horizons stretch out into the distance, lit by the distant industry of Deeside. The ambience is that of Eastern England - Humberside perhaps - although the Clwydian hills wink on the horizon as a beckoning reminder of a different world.

The River Dee, perhaps the most tangible symbol of a physical border between England and Wales in these parts, is here engineered into straight-as-a-dye artificiality. It's been that way for centuries, an illustration of the effort made to keep Chester functioning as a port as the Dee gradually silted up and the water ebbed further and further away. That post-industrial artificiality seems entirely in keeping with the landscape, a blend of flat arable farmland, a few housing estates, office buildings and mini-industrial parks. After a mile or two, a sign welcomes you to Wales. It has been attacked with paint and, by the look of it, some kind of vehicle or earth-moving equipment. It is bent over and defaced, and sits perfectly in the landscape.

"The River Dee, perhaps the most tangible symbol of a physical border between England and Wales in these parts, is here engineered into straight-as-a-dye artificiality."

Further north, you can trace the exact line of the border as it runs through more featureless farmland. Another village, Sealand, marks the Welsh side of the border. It looks and feels like an ironic pastiche of a gated community, echoes of nearby Blacon, another council estate compound with

Boundary Lane in Saltney - the border runs down the middle of the road.

serious social problems. The ruins of Shotwick castle represent a tangible, tranquil contrast on the English side. Unexpectedly, jarringly, a Welsh place name occurs - Maes Gwyn - right next to the border and the Sealand RAF base.

The A494 intervenes, a 'key artery' which has recently expanded to become a six-lane mega-highway serving day-trippers and Irish juggernauts. The border continues across the Dee's floodplain, literally at sea level. Here there is another real contrast. On the Welsh side is the vast sprawl of industrial Deeside with its chimney stacks and enormous warehouses. On the English side are the chocolate box villages of Burton, Puddington and Shotwick. Within a mile or two the border enters a 'danger area' of marsh and quicksand as it continues out into the Dee estuary itself, where it becomes just a nominal line on the Ordnance Survey map.

Denis Balsom famously divided Wales into three in the 1980s, in an attempt to explain voting patterns and cultural allegiences: Welsh Wales, Y Fro Cymraeg, and British Wales. Flintshire, tucked away in the north-eastern corner of Wales, is where 'British Wales' reaches its apotheosis, particularly this urbanised and industrialised eastern fringe along the English border.

The area's marginalisation from the rest of Wales is rooted in its geographical location, particularly its proximity to the English border and the large urban areas of north-west England, where suburbs straddle an invisible frontier with barely a nod to its significance. This is far removed from the empty moorland of the Anglo-Scottish border, let alone the historic physical boundaries of the Pyrenees or the Rio Grande. I would argue that this fundamental geographical reality does have real political implications as devolution moves forward.

There is an inevitable blurring of socio-cultural boundaries which gives the region a more ambiguous identity than both the rest of Wales and neighbouring parts of north-west England. The area is far removed, geographically and culturally, from the centres of Welsh political life, particularly if one accepts that the two dominant national narratives in post-devolution Wales echo Balsom's 'Welsh Wales' of the south Wales Valleys and 'Y Fro Cymraeg' of the rural north-west and west. Both narratives are coherent in terms of identity markers and stereotypical Welsh characteristics. And both contrast sharply with the unusually nebulous cultural identity of Flintshire, which expresses itself politically in a marked reluctance to engage with the newly devolved Welsh political system and which looks to north-west England for its cultural cues. It is, quintessentially, border country, awkwardly defined by the ambiguity that typifies such regions.

The political implications of these issues should perhaps be considered in the light of the statistics released by the Welsh Government which confirmed that Alyn and Deeside was the Welsh constituency where the lowest percentage of school pupils consider their national identity to be Welsh – 20.5 per cent, while 27 per cent consider themselves English. Given the decline in an all-encompassing 'British' identity, an optimistic prognosis in terms of likely civic and political engagement with Welsh devolution is difficult.

As Chris Williams argues, a Wales that does not take proper account of the ambiguities and complexities that render the national project problematic will only generate a future embraced by a minority of its citizens. In Flintshire, these issues are compounded by a weak sense of local identity that has implications in terms of broader civic engagement on a local level. Residents seem less able to mobilise a form of localism as a means of dealing with the mixed identity markers many of them send out.

Yet that ambiguity might yet be celebrated by the residents, in the same way that the people of Berwick-upon-Tweed on the Anglo-Scottish border celebrate their hybridity. They are neither Scottish nor English, and feel enriched by that rather attractive and unusual status. Celebrating that ambiguity might engender an increased sense of civic pride and local identity in north-east Wales, and thereby perhaps encourage democratic participation. And in the post-devolution climate, there might be wider lessons here about civic engagement and civic forms of identity as the project progresses and matures.

— **Simon Gwyn Roberts** is a senior lecturer in journalism at the University of Chester.

Border Wars

Jane Redfern Jones makes a plea for the identity of Wrexham

As a child I loved visiting my great aunt at her home in the Ceiriog Valley in the County of Wrexham. I loved the local craft businesses and the heritage they represented. However the opening of the A483/A5 Chirk Bypass hit the economy of the Ceiriog Valley and sadly, like Wrexham town itself, all but a few of the area's potential tourists now speed westwards.

I moved to the town of Wrexham 14 years ago. It is a wonderful place full of excellent people but it has suffered from being ignored both culturally and economically for too long. Towns like Llangollen and Corwen in Denbighshire successfully market themselves. However, comparatively little has been done in Wrexham to promote its history and heritage. Outside of the town we have two major National Trust properties, country parks and miles of rolling countryside. This is what we should be promoting, not pushing Wrexham as an under-confident piece of the English commuter belt.

Town planners need to give the town more structure and landmark. Former Wrexham resident Jamie Harris, an architectural stonemason, commented that he would love to see a great deal of new-build projects being decorated with traditional patterns calling on our history and culture, Celtic knotwork, Owain Glyndŵr, and scenes from the Mabinogion. In short, we should be promoting an architecture that is very different from our English neighbours.

One apparent threat to Wrexham's identity is the West Cheshire / North East Wales Sub-Regional Plan. This strategy, which has received strong opposition from the People's Council of North Wales, proposes tightening the links between adjoining Welsh and English counties. It was created by the Mersey Dee Alliance, a partnership which includes the local authorities of Cheshire West, Chester, Denbighshire, Ellesmere Port, Neston, Flintshire, the Wirral and Wrexham.

Those opposing the plan feel that north east Wales is being prepped for an influx of workers from across the border, workers who are keen to find affordable housing at much more reasonable prices than those found in Cheshire's leafy suburbs. The passion local people feel about this topic was demonstrated in February 2010 when one of the largest petitions in the history of the National Assembly was debated at Glyndŵr University in Wrexham.

Most representations to the Petitions Committee at the National Assembly come in with less than 50 signatures. The one in Wrexham had around 15,000 signatures on it (it now totals over 22,000). To put this extraordinary figure in context, it is estimated that, in comparison, only 20,000 Wrexham people turned out to vote in the Assembly elections of 2007. What is even more significant is that the signatures were gathered in just three months. The presentation of a petition of this size to the National Assembly makes a clear but non-too-subtle point. It is an issue people greatly care about

There have also been a number of smaller debates surrounding what Janet Ryder AM calls the "creeping Chesterfication" of north east Wales, pointing to the re-branding of a Flintshire hotel formerly known as 'The Gateway to Wales' to 'Days Hotel – Chester North'. As she said, the re-branding was, "One of the unforeseen consequences of councils like Flintshire signing up to a long term plan called the West Cheshire/North East Wales strategy".

The project is described as a comprehensive housing, employment, recreation and retail strategy for a wide area. Except that when one considers what is planned on the Welsh side of the border one finds only housing.

Going back in history, towards the end of the Second World War, a lack of affordable housing meant many problems for the Roman City of Chester. Large areas of farmland on the outskirts of the city were developed as residential areas in the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1964, a bypass was built through and around the town centre to combat traffic congestion. These new developments caused local concern that the physicality and therefore the feel of the city was being dramatically altered. In 1969 the City Conservation Area was designated.

The sub-regional strategy is seemingly aimed at the expansion of Cheshire and Merseyside into north east Wales. The expansion of Cheshire and Merseyside is limited due to building restrictions and this desire to preserve their green belt. In Wales there is no green belt and the strategists identify north Wales as the answer to their expansion limitations.

Welsh identity is identified in draft versions of the plan as being a "threat". It is seen as a barrier to the implementation of the plan. Draft versions of the plan also make reference to the fact that people in north east Wales are very 'attached' to their Welsh identity and heritage. This is not conducive to the economic expansion that is planned and explains why it is identified as a 'threat'.

A newcomer to Wrexham businesswoman and television celebrity Stephanie Booth agrees that Wrexham lacks an identity. She says, "During our research prior to buying the Wynnstay Arms Hotel in Wrexham we undertook a survey in southern England where many of our hotel guests originate and to our dismay and surprise the bulk of respondents thought Wrexham was a 'town in England near Chester'. Hence our campaign to forge a new identity for the town via Wrexham County Borough Council lobbying for city status and inserting in our advertisements 'Wrexham - Capital of North Wales"'.

Businesswoman and television celebrity Stephanie Booth, outside Wrexham's Wynnstay Arms Hotel which she has bought. She says Wrexham has the image of being an 'English' town but should be seen as the capital of north Wales.

The idea of creating an identity and vision for Wrexham has been discussed before. Back in November 2006 I attended a seminar called 'Sense of Place' which was organised by the council as part of Wrexham Business Week. It was followed by publication of the study in February 2007. It was a much more positive and locally distinct vision which is still languishing on a shelf. It advised a branding vision based on the town and its people. However, it was dropped and a new vision was commissioned in line with the West Cheshire plan. The original work focuses on Wrexham's Welsh identity, character and uniqueness. These are assets the Mersey Dee Alliance and the cross-border sub-regional strategy apparently do not consider useful to market.

This strategy is wrong. As an English person living in Wales I know what first attracted me to this beautiful place, which is why I started a campaign to preserve Wrexham's Welsh identity. This prompted a huge debate and incredible support.

The council has never before tried to market Wrexham as a prosperous Welsh town. Perhaps this is intentional so as to make things easier for the West Cheshire/North East Wales Sub Regional Strategy to slip into place. Though now with Stephanie Booth in town and a new Wrexham Chamber of Trade and Tourism being formed, our council will have to sit up and take notice. Perhaps soon we will see our town receiving the recognition it deserves. Let's hope so.

— **Jane Redfern Jones** is a freelance journalist. *The Sense of Place* study, prepared by Angharad Wynne marketing and communications can accessed at http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/tourism/wtf/sense_of_place_report.pdf

The West Cheshire/North East Wales sub-regional strategy can be found at: http://www.merseydeealliance.org.uk/subregion.htm

Mold on a busy market day.

Mold's sense of place

Derek Jones casts an eye over a town that has joined the Slow Food Movement

Fred Boneham, the town clerk, would not thank me for saying that everything in the Mold garden is lovely. Not given to hyperbole, he responds only cautiously when I ask him how the town has managed to remain lively and economically active when so many other places are talking in terms of urban decline.

It is Wednesday, one of Mold's two market days, and by 10am it is difficult to find a space in the town's main car park. Market stalls spill out into side streets, and the High Street is thronged with shoppers and the cafés with tea and coffee drinkers. I have visited Mold on ordinary weekdays, when there is no market, and noted that only a few, a very few, of the shops are empty or boarded up. There's probably more than you think, says Mr Boneham, and just because a place looks lively does not mean that individual shopkeepers are not suffering hardship. Nevertheless, he is obviously pleased that Mold appears to be weathering the storm.

Of course, successful shops and markets are not the only measure of urban health. Issues of townscape, heritage and culture are also important. A town needs leaders and opinion formers who are ready to think about all the issues in the round, and to come up with practical ideas for improvement, to be shared with fellow citizens, and acted upon. Mold again scores high marks. It is the first town in Wales to have been accepted into the Cittaslow movement (cittaslow.org.uk), committed to encouraging diversity, sustainability, and healthy living. Cittaslow Mold, the town council and Flintshire County Council have commissioned a study of the sense of place in the town from the Deganwy-based firm Heritage Initiatives, to include attention to building fabric and public space.

The town centre is coherent. The High Street climbs gradually to a handsome parish church which closes the view. Two cross streets allow the high street to be closed to traffic allowing the market to take over. To the west, an embryonic town square and a shopping precinct bearing the name of the Mold tailor and novelist Daniel Owen makes a useful link between two parts of the town. To the east, between the two crossing streets, stands, perhaps surprisingly, a livestock market from which permeate pungent agricultural sounds and smells every Monday and Friday.

The bus station is nearby. The train

station, a little further down, was closed by Dr Beeching in the early 1960s, prematurely, it turns out, in the light of Mold's subsequent growth in population. At each end of the town centre are no less than four supermarkets - Somerfield and Iceland to the West, Aldi and Tesco to the East. Residential areas, most of them post-war, surround the centre, and across the town and up the hill stand Flintshire County Hall, the Magistrates Court and Clwyd Theatr Cymru.

The population of Mold is still under 10,000, but its hinterland contains up to 40,000. The market is very long established and people from

Mold's High Street, closed to traffic on market day.

as far away as the Wirral, Chester and Shrewsbury visit it. There is a wider range of goods for sale in Mold than in many other similar markets. The usual crockery, ornaments, garden plants and clothing are on display, but also there are fruit and vegetables, locally produced cheese, and even a stall devoted to food and artwork from South Africa. Cittaslow Mold sets up shop once a month to keep people up to date with its activities and recruit new supporters. Mold Market is an *urban* experience. It is striking the council feels strong enough to be considering fining traders who book a space on a particular day and fail to show up.

Visitors to the livestock and street markets help sustain the shops and, there are a great many of them, some long standing. Diane Johnson, chair of Mold Civic Society, thought that perhaps the warm relationship and banter between shoppers and shopkeepers was not as strong as it used to be. Nonetheless, despite the presence of four supermarkets, a Homebase emporium, and a limited number of high street multiples (Argos, Peacocks, Shoe Zone, Smiths, Boots) the town is said to retain a generally friendly atmosphere. This is noted in a number of recent surveys and is all the more impressive because, as the housing estates indicate, Mold is a commuter town attracting incomers from Cheshire, the Wirral and Merseyside, many of whom still work there.

So far, then, so positive. There are, as you might expect, some black spots. A small shopping precinct linking Somerfield to the rest of the town appears to have been a complete financial disaster, and is now set to be a physical disaster as well. The space is largely unoccupied and the shopfronts, boarded up with silvery corrugated metal, have the appearance of a stockade. A telephone exchange, relatively recently built, which looks empty (but isn't), is gathering dust, and is in danger of creeping towards dereliction. Some people would like the sheds near the cattle market removed. However, I rather think they add to the character of the town, which might otherwise seem *too* neat. Similarly there is a rather ramshackle group of buildings above Tesco.

Culturally also, Mold is not quite perfect. The Library and Museum do not exactly make their presence felt, although the museum is beautifully laid out to celebrate the Mold Cape (a replica of the bronze age garment discovered here in 1831, the original in the British Museum), the Mold Riots (1869), and the work of Daniel Owen (1836-1895).

The potential of Daniel Owen Square awaits imaginative exploitation. St Mary's Church, one of the great 15th Century Beaufort churches has been locked whenever I have tried to look inside. And, perhaps most disappointing, there is, I gather, very little formal contact between the town and Clwyd Theatr Cymru, the marvellous *maison de la culture*, less than a mile away, which houses two auditoria, a cinema, two art galleries, a shop, a bar and restaurant. Many people in north Wales (and Merseyside, Cheshire and Shropshire for that matter) will testify that some of the best evenings of their lives have been spent at Clwyd Theatr Cymru. So, there is some unfinished local business to make better connections between the town and the arts centre. This could be a project for Cittaslow Mold which, I am sure, would acknowledge the vital contributions of art, film and theatre to urban wellbeing. It might begin by setting up a stall in the bar or restaurant.

Cittaslow UK developed from the Slow Food Movement - in that respect it is both ironical and amusing that Mold has one of the few drive-through McDonalds in north east Wales. 'Slow' is now shorthand for a whole range of attitudes and policies concerned with food, hospitality, the environment, energy, and the urban fabric. To qualify for membership the Mold enthusiasts had to assess the extent to which the town met some 45 criteria covering all these areas. They submitted their application before the Flintshire Eisteddfod in 2007 and were accepted, joining Aylsham, Berwick upon Tweed, Cockermouth, Diss, Linlithgow, Ludlow (the pioneer), Perth, and Sturminster Newton in a network of like-minded towns.

Cittaslow Mold is now supported by many local organisations, and in particular the Town Council. It organises itself into working groups concerned with environmental matters, space and place, local produce and community. To this outsider, at least, it is refreshing to encounter an initiative which is not just local but is prepared to listen and learn from experiences elsewhere. Go to the website and you find that:

- One member has attended the annual conference of the Soil Association on 'The Future of Food' and is reporting back.
- Another has visited a 'transition town' and commends to his colleagues some reading matter to get them thinking about what happens when the oil runs out.
- The Environmental Policy sub-group talks ambitiously about Mold going carbon-neutral and is surveying how much energy Mold households are currently using.
- The Space and Place sub-group, equally ambitiously, is examining the town's future travel needs and will bid for Mold to pilot the idea of becoming a North Wales Travel Town.
- The Local Produce and Community sub-group is creating a directory of local produce and producers, and hosts a forum to debate topical issues related to food.

Some might argue that a sense of place is way down the list of priorities when it comes to the survival of the planet. Not so Cittislow Mold, which obtained funds from Cadwyn Clwyd, the local rural development agency, to study how far the town is distinctive and how that might be enriched. Sensibly, they concluded that 'man does not live by bread alone'. Heritage Initiatives took a stall at Mold's annual food and drink festival in September 2009 and invited passers-by to complete a questionnaire which would reveal their attitudes to local townscapes, individual buildings, signposting, and hospitality. I am able to report that interest in these issues is considerable. I wouldn't be at all surprised to see a plan emerging for the town's history and heritage to be placed nearer the top of the agenda. In Ruthin, ten miles away across the Clwydians, the Civic Association has produced a 60-page illustrated guide *Slow Walks Round Ruthin*. Cittaslow Mold, attracted by that word 'slow', might well follow suit.

I would not be surprised if another result of the survey was to focus attention on the considerable potential of Daniel Owen Square for *al fresco* eating and drinking, performances (also an opportunity, surely, for Clwyd Theatr Cymru), and general sitting about. It's the nearest Mold has got to a town square and, placed as it is, just outside the library, museum and tourist information centre, could make a huge contribution to local conviviality. Of course it would need to be re-fashioned, but I can't see Mold making heavy weather of that. Meanwhile, in an entirely separate initiative, the town's Norman fortification, Bailey Hill, is to be cleaned up and subjected to archaeological, geophysical and arboriculture study. Together with Mold Civic Society,

Daniel Owen (1836-95), foremost Welsh language novelist of the 19th Century and Mold's most famous son, dominates the eponymous square which "awaits imaginative exploitation".

Cittaslow obtained a Welsh Government Tidy Towns grant for this.

There is much more to be said about Mold than space allows, including the food and drink festival, the annual spring clean of the town to include not just picking up litter but painting fences and repairing benches, the provision of cycle racks, and a campaign to encourage people to refuse junk mail. Some months ago I heard a talk by local historian and Mold Civic Society archivist David Rowe, who spoke so glowingly about Mold that I felt moved to go and see for myself what was going on. Now I know he was not exaggerating.

—Derek Jones is a freelance writer and vice chair of the Civic Trust for Wales.

Flying the Welsh flag

Rhys David interviews Alan Edmunds, editor of Wales's sole national newspaper

Western Mail editor Alan Edmunds rejects as 'fantasy' the image of reporters chained to their desks by the pressures of 'churnalism'.

It is a tough job editing a newspaper at any time but when you are in charge of a nation's sole standard-bearer in a highly competitive overall media market, and faced with a usually well-intentioned but critical audience with high expectations, it is going to be much harder.

However, Western Mail editor and Media Wales publishing director Alan Edmunds, a veteran of 23 years with Trinity Mirror and its predecessors as owners of the Cardiff title, is resolutely calm and sanguine. He views with quiet satisfaction the progress made and the direction he and the group have set for the 141-year-old paper and its print and online stablemates. "My aim is to make sure the Western Mail is constantly changing to reflect the way Wales is changing," he says, pointing to the new look introduced to the paper in June, including new fonts and page furniture, and new content.

The problem as many critics point out, is that since 1974 the Western Mail has lost two out of every three readers it used to have. How, it is asked, can this have happened when devolution should be generating greater interest in Welsh issues and hence increased demand for the only English language daily print medium covering Wales as a nation?

Edmunds, a 46 year old Cardiffian and in his own words a passionate Welshman, strongly denies that Trinity Mirror are unconcerned about circulation or resigned to a long term rundown in sales. The downward trends, he argues, are UK-wide and the Western Mail is not faring worse than its peers. Indeed, the Birmingham Post has moved from daily to weekly publication. "Circulation is important to us and always will be, and we have a marketing strategy for all the newspapers we publish," he says. The re-design will, for example, be backed by a campaign on billboards, bus sides and shelters, and possibly on radio. It will also be backed by in-paper readers' promotions linked to local retailers and other suppliers of services.

The paper likes to stress that it is not just its 30,000 purchasers who get to see it each day but a further (and perhaps rather optimistic) 80,000 readers of each issue. More importantly, the journalism produced by Media Wales, the collective name for all the Cardiff-based titles, including its south Wales weeklies, was seen over the most recent six month period by 764,333 unique users, who were responsible for 3.85m. page views. Edmunds concludes, "With all the work we have done to create WalesOnline, we have transformed the nature of the proposition we offer and we are now reaching people we were not reaching before with our content".

Nevertheless, critics insist that Trinity Mirror's market-led business model, with its primary aim of generating large profits for shareholders is the source of its problems. It is asserted that highly profitable Welsh business, securing annual profit margins of more than 30 per cent over much of the past 10 years, is propping up a weak parent company balance sheet.

The charge is dismissed by Edmunds who points to the substantial investment Trinity Mirror has made in Wales, including a new print plant in Cardiff to produce its dailies and

weeklies, and a state of the art integrated newsroom in a £17 million new headquarters opened in 2008 in the shadow of the Millennium Stadium. "We created the first regional integrated newsroom in Britain in Cardiff, bringing together print and online operations. We now have the structure to deliver through WalesOnline the best possible service to our readers and advertisers," he says. Funds have been deployed, first for the move from broadsheet to tabloid and to back the latest facelift. At a UK level, Trinity Mirror has decided not to pay a dividend to shareholders this year, citing the need to support the business as a whole during the present tough economic climate.

Yet has all this not been achieved at the expense of savage staff cuts, very low wages and in consequence serious disputes with the National Union of Journalists? According to some critics, staff are now virtually tied to their desks, engaged in what has been termed by journalist and author Nick Davies "churnalism", the regurgitation of public relations industry delivered news releases.

Edmunds admits painful cuts have been made in staff numbers and that journalists may now be having to work harder than ever. However, he rejects as "fantasy" the picture of a chained-down newsroom portrayed by critics.
He cites Steve Dubé, his country and farming editor, as someone who just could not do his job without getting out and about to meet farmers, and chief reporter Martin Shipton who, he says, generates all his own material through his contacts and "has broken more stories than any other journalist in Wales".

His business team, his Senedd and Westminster correspondents and others are out and about finding stories. This, says Edmunds, gives the lie to the image of reporters and sub-editors as desk-bound and passive, reduced to 're-nosing' press releases into shallow and inoffensive stories, or picking up cheap, homogeneous UK national news (often about celebrities) straight off agency wires. He regards his rugby coverage as equivalent to the best anywhere in the UK press. And, if some staff with their new web-based skills do spend more time at their desks this is partly because so much more information is available over the internet.

"When we change the paper we do so on the basis of very scientific research among our readers, the business community and our advertisers," says Edmunds, who worked his way up to his present position from the Cardiff Post, through the South Wales Echo and

Vital statistics of Wales's morning newspapers

The owners of the *Western Mail*, Trinity Mirror plc, have been subject to much academic and trade union criticism for squeezing too much profit from their regional titles in the years before the recession, and from the Welsh titles in particular. The company points to a combination of structural changes in newspaper buying habits and competition from the internet. What are the facts?

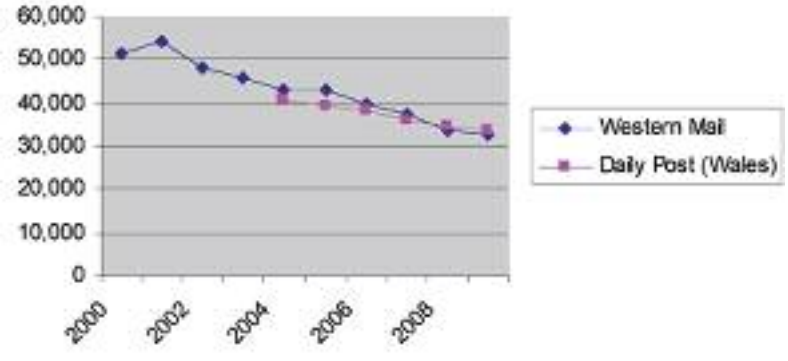
Over the last three decades circulation the *Western Mail* has dropped by two thirds, from 94,000 to 30,000. Since 2004 the *Daily Post* has dropped from 41,000 to 34,000. This is inline with the fate of the regional press everywhere. In the last six months of 2009 the average fall in circulation in the regional press was 7.2 per cent. The fall for the Western Mail was 10.6 per cent, for the Daily Post 5 per cent, for the South Wales Echo 10.1 per cent. By comparison Bristol's Western Daily Press was down by 10.7 per cent, the Birmingham Mail down by 14.3 per cent.

The largest regional paper in the UK, the Wolverhampton Express and Star, saw a drop of 7.6 per cent to 120,344.

In recent years the Media Wales operation in Cardiff has been required to deliver substantial profits, against a backdrop where the pressure to maintain share price has intensifed hugely. Trinity Mirror has been operating in a corporate world that has been driven over recent decades by the 'shareholder value' movement, with its obsession for short-term profit performance. Even so it has seen its share

continued on page 62

Falling circulations at the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post* (Wales) 2000-2009



Source: Trinity Mirror Plc Annual Reports, and ABC

Wales on Sunday to the Western Mail. Research has confirmed that what people value most from a paper like the Western Mail is information and advice. Consequently this is the core of the paper's content. The idea that there should be much greater coverage of the Assembly is not backed by research. Edmunds says there was never any prospect devolution would generate a demand for more political coverage.

"It is part of a general disengagement with politics," he added, though he points with enthusiasm to the Western Mail's very extensive coverage of the 2010 General Election – better he believes than any other news organisation in Wales.

Though readers may only gradually notice, the new look paper is intended to offer greater depth, giving increased coverage to health and education, for example, and will be bringing in more columnists to strengthen the analysis it offers in crucial areas. Availability on news stands, which has been a problem in recent times, is also being addressed.

"Though readers may only gradually notice, the new look paper is intended to offer greater depth, giving increased coverage to health and education, for example, and will be bringing in more columnists to strengthen the analysis it offers in crucial areas."

In Edmunds' view critics are harking back to a time that cannot now be recreated, given the explosion in digital media and changes generally in society. They lack an understanding of the economics of the modern media industry and offer solutions that would not work for modern readers. They also ignore the fact that print is only part of the service the public has come to expect from a media group. The price fall substantially over the past five years, from 600p to 80p.

In the years before the recession Media Wales, the subsidiary company which owns the *Western Mail* along with other Cardiff and south Wales titles, consistently posted high profits, with margins well over 20, and immediately before the onset of the recession, 30 per cent. At the time of writing the company had not published its accounts for last year, but the profit margin is expected to be in excess of 10 per cent – a more than respectable performance in the worst advertising recession in living memory.

Critics have argued that these profit levels were unsustainable and have mainly been managed by keeping labour costs extremely low and by shedding staff. Media Wales alone has experienced five rounds of job cuts since 2003, along with delayed recruitment and non-replacement of staff, although there have been recent exceptions to this. Journalists' pay is extremely low and the group as a whole is going through a pay freeze. The number of editorial and production jobs at Media Wales has fallen by 41 per cent in the last decade.

Between 1999 and 2005 Trinity repeatedly posted healthy group profit margins between 13 and 19 per cent, but in recent years the group has twice seen losses in excess of £73 million. Although it returned

Profitability at Media Wales 1999-2008

Year	Pre-tax profits (000s)	Turnover (000s)	Profit Margin (%)
1999	9,475	44,508	21.30%
2000	6,374	45,991	13.90%
2001	13,296	49,966	26.90%
2002	15,707	51,998	30.20%
2003	16,241	54,307	29.90%
2004	19,624	55,356	35.50%
2005	20,999	54,956	38.21%
2006	16,341	45,306	36.07%
2007	15,441	50,228	30.74%
2008	18,929	52,102	36.33%

Source: Media Wales Annual Accounts

integrated newsroom offers a comprehensive news, sport and business service, including online interviews and film clips, as well as jobs, homes, motors and other advertising, providing readers with a choice of platforms from which to gain information.

"As the biggest commercial news site in Wales, WalesOnline is crucial," Edmunds said. "Without it there would just be the BBC in a dominant position". Even so, this still does not amount to a genuine plurality in Welsh news coverage, the absence of which is lamented by many critics, particularly given the current threat to ITV's regional news service. At the same time Edmunds notes that some of the gap is being filled by the large number of blog sites now operating in Wales. These, of course, include *ClickonWales*, the IWA's online news magazine that seeks to provide a platform for news and contrasting opinions on issues of importance to Wales.

Edmunds is patient with his critics and would prefer to build bridges than pick fights. He was ruthless, however, in summarily dismissing then Culture Minister, Alun Pugh as a columnist in 2006 after he made disparaging remarks about the paper's political coverage. He has been firm, too, with other Ministers because he believes some of their criticisms are ill-thought out and could be damaging.

"I have told the Welsh Government that it is in the interests of Wales to ensure the Western Mail and Media Wales have a thriving future," he said. "We are not complacent. We need to have realistic targets that we can reach and we need to continue finding out how we can deliver value to our readers, to business and to our advertisers. We have to manage the business to ensure this is the case but I have total confidence that we have the right strategy for this business that will give it the best possible future. This is what we will continue to do."

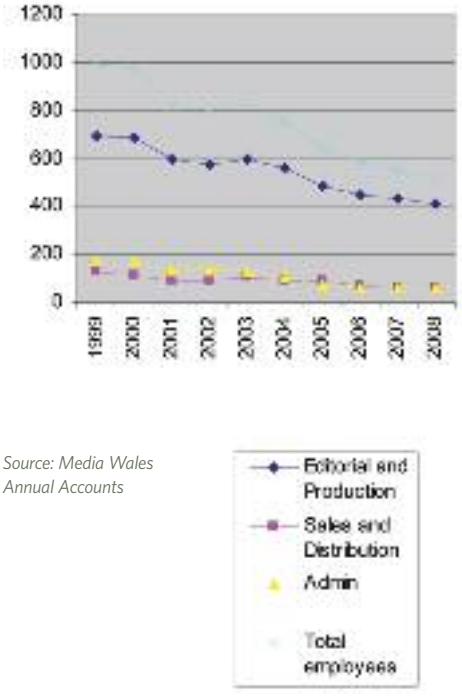
—**Rhys David** is former Financial Times journalist and now writes on economic and business issues. He is a trustee of the IWA where he was development director from 2002-2008.

Profitability at Trinity Mirror, 1999-2008

Year	Pre-tax profits (000s)*	Turnover (000s)	Profit Margin (%)
1999	116,000	596,800	19.46
2000	154,100	1,080,300	14.26
2001	155,500	1,131,100	13.75
2002	155,500	1,092,200	14.24
2003	172,500	1,095,100	15.75
2004	216,800	1,141,700	18.99
2005	209,500	1,122,000	18.67
2006	-73,100	1,053,000	-6.94
2007	21,000	971,300	2.16
2008	-73,500	871,700	-8.43
2009	42.0	763,300	5.5

Source: Trinity Mirror Plc Annual Reports

Staffing Levels at Media Wales, 1999-2008



Source: Media Wales Annual Accounts

to a £42 million profit in 2009, having sold 30 titles, its regional titles fared worse than its handful of UK national titles. Revenue for nationals fell by only 3.2 per cent, against a fall for the regionals of 23.5 per cent. The difference in profit was even wider, with national's profits falling by 5.9 per cent, against a fall for regionals of 47.3 per cent. Operating margins were also lower in the regionals – 11.9 per cent against 18.2 per cent for the nationals. Dividends have been

Thinking about history

Colin Thomas says the makers of a BBC Wales landmark series should avoid paying safe

What is history? It seems that Michael Gove, the new Secretary of State for Education, doesn't find this a difficult question. Inspired by a talk by defender-of-empire Niall Ferguson, he has announced his intention to impose a grand narrative on history teaching in schools. However, the 'what is history?' question was one that much preoccupied us during the making of *The Dragon has Two Tongues* 25 years ago.

When HTV brought me in as producer and director of the History of Wales series that had been commissioned by Channel 4, it only had one tongue, that of Wynford Vaughan Thomas, who had already drafted a structure for the series. The argument that then began was only peripherally about television techniques. Instead, it was much more to do with different approaches to history and historiography. I wanted the series to have two presenters and, although Wynford was implacably opposed to bringing feminist historian Angela John on board, he was more sympathetic to giving Gwyn Alf Williams the role of a second tongue.

I had first encountered Gwyn Williams through the History Workshop movement and we were both influenced by Colin MacArthur's booklet *Television and History*, produced by the British Film Institute in 1978. Before a frame was shot, Wynford, Gwyn and I soaked ourselves in what was then the current thinking about historiography – Wynford tending to rely on G.R. Elton's *The Practice of History* (1967) and Gwyn on E.H. Carr's *What is History?* (1961). I was particularly struck by Carr's line - "Study the historian before you begin to study the facts."

I would respectfully suggest that whoever makes the new Welsh history series that will be broadcast by BBC Wales in 2012 should also look at current thinking about historiography. Post modernism has shifted the terms of the debate. I recommend a reading of *History and the Media* (2004) edited by David Cannadine and *In Defence of History* by Richard J. Evans – make sure you get the 2000 edition of the latter with its passionate *Afterwords* defence of history against some of the dafter assaults of the post modernists.

Two short quotes from these suggest the way in which they can stimulate original approaches to the BBC Wales commission. Cannadine writes (page 4):

> "…as written and presented, media history is still largely confined to linear narrative. It needs to be more experimental, and to try other modes of exposition and presentation."

In his *Afterwords* chapter Richard Evans writes:

> "The idea of history as progress has been abandoned. Innovation has come above all from historians writing about the marginal, the bizarre, the individual, the small-scale."

In the far off days when *The Dragon* was commissioned, producers and directors were given a comparatively free hand. There was an initial battle with Patrick Dromgoole, then HTV's Head of Programmes, over the two presenter approach, but once that was settled the degree of intervention was minimal. Naomi Sergeant, the commissioning editor at Channel Four, made occasional visits and helpful suggestions. At HTV

Filming *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* near the Castlemartin army firing range in Pembrokeshire in the mid-1890s. Facing producer director Colin Thomas are the presenters, Gwyn Alf Williams (left) and Wynford Vaughan Thomas.

Image and quotation take from the cover of the background document packs that accompanied *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* series.

Wales Geraint Talfan Davies and Huw Davies gave Medwen Roberts, the series researcher, and myself support, encouragement and trust from the beginning to the end of the project.

However, since the 1980s there has been a massive concentration of decision making in television, both inwards and upwards. At S4C, C4 and BBC, the prevailing assumption seems to be that the centre knows best. I suspect that whoever gets the History of Wales project will have to fight hard to stop Martin Davidson, the BBC's head of history, getting his hands on it.

Whatever the weaknesses of *The Dragon* on issues of gender, we were determined that throughout it would maintain an awareness of the importance of class. Series like Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* in the 1970s, and David Starkey's *Tudor* series in more recent years, all too often assume that what was happening to the 5 per cent top dogs was happening to the nation. Gwyn's contributions always ensured that the high drama of political history did not push to the margin the social history of the same period. This should also be of crucial importance in the new series.

We always thought of the 13 programmes of the C4/HTV series as only part of a wider project. If viewers had their interest sparked by the series, we wanted them to be able to follow up on that interest. Hence the four document packs that accompanied the series, containing material from the primary sources that are so important to good historians. With the help of able and energetic education officers – Bethan Eames at HTV and Derek Jones at C4 – we were also able to set up nearly 200 discussion groups, many of them outside Wales, which focussed on the key question addressed in each programme.

Now some of that backup could be provided through the BBC's excellent web sites or through a Facebook group, but this should be planned from the outset, designed to run in parallel with the series. The arrival of the Kindle and the Ipad and what Sue Halpern in the *New York Review of Books* (10 June 2010) calls the Vook – "a book with embedded video" – suggests all kinds of exciting new technological possibilities.

In MacArthur's *Television and History* booklet, there is reference to a television producer who admitted that in a television programme on recent German history, he had encountered an issue which, although important historically, was difficult to illustrate… so he simply left it out. We determined that we would never allow that to happen in *The Dragon*. Through whatever means was necessary – animation, re-enactment, crane and helicopter shots - we would find a way of maintaining the visual interest. The new series, like ours, will be transmitted on the network so its makers will also have to find a way of making their series entertaining and accessible for a UK-wide audience.

We also aimed to connect past to present and some would claim that *The Dragon* - and Dai Smith's BBC series *Wales? Wales!* also transmitted 25 years ago - helped to shift the Welsh vote in favour of devolution. Aware of the potential significance of the new series, the Centre for the Study of Media and Culture in Small Nations at the University of Glamorgan recently convened a meeting of historians and television producers to talk over possibilities. There was a certain wariness about giving away too much information to potential rival bidders for the commission – I felt it myself. However, there was general agreement that the new series represents what was described as "a massive opportunity", especially the opportunity to reach younger audiences, and that it is vital not to play safe.

There were moments during the making of *The Dragon* when I was terrified that the tensions between its two presenters would cause the whole concept to fall apart. But I am glad that all those involved were prepared to take a risk and hope that, at what looks like being a very difficult time for our nation, BBC Wales will also prove to be bold and adventurous.

— **Colin Thomas** is a freelance television producer and director.

A New Silk Road: Algorithm of Survival and Hope, photograph taken in 2007 by Kyrgyzstan artists Muratbek Djumaliev and Gulnara Kasmalieva, shortlisted in this year's exhibition at National Museum Wales.

Art of the world

Tessa Jackson reflects on eight years at the helm of Artes Mundi

By early 2002 the idea of a contemporary visual art prize emanating from Wales had been debated by a number of public bodies including the Welsh Government, Cardiff Council, Arts Council of Wales, National Museums Wales and BBC Cymru. Each had been encouraged by William Wilkins, a practicing artist as well as an energetic cultural entrepreneur, to believe that such an initiative could create "a new event on the cultural calendar of Wales and ensure an enhanced profile for Wales on the world stage".

> "At the start of Artes Mundi the initial theme for the Prize was to have been the human form but in my view this was too limiting not to say excluding, particlularly when many in the world are not able to represent the human form if they are to remain true to their culture or religion."

My first knowledge of it came from a small single column width advert in the UK media, seeking an Artistic Director. Some funding had been pledged but the organisation, its charitable status, board, team and office were still to be established. Having collaborated previously with the visual arts in Wales and lived more than a decade in Scotland, I saw the new devolution era as

providing an exciting challenge and opportunity to establish an utterly international and thought provoking project from scratch.

Of course, over the eight years of Artes Mundi's development, the world has changed. At the beginning 9/11 was fresh in everyone's mind. Human tragedy was laid bare once again following the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004. In 2005 Hurricane Katrina hit and after months of controversy and disagreement, the UK embarked on war with Iraq.

At the start of Artes Mundi the initial theme for the Prize was to have been the human form but in my view this was too limiting not to say excluding, particularly when many in the world are not able to represent the human form if they are to remain true to their culture or religion. So with the establishment of the organisation came the decision to set the Prize's theme as the human condition as much as the human form. It was decided that Artes Mundi would celebrate artists who had achieved recognition for the quality of their work in their own country or part of the world and were emerging internationally, while simultaneously recognising art that added to our understanding of humanity.

At the start some saw this as too universal and imprecise a criterion. However, over the years the theme of the human condition has been one of Artes Mundi's strongest assets. Each selection of artists has provided new insights and audiences responding positively to artwork with real content. Funders and sponsors have also expressed their support, keen to connect with an initiative which was both contemporary and topical.

Many public and private and political

"From the outset Artes Mundi has been unashamedly international in its approach, working with fellow professionals from every continent except Antarctica. It has given the responsibility of selecting the shortlisted artists to others, of choosing the Prize winner to a separate independent panel."

Lida Abdul, *Brick Sellers of Kabul*, 2006, transferred from 16mm film, and shortlisted in the 2006 competition.

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Honorary President, Plaid Cymru

"As someone who has been involved all of my professional career in thinktanks, research bodies and policy units, I would like to pay tribute to the way in which the IWA has clearly established itself as a leading forum for debate in Welsh political life."
IWA Fellow, Conservative Peer
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Fellows of the IWA are able, if they so wish, to become involved in shaping the work programmes of the IWA. In addition Fellows will:

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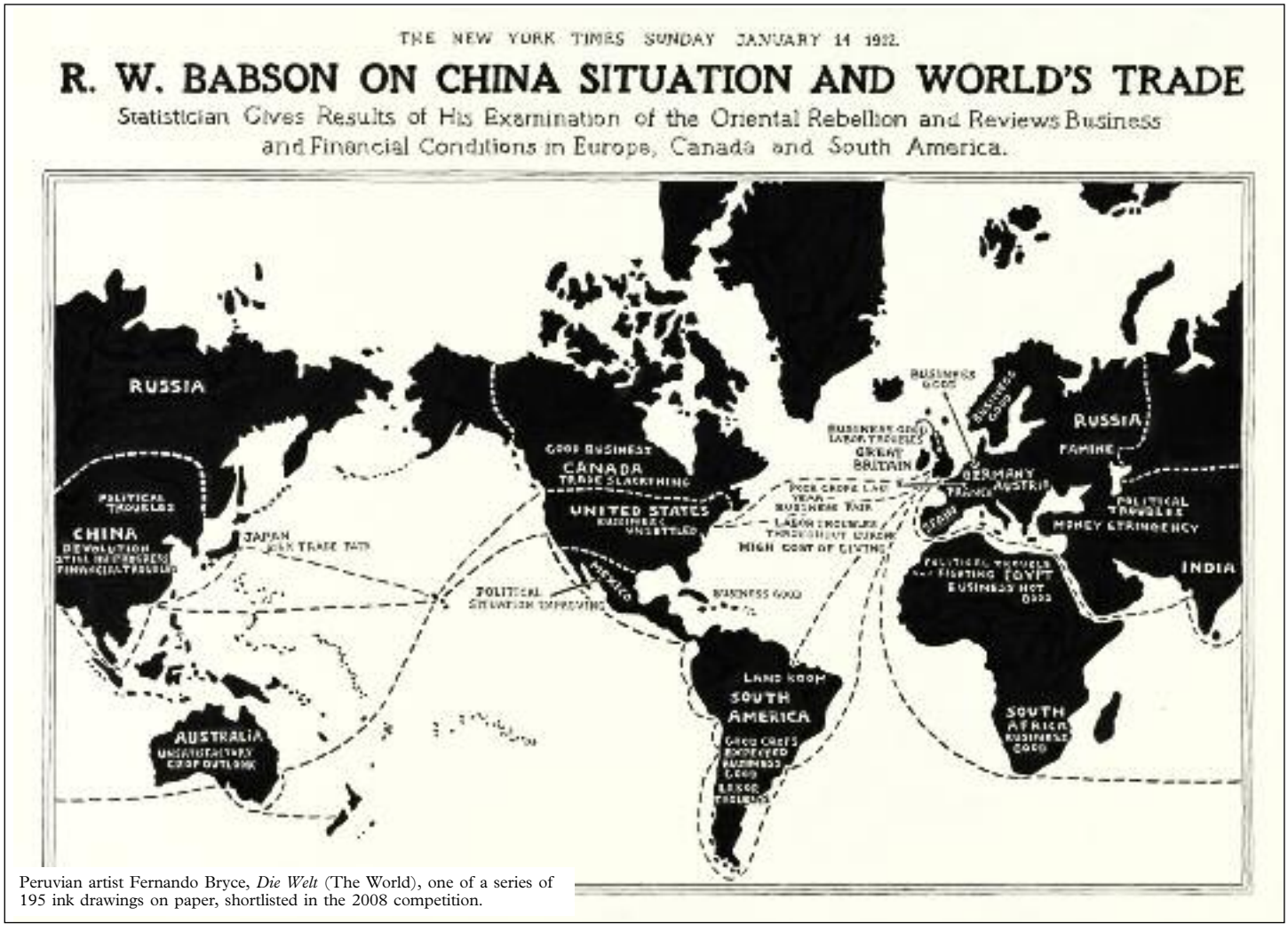
Through their inclusion on the shortlist we have been privileged to gain an understanding of how trade along the ancient Silk Road continues today.

From the outset Artes Mundi has been unashamedly international in its approach, working with fellow professionals from every continent except Antarctica. It has given the responsibility of selecting the shortlisted artists to others, of choosing the Prize winner to a separate independent panel. This has meant we have been able to involve curators, artists, writers, critics, and museum professionals from across the globe, many of them visiting Wales for the first time. It has meant that Wales has gained a reputation for real cultural connections beyond post colonial or political expediency.

There has been comment as to what have been the benefits for artists in Wales beyond the fact that to date two have been included in the four shortlists. Those shortlists have comprised artists from 28 countries, with 500 nominations from about 80 countries for the latest selection. Wales has many good artists. However, our selectors can only choose between six and eight artists from across the world. Only a couple of other countries have managed to get two artists selected in the same period. Moreover, Artes Mundi has brought other and longer term benefits for Wales, including:

- Young people gaining employment.
- Wales-based artists being selected for residencies and exhibitions elsewhere in the world.
- International artwork being purchased for our national collections.

Tim Davies, *Figures in a landscape*, Postcard Series III, shortlisted for the inaugural Artes Mundi in 2004.



Peruvian artist Fernando Bryce, *Die Welt* (The World), one of a series of 195 ink drawings on paper, shortlisted in the 2008 competition.

- Greater UK and international media coverage.
- Significant inward investment into cultural activity from the international companies which have supported us.

At the time of the first Artes Mundi in 2004, National Museum Cardiff was not able to present, on a regular basis, modern and contemporary art due to shortage of space. Now it will be opening a new wing in 2011 in order to do just that. While Artes Mundi may have played a small part in that journey, the enthusiasm and strength of its audiences and public response has certainly contributed to the Museum's vision.

At Artes Mundi we like to think our activities and brand have made a real contribution to how Wales sees itself, as much as how it is seen in the world. Over the last eight years news of Artes Mundi, its activities and the debates it has triggered, have been picked up by a growing range of media and people. The internationalism of the Prize has been enormously enhanced by its launch coinciding with the age of the internet. The world has changed so much in these first eight years. Just imagine where we and Wales will be in 2018.

A family workshop underway during the second Artes Mundi exhibition in 2006.

— **Tessa Jackson** was the first Chief Executive and Artistic Director of Artes Mundi.

Sydney Harbour comes to Glamorgan

Stephen Knight describes how a voluntary group of enthusiasts are putting the pier pavilion back into Penarth

At Penarth there are two remarkable sights, close together. At low tide the Pier perches on elegant spindly legs, stranded by a famously high tide. The water floods back every day, but for the Pier Pavilion there has been no return of vitality since it dwindled into dark isolation in the 1970s. At the Esplanade end of the Pier it still silently stands, aquamarine, white and gold, a bold cross between an Art Deco Masonic hall and a Byzantine cathedral.

It was a 1929 public works project, a Utopian vision of concrete curves, lofty dormer windows, four minarets, daring shapes and colours to create a people's palace for and beyond its time.

The people responded. Old-timers reminisce about the dances, the jazz evenings, the walks, the views, the sheer communality of it all. "There", said a moist-eyed old lady to a researcher, "that's where Idris first kissed me". In war-time boats went from here to Dunkirk, and soon the place bopped with local girls and American Sea-Bees. Then through the austerity years of amuse-yourself, local people did just that at the Pavilion.

The gathering shadows of television, supermarkets and inactivity overwhelmed the building. By the late 1970s, with an economic pall over south Wales and beset by structural and safety problems a local authority could not begin to finance, the Pavilion basically closed its doors. In the 21st Century the only users are hardy gymnasts, braving the lack of plumbing and the missing stairs.

Ultimate decay loomed ahead, and probably one of those furious fires that haunt salt-drenched British piers. But there is hope: as in one of the forties movies they loved at the Pavilion, the hoof beats of rescue can be heard over the horizon.

In 1997 a group of seaside art-lovers and coffee-drinkers formed Penarth Arts and Crafts, a not-for-profit company, to refurbish as a café-gallery the disused foyer of the Washington Cinema, an art-deco edifice curving gracefully around a corner opposite Penarth's grandiose public library, but sadly declined to a furniture store, and then a disco. There was even a proposal for the site to become a car park.

In its wisdom the Vale of Glamorgan Council rejected the last idea, and provided the capital funding for a refit as the Washington Gallery. The name came from the old cinema, and before that from the adjacent hotel, aimed to attract American tourists. It had also opened in 1929, when wealthy US citizens were riding shotgun on their remaining riches.

Cardiff artist-designer Keith Munro led a redesign which was to delight many and won an award. After several years of many shows of art and craft, mostly from Wales, and running a busy art-education programme, Director Maggie Knight and her cohorts cast their eyes and minds on the equally derelict and even more delightful Pavilion.

Following discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund, for whom the

> "Old-timers reminisce about the dances, the jazz evenings, the walks, the views, the sheer community of it all."

Perching on elegant spindly legs at low tide, Penarth Pier has the potential to become a "beating heart" for regenerating its hinterland.

Gallery had mounted several successful programmes – Pinhole Photography had been a winner across south Wales -- and with the Vale of Glamorgan Council, owners of the Pavilion, they applied for an Project Planning Grant in 2006. That came through in 2007 and a bid to restore, refurbish and reactivate the Pavilion was submitted for first-round approval in 2008. It failed narrowly but, with advice from the Cardiff Heritage Lottery Fund office, was resubmitted, this time with a generous £20,000 grant from the Vale. In November 2009 it was granted a first-round pass, which in the funding trade is regarded as the really important hurdle. These are hard financial times and everyone is cautious, but the bid is up there with a really strong chance.

So what do we have in mind? Under the leadership of Conservation Architect Niall Phillips, from Bristol-based Purcell Miller Triton, and with the help of two retired architects-cum-Gallery Trustees, Bryan Alcock and Maureen Kelly Owen, basic repair work was identified, a new roof, insulation, services and a restoration of the once splendid dance floor. There would be space re-division: the huge antique toilets have a grand view of the Severn and deserve better use. The auditorium, not huge, but striking has a round proscenium arch like Radio City's baby sister, a barrel-curved concrete roof, with wonderful clerestory windows affording estuary views from a new above-auditorium walkway.

After enjoying a concert or a meeting in the art-deco auditorium, a natural add-on will be drinks and dinner in the bistro restaurant, with locally-sourced food and views across the estuary: Sydney Harbour comes to Glamorgan. Those elegantly horn-shaped shops at the Esplanade front will house a cafe for all-weather take-aways, gelato for summer or cheese on toast when the wind blows down the Esplanade.

The project team studied redesign options including a new auditorium level for shops. Aesthetic sense and economic prescience rejected such vandalism and the scheme aims to restore the auditorium for multipurpose use and refit its large balcony as a smaller hall. These will house meetings, dances, concerts, conferences, parties and, best of all, sea-side weddings. Rooms will be for permanent rent as professional offices with a view or variegated uses, for example chess, bridge and a crèche.

Enjoying yourself at the Pavilion may merge into self-improvement. All parties involved are keen to see the reactivated building a centre for community education and curricular links. Heritage, obviously: standing displays and electronic pods will detail the exotic past of the building and its region. These will trace the regions history from the power of the dark age Christian church (visits to Llanilltud

Fawr), through the early modern pirate coast, to the time of industrial leisure from Penarth to Barry and Porthcawl.

The environment will have equal billing: the wonders of the massively tidal estuary and its rich wild life; the fossils and striation of the Glamorgan cliffs; local islands will star, with a live feed to the Steep Holm nature reserve and fond memories of the monks who lived there and on Flat Holm. The Pavilion will also operate a range of adult classes, in languages, especially Welsh, and also in areas such as keep fit, first aid, lean cookery, including Welsh-medium delivery.

Such complex use will bring issues to solve. Parking is limited, but an environmentally-aware management will turn that to advantage. We envisage augmented bus services, taxi-shuttles up the hill to the town station, and there are wilder-eyed dreams of electric rickshaws, even a funicular to and from Penarth station over the beautiful Alexandra Gardens.

Nobody provides capital funding these days without careful study of a project's financial sustainability, and the project team sees much of its support coming from on-site income-generation -- conferences, weddings and above all the restaurant. There will obviously be business and agency sponsors for what will be a superb refurbishment, and people in the locality and region have already indicated they will be happy to be, for a modest annual sum, supporting Friends, and so voting Members, of this project to regenerate an iconic presence as a beating heart of the region.

There is more to imagine. The pavilion renovation is nothing if not optimistic and expects the recently abandoned Headland Walk from Cardiff Bay to Penarth Pier to re-emerge. Just downstream a massive barrage may soon stride across the estuary. Then there is tourism. Escaping the weak pound and the body-scanners, British home-holidaying is on the rise, and the Pavilion's iconic presence makes it well-placed to be a ball-carrier for the growing short-break industry in Wales. A new ferry service is being launched during 2010 by an enterprising Somerset firm, to dock at Penarth from Minehead. Passengers are expected to cross the channel southwards in search of holidays or, in the reverse direction, for Cardiff shopping and sport.

Surfing on its own tide of enthusiasm and innovative practicality, the Penarth Pavilion project is offering a social enterprise capable of performing at the highest level in communally-vibrant local terms and also on the biggest of national and even international stages.

— **Stephen Knight** is Professor of English at Cardiff University.

Marc Jennings, Graphic Design.

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Cynghanedd gives life to Welsh verse

Mererid Hopwood discovers enticing connections between the Meistersinger and our bardic traditions

Back in the 6th Century King Maelgwn of Gwynedd gathered together his bards and minstrels and summoned them to perform for him. As the poets were his favourites, Maelgwn declared that before the proceedings began, both parties should swim across the river. How did this twist benefit the bards? The poor minstrels had the complication of having to swim with harps strapped to their backs, an unfair disadvantage indeed.

As this early account reveals, it seems that wherever two or three are gathered together to practice the art of song, the temptation to turn the event into a competitive, spectator-sport, has proved to be irresistible for the Welsh. And where there is competition, there must be rules and standards against which the participants are assessed. Of course, For song read poetry, too. After all, there is a close link between these art forms, and one that is clearly observed in Welsh, where *cerdd*, the word for poem, forms the stem of the word for music, *cerddoriaeth*.

From the Punjab to Penrhosgarnedd, it seems that the custom of reciting poems has created frameworks in which the personal, exquisite response to the art, once shared with an audience, becomes a matter for competition and ranking. Here in Wales we have the ever-popular *Talwrn y Beirdd*, where *talwrn* is the word for the pit in which cock fighting took place. Each neighbourhood has its own team of poets adept at forming extemporaneous verse on all kinds of measures. Between the teams sits the adjudicator – these days known as *Meuryn*, after the esteemed Robert John Rowlands whose bardic name was *Meuryn*. In front of them is the audience, ready to colour the *Meuryn's* opinion with sometimes genuinely spontaneous response, and sometimes more strategically played sighs and applause to favour their own team.

Bryn Terfel plays Hans Sachs to Raymond Very's Walter von Stolzting in Welsh National Opera's acclaimed production of Wagner's *Die Meistersingers* this summer.

The poets must then respond to given themes within a short period of time, sometimes a fortnight, sometimes five minutes. Today these gatherings reach a climax in two events: the final of the annual *Talwrn y Beirdd* radio series, and the final of the *Ymryson*, a week-long play-off held at the National Eisteddfod. At the Eisteddfod, two entirely different competitions are open to poets as individuals, where you submit your work anonymously to be considered by three adjudicators. The winners of these earn the right to wear the white robes and laurel crown of the Chief Poets at the *Gorsedd*, or sessions, of the Bards.

Thus it soon becomes apparent that a comparison with the *Meistersinger* tradition is enticing. One could, for example, draw similarities between the role of the *Meuryn* and the *Merker*, though mercifully for the Welsh poets, the *Meuryn* operates a system of awards where a point is given for merit, even if sometimes begrudgingly. However, the *Merker* works on a penal system where, rather as with the modern day driving licences, the more

points you have, the worse things are.

The practice of composing words to set forms is also similar in both traditions. But before we turn to the nitty-gritty of rhyme schemes, syllable counting and scansion, perhaps we should pause to ask the basic question: who were these *Meistersinger*, and who are the Welsh bards and what about their training? And already the use of the past tense for the German tradition and the present for the Welsh suggests an important difference.

The *Meistersinger* were craftsmen who probably first came into contact with poetry and music-making as lay musicians within the church. They grouped themselves together in 'guilds' and 'schools', originally in Mainz then in Worms and Strasburg. The custom flourished until the 15th Century, sweeping through Swabia in southern Germany, then eastwards to Silesia and into Upper Austria. A particularly famous guild met in Nuremberg, whose members are at the heart of Wagner's opera. The guilds reflected the traditions of the tradesmen's apprenticeship, and poetry was regarded as essentially a craft. You started your career as a *Schüler* (apprentice), then became a *Schulfreund* (journeyman), until finally, a few stages further along, you graduated to the rank of the *Meister* (master).

To be promoted from one level to the next, your work would be judged by four markers, each concentrating on different aspects of the work – faithfulness to the often Biblical text, prosody, rhyme and tune. As already mentioned, these markers would listen out for breaches of the rules and the winner was the one who had the fewest marks against his name.

The *Meistersinger* claimed lineage to the earlier Middle High German *Minnesinger*, where *Minne* is an old word for love. However, the *Minnesinger* were professionals linked with the nobility, unlike the *Meistersinger*, who had day-jobs as cobblers or builders or bakers. The work of the *Minnesinger* reached a peak in the 12th Century when they produced lasting and beautiful, lyric verse. The most famous poet from this tradition is perhaps Walther von der Vogelweide, who has quite possibly lent his name to the Walther of the opera.

What about the Welsh bards? The earliest extant examples of our tradition extend back to Aneirin and Taliesin, who recorded the harsh realities of the life of the Brythonic people in the 6th Century. By the 10th Century Hywel Dda, the enlightened king and law-maker, had defined the privileged status of poets. He codified a bardic order which testifies that in Wales too there is an old tradition of ranking poets. This system is listed in Simwnt Fychan's *Pum Llyfr Cerddwriaeth* (circa 1570) thus: *Disgybl ysbâs heb radd* – unqualified apprentice; *Disgybl disgyblaidd* – qualified apprentice; *Pencerdd* – master poet.


Bryn Terfel and Christopher Purves as Beckmesser.

With a nine-year training period, the status of *Pen-cerdd*, or Master-poet, was a highly sought after position. However, in Wales, the poets' apprenticeship did not happen in the context of a circle such as the guilds of the *Meistersinger*. The aspiring poet would seek a 'poetic father' who would, so to speak, adopt him (and it was, always, a him), until he had learnt the mysteries of the art - I deliberately reject the phrase 'tricks of the trade'. In this sense, the Welsh tradition is a much more personal affair, and perhaps here 'tutelage' is a better word than 'apprenticeship'. Furthermore, in the Welsh model this was a training for a profession, not a pastime. A tract dating from the early 16th Century, known as *Statud Gruffudd ap Cynan*, notes to the penny the rates of pay for various verse measures, though poets were also offered useful tools such as swords and axes as payment.

Later the poet would be given a passport, a sort of right-to-roam-certificate, which granted him freedom to travel the length and breadth of the country, while the rest of the Welsh had to stay put within the confines of their own home patch. Often the poet would win himself a very welcome place at the patron's table. Indeed, the tradition of honouring the poet with an elaborate chair lives on to the present day, where the winner of one of the Eisteddfod's main poetry competitions is given a uniquely crafted, throne-like chair, as well as the title *Prifardd*, Chief-poet.

So much for the similarities and differences in the learning process between the two traditions. What now of the forms and content?

To understand the work of the *Meistersinger*, we must look again at the earlier traditions of the *Minnesinger* who developed quite intricate verse, the

Die Meistersingers have an uncanny resemblance to the Gorsedd of Bards.

basis of which is the *Liet*. This is a single strophe containing two groups of lines followed by a coda. The *Minnesinger* traditionally kept to set themes. The *Kreuzliet* dealt with separation as the knight sets off to fight in the crusades. The *Tageliet* dealt with separation as dawn breaks and two lovers must part. Another aspect of the *Minnesang* was the *Spruch*. This form usually contained a moral, and based itself on social and political matters, though quite often in a personal context. The *Spruch* became a favourite with the *Meistersinger* as it allowed them plenty of scope for pontificating.

The *Meistersinger* claimed to develop the *Minnesinger* traditions. However, they seemed to place more emphasis on complicating the forms than on deepening the sentiment, and the sincerity of the works of the best *Minnesinger* somehow got lost along the way. The *Meistersinger* called the melody *Ton* or *Weis*, and the poems *Bar* or *Gesetz*, and took great pride in varying the length of these from two or three verses to more than a hundred. The skill was to write a new poem to fit the old tunes, though making them fit was not always easy, as the poor old Beckmesser of the opera finds out.

Here, another of the Welsh traditions springs to mind – *Cerdd-dant* – where the art of composing and singing a new melody while playing a traditional melody as harp accompaniment, calls for a great degree of skill – one for which I remember Bryn Terfel winning a fair share of prizes as a young Eisteddfod competitor!

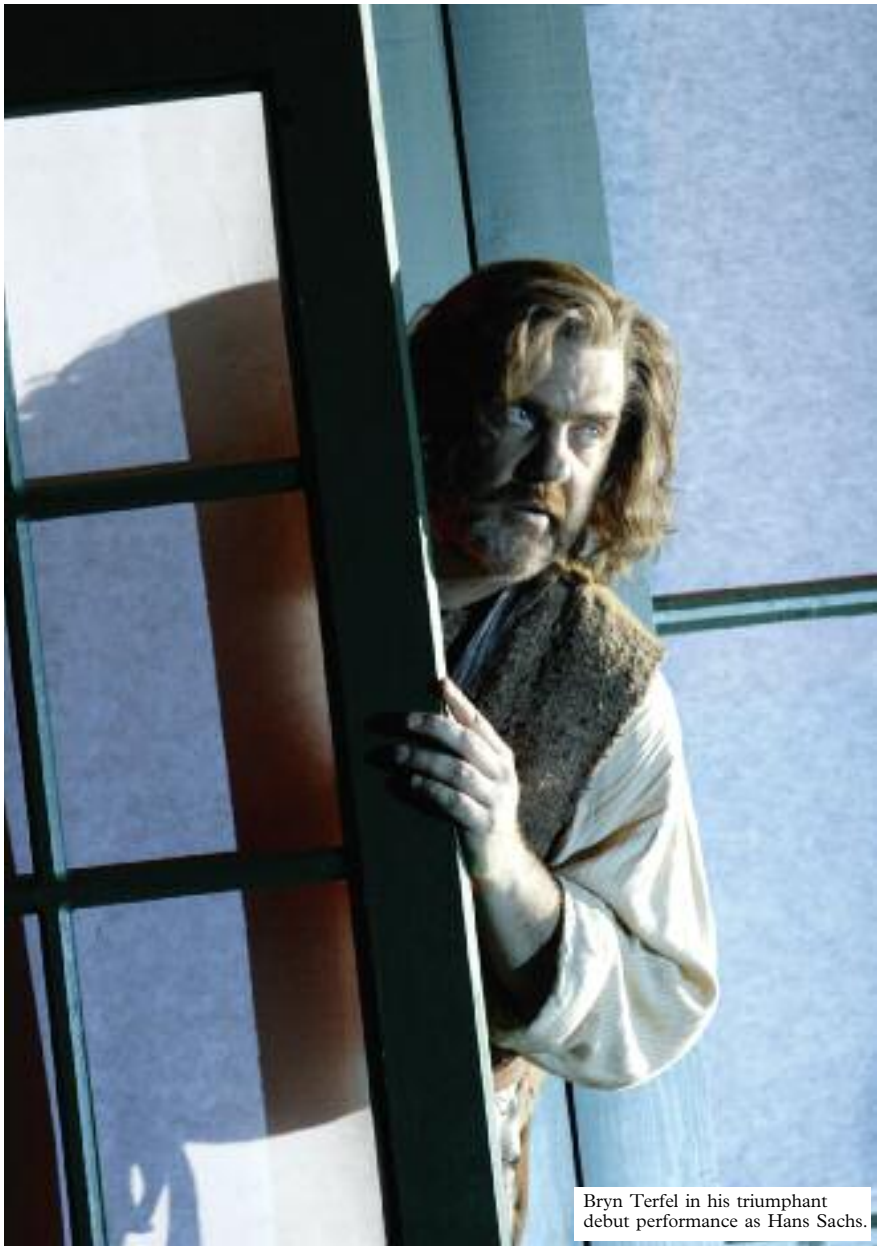
At first, an aspiring *Meistersinger* could only use a set of permitted twelve medieval tunes. However, Hans Folz, a member of the *Meistersinger* guild at Nuremberg, broke this rule and wrote a new tune. Thereafter a candidate who sought the title of *Meister* had to compose an original *Ton* as well as a poem. These tunes were given the most fanciful names such as *The Tone of the Red Bat* and *The Tone of the Small Striped Bouquet of Saffron Flowers*. Despite this development, on the whole, the rules, as laid down in the *Tabulatur*, were almost impossible to bend.

At first glance the Welsh forms appear to be even more complex, in that they observe the grammar of the ancient strict metres, where each line depends on a musical interplay of alliteration and rhyme, known as *cynghanedd* (translated, significantly, as 'harmony'). Within the *cynghanedd* discipline, there are four basic line structures: *cynghanedd Groes*, *Draws*, *Lusg* and *Sain*, where the *Groes* and *Draws* depend on alliteration for their music, the *Lusg* on internal rhyme only, and the *Sain* on a mixture of both alliteration and internal rhyme.

A combination of these four types of *cynghanedd* then lead to at least 24 official measures and many more unofficial. Perhaps the three most common measures are the *englyn*, the *cywydd* and the *hir-a-thoddaid*. The *englyn* is a compact 30 syllabic stanza arranged in four lines of *cynghanedd* with each line rhyming together. The best examples of the *englyn* can make the haiku seem long-winded. The *cywydd* is a series of any number of seven syllabic rhyming couplets, where each line is written in *cynghanedd*. The *hir-a thoddaid*, generally stretches to a 10 syllabic line, composed in groups of four or six.

I have already referred to the system of *cynghanedd* as a 'grammar', which might explain why I believe that it only seems to be more restrictive than the German code. After all, a grammar is the machinery that drives a language, its careful engineering leads to movement. It's what allows the words of a language to make sense when spoken. In many ways

"Later the poet would be given a passport, a sort of right-to-roam-certificate, which granted him freedom to travel the length and breadth of the country, while the rest of the Welsh had to stay put within the confines of their own home patch."



Bryn Terfel in his triumphant debut performance as Hans Sachs.

cynghanedd is nothing more, nothing less than the grammar of a language within a language. It is a branch within Welsh, which, once mastered, is as flexible and fluid as any other language. In this sense, its rigidity is only an appearance. Indeed it's the very clear rules of the grammar of *cynghanedd* that makes it possible for its practitioners to express anything under the sun.

So, while the poor aspiring *Meistersinger* find themselves tongue-tied and burdened with the dead-weight of the *Tabulatur* leaving virtually no room for the soul to speak, the Welsh poets composing in *cynghanedd* are eventually liberated, for they are working with an ever-evolving living language. Although the basic rules of its grammar must be observed, at time *cynghanedd* almost seems to help the imagination find the expression it needs.

It might also be worth drawing attention to the difference in the relationship between the poet and the public in both traditions. In Wales, an 18th Century poet, the legendary Iolo Morganwg, masterminded the Gorsedd y Beirdd ceremonies. He compiled a handbook of the rules of the bardic system under the curiously mysterious title *Cyfrinach Beirdd Ynys Prydain* (The Secret of the Bards of the Island of Britain). Yet, once written, the poems themselves are no secrets, but rather works of art to be enjoyed by all.

In the *Meistersinger* context, however, no *Meisterliede* or 'master-songs', were allowed to be published. Development was thus further stifled as the closed-shop nature of the guilds made it almost impossible for them to influence, or indeed be influenced by the wider poetry scene. Unsurprisingly, the *Meistersinger* eventually disappeared.

However, in Wales the bardic tradition lives on, and while there have been periods when the art of *cynghanedd* has been unfashionable, it has never disappeared. Each age seems to produce a poet who picks up the pen and pushes the lines a little further. At present, *cynghanedd* is enjoying an energy unprecedented for decades. In chapel vestries and pubs, in schools and universities, you can find budding bards huddled together to learn this mesmerising grammar. Some struggle, others take to it with startling ease, and thank goodness, every so often, a Walther will emerge to challenge the status quo, and a Hans Sachs to ensure that his challenge is given a just hearing. And now and again a poem is captured, so perfect in its beauty that no sport or competition could ever properly rank it. A poem that is, quite simply, a work of art.

— **Mererid Hopwood,** a lecturer in Trinity St David University, is a poet who made history in 2001 by becoming the first woman to win the Chair at the National Eisteddfod. She won the Crown in 2003 and was awarded the Prose Medal in 2008 for her book *O Ran*.

Present day Primrose Hill overlooking central London where in 1792 Iolo Morganwg's Gorsedd of Bards of the Isle of Britain was inaugurated.

Ancient Britons and London Aborigines

Prys Morgan ponders the long history and continuing role of the Cymmrodorion

A few weeks ago I visited the Cymmrodorion office in central London. E-mails were coming in from both sides of the Atlantic asking for information about Wales or for permission to reprint articles from the society's publications. I riffled through the filing cabinets, my eye catching correspondence with government ministers of the 1950s and 1960s asking for Wales to be represented on coinage and stamps, and for a Welsh television channel. Some of the government replies looked just like the script of 'Yes, Minister'.

We were founded in 1751. Several of the founders were members of the 'Most Honourable and Loyal Society of Antient Britons' founded by the London Welsh in 1715. These had organized St David's Day Dinners and helped Welsh families in London fallen on hard times. They also ran a school for their children at Clerkenwell, which eventually became the St David's Girls' School at Ashford. The 'Antient' was not only a reminder to the English that the Welsh were here first, but it made a clear distinction between Welsh as the real Britons and the new-fangled use of 'British' to describe the United Kingdom parliament, only in existence since 1707.

By 1751 there were growing numbers of Welsh in London and many of them felt the need for meetings other than for St David's Day. The idea of founding The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion probably came from Lewis Morris, controller of the Royal Mines in Cardiganshire, and the leader of the cultural Renaissance of the period. But the form of its London meetings was probably devised by Lewis's brother Richard, a clerk in the Navy Office, Whitehall. It must be his influence which added optional verses to the Cymmrodorion Song, cursing the French and Spanish, but only to be sung when we were at war with them.

The society was to meet for social and benevolent purposes, to discuss literary, historical, cultural and even scientific matters, and it was to give a lead to people back home in Wales. But why 'Cymmrodorion'? The word was made up, probably by Lewis Morris, meaning 'earliest natives' or aborigines. It was meant to remind the English that the Welsh deserved special respect as the earliest people of Britain. Unless the Welsh dimension was acknowledged Britain could not boast any kind of ancient history.

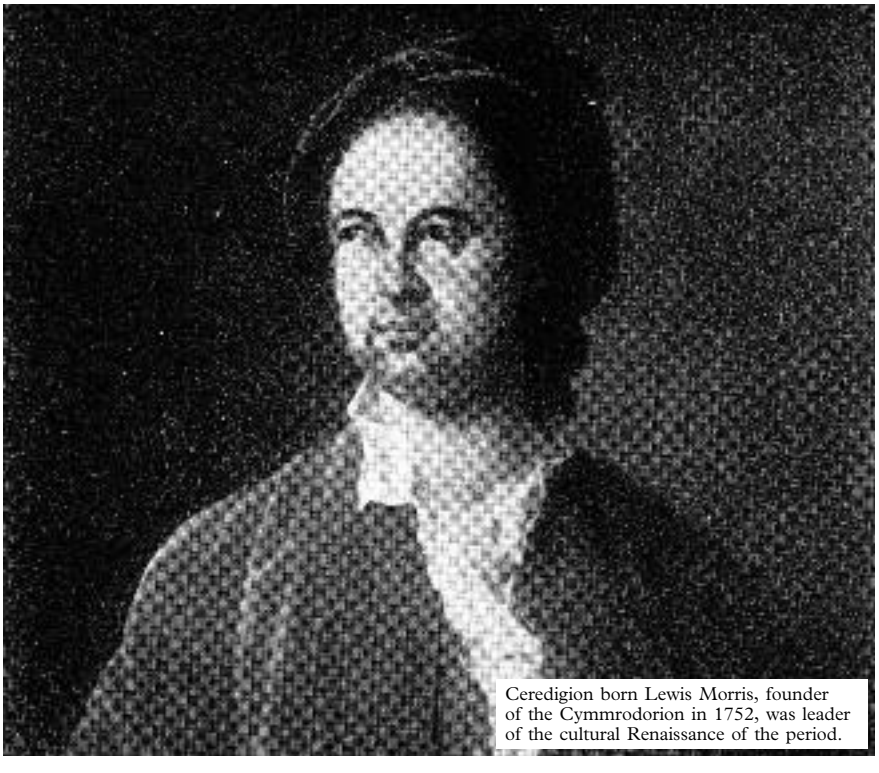
In 1770 some of the members - several from Gwynedd - formed an offshoot of the society called the Gwyneddigion to hold more convivial meetings with sing-songs. By the 1780s they had developed a more serious side, adding political debates to their meetings, which eventually caused the demise of the mother-society around 1787. In many ways the Gwyneddigion was more successful than the Cymmrodorion because it subsidised important publications, such as the first edition of the poems of Dafydd ap Gwilym, and the holding of eisteddfodau, such as the three held in 1789. The ever-growing influx of Welsh into London caused further offshoots to grow, such as the Caradogion, the Cymreigyddion, and in 1792 Iolo Morganwg's Gorsedd of Bards of the Isle of Britain, inaugurated on Primrose Hill, London, in 1792.

During the long wars against France it was difficult, even illegal, to

hold public meetings, and so Welsh societies did not blossom again until after 1815. The Wales of 1815 was very different from the Wales of the 1780s, and Cymreigyddion or 'Cambrian Societies' to energize Welsh culture emerged in Wales itself. Many of the leaders of these societies met at Lord Dynevor's London house in 1819, demanding the re-foundation of the old Cymmrodorion, to give leadership to life in Wales.

W.J. Rees of Cascob spent six weeks in London in 1820 browbeating the London Welsh to re-found the society. So the second Cymmrodorion arose and lasted until 1843, succeeding from 1822 in publishing the *Transactions*, and getting a Welsh language Church in London. It is they who adopted our present motto 'Cared Doeth yr Encilion', which roughly translated is 'Let the wise cultivate antiquities'. By 1840 London Welsh life was much affected by a new kind of Victorian seriousness, so instead of enjoying convivial nights in taverns the Welsh were founding chapels and Sunday schools. The result of this change was that the Cymmrodorion again declined and disappeared.

It is said that the Cambrian Archaeological Association was founded in 1846, in Wales itself, as a reaction to the failure of the Cymmrodorion. Between the 1840s to the 1860s a great deal of frenzied Welsh activity was devoted from the to a peculiarly Victorian mixture of religious revivalism, social improvement and radical political activism. The famous election of 1868 led to a number of self-consciously Welsh MPs being sent to Westminster. As a result Welsh educational and cultural movements once again felt the need for the London Welsh to give leadership to campaigns back home. In 1873 the journalist John Griffith 'Y Gohebydd' and his friend the civil servant Sir Hugh Owen saw an opportunity at the Mold Eisteddfod to refound the old Cymmrodorion society. This has had a continuous existence since that time.



Ceredigion born Lewis Morris, founder of the Cymmrodorion in 1752, was leader of the cultural Renaissance of the period.

From the start the present pattern was laid down of holding regular meetings in London, with an annual meeting in Wales at the National Eisteddfod. Indeed the Cymmrodorion were instrumental in creating a National Eisteddfod Association to regulate that body. In turn that set another pattern, acting as midwife to national Welsh organisations, such as the National Library and the Museum (1907), and the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales (1927).

The society's journal *Y Cymmrodor* first appeared in 1875, supplemented by the *Transactions* which appeared in 1893 and continue to the present day. From the 1890s onwards the Cymmrodorion Record Series was published to provide scholarly texts. In the 1930s the society began to organise a dictionary of national biography for Wales, the first volume appearing in Welsh as *Y Bywgraffiadur* in 1953 and in English as the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* in 1959. The history of the Cymmrodorion was published in 1951 as a volume of *Y Cymmrodor*. The quarter millennium was celebrated in 2001 by *The Welsh in London*, edited by the then President Emrys Jones, and published by the University of Wales Press. The first of the Cymmrodorion Society medals was given to Gwilym Hiraethog in 1883, a tradition continued to this day. Archbishop Rowan Williams received a medal in 2008 and Lord Kenneth O. Morgan another in 2009.

Another aspect of our activities over the years is making representation to government bodies about things Welsh, giving evidence to official commissions, or simply writing to ministers to ask for recognition of Welsh opinion. In 1973 Ben Jones, the secretary of the Cymmrodorion, was appointed chair of the Welsh Language Council as it then

was. In 1984 we successfully pleaded with the government not to remove the Welsh Plant Breeding Station from Aberystwyth to the Thames Valley. This is a tradition that has continued right up to the present century.

Can such a situation continue? The society has been for so long a midwife to so many Welsh devolved bodies, and devolution has meant that we find ourselves in a position at the end of our first quarter millennium very different from our role in the 1880s or even 1950s. Is it likely that government will turn to the Cymmrodorion in London for advice, when Cardiff has been the Welsh capital in name since 1955, and has a large and growing government and administration there since 1999? Although there are several scholarly journals on literature history and current affairs in Wales, there will

"Is it likely that government will turn to the Cymmrodorion in London for advice, when Cardiff has been the Welsh capital in name since 1955, and has such a large and growing government and administration there since 1999?"

be always a role for the Cymmrodorion *Transactions* since they uniquely deals with all those fields under one cover. We are trying to meet a growing demand from our members to hold more meetings in Wales, not merely at the Eisteddfod.

Successful meetings have been held in 2009 and 2010 in Ty Hywel in Cardiff Bay, the latter in conjunction with the IWA. We have also had several requests to hold meetings in north Wales and in Liverpool. It is obvious that there are still an immense number

Iolo Morgannwg, paramount mover and shaker of his time, founded the Gorsedd of Bards in 1792.

of Welsh people living in London, and they will require a focus for meetings, particularly since the old network of London Welsh churches and chapels has declined in recent years.

The fact that various London Welsh societies have proliferated recently also shows that there is a great deal of vigour in London Welsh life. We already cooperate each year with the Montgomeryshire Society in London and the London Welsh Association in Gray's Inn Road, and we need to cooperate further with other London Welsh societies. But we also have considerable numbers of members all over Wales, and if we could increase membership in such areas as Cardiff, we would have a firm foundation for holding meetings regularly there.

I am a great believer in the importance of institutions. They are the ribcage of nationality. Our history shows that since its foundation in 1751 the Cymmrodorion has been an acorn from which all sorts of other cultural institutions have grown, out of which all kinds of sporting, social and political institutions have sprouted, even the fresh green oaktree of the National Assembly itself.

Other oak saplings are also springing up as I write. I have been for a couple of years a member of a committee to set up Cymdeithas Ddysgedi Cymru / The Learned Society of Wales. Its ambitious aim is to carry out in Wales some of the functions of the Royal Society and the British Academy in London, without in any way pretending to be a rival organisation. In the circumstances of 21st Century Wales it will carry out some of the tasks Lewis Morris hoped would be done by the Cymmrodorion in 1751. Morris himself was not only a poet and administrator, but also a mineralologist and cartographer. Our printed constitutions of 1755 show a fine blend of concern for the humanities and sciences.

Acting as the core members of the new Learned Society are the Fellows of the Royal Society and the British Academy who have a connection with Wales, and they have given our plans enthusiastic support. Launched in Cardiff in May the Society already has a programme of meetings of various kinds in hand to publicise recent work in the humanities and the sciences, and focus the minds of experts from Wales and outside on our problems.

The Ancient Britons and the Cymmrodorion were provocatively named to gain respect for Wales from a wider world. Could I remind all those who are well-wishers of Welsh institutions that the ancestral oak tree of the Cymmrodorion deserves their respect and support?

— **Prys Morgan,** Emitus professor of history at Swansea University, is President of the Cymmrodorion.

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The Canadian soft option

It all began with a call I received from somebody claiming to represent the WBSI which turned out to be the Wales Black Swan Institute. Sport always comes first for me and I assumed that the call had something to do with Swansea's Liberty Stadium. After all when the Neath and Swansea clubs came together to form the regional rugby side I had urged the consortium to call their club the Black Swans.

However, more serious matters were afoot. The Institute had, of course, taken their name from Nassim Nicholas Taleb's brilliant 2007 book *The Black Swan*. Taleb's subject was randomness and how to handle it. He had taken his title from the fact that people had once refused to believe that there could be such things as black swans. Taleb forcibly argues it is more important to find out what a job-applicant does not know than what they do know. In a person's library the unread books are more important than those read. He defines a nerd as someone who never thinks outside the box.

The WBSI then were Taleb disciples who had heard of my passion for his thinking and who wanted to enlist my help in developing new ideas with regard to Wales. Pledging secrecy I was flown to a seminar on Prince Edward Island where the sole topic on the agenda was the proposition that a referendum should be conducted with a view to Wales immediately becoming a province of Canada. Looking around I spotted the usual suspects, a couple of Welsh Government ministers, the University of Wales high-command, Welsh TV academics, earnest IWA types as well as the two richest Welshmen in the world. Were this lot up for it? I worried, but my fears were immediately allayed as we all plunged into pure Talebesque dimensions.

We began with my argument that the people of Wales had not yet taken on board the fact that the granting of devolution had indicated that the English had effectively lost all interest in Wales. As a nation we had just scraped through A Levels and we were now free to choose our own path. The failure to pay us a full grant was a straight invitation for us to think outside the box. It was then good to hear lifelong Europhiles admitting that Europe was a busted flush. We can leave Europe now to sort out its own economic problems, feeling sorry only for those Welsh families who had set out to colonise the Spanish coast.

Even more encouraging was the admission by erstwhile nationalists that in the new international dispensation the notion of 'independence' has become problematic. It was good to hear them argue that culture and fulfilment should come before statehood and that it was no great sacrifice to abandon the thoughts of all those attractive ambassadorships that might have accrued.

We had effectively cleared out accumulated baggage and led by spectacularly successful Welsh-Canadian businessmen we could turn our thoughts to the quite simple notion that Wales should just throw in its lot with Canada. I had remembered reading that following the Wall Street Crash in 1929 many Hollywood types had been ruined. The comedian Charlie Chaplin was an exception since most of his money had been invested in Canada. Subsequently other investors have found Canada to be the safest option. The recent world crisis in banking left Canada relatively untouched as it has the best system of bank regulation. As London politicians set out to axe spending and roll back the state their eyes are on the successful Canadian model.

Canadian wealth has largely been generated by its exploitation of its natural resources and in particular its mineral wealth. Meanwhile, the country is well placed to lead the world into a new age of energy generation. In all these respects there could be obvious investment and technological links between Wales and the Canadian mainland. The university leaders present reminded us of the outstanding university system in Canada, a sphere in which many distinguished Welsh scholars have flourished.

Our deliberations were going well. We had visions of Canadian money regenerating Wales - the three million Welsh would make up 12 per cent of the new nation's population. There would be wonderful university exchange programmes and fascinating interchange of populations. Many Welsh people would migrate to Canadian cities while many Canadians would choose to winter in Wales. Our elected MPs would receive a warmer reception in Ottawa than in London and a new swathe of careers would open up in Canadian public and diplomatic life. We were given every assurance that Canada could effortlessly and meaningfully become a trilingual nation. Welsh culture would flourish under the Maple Leaf with the Dragon flag.

I did my best to contribute to the economic and constitutional debates but it was my views on the cultural implications that they wanted to hear. I pointed out that with a population of 36 million there would be a spectacular improvement in the quality of our rugby, soccer, boxing and athletics squads. Wales would host home games of the world's best ice-hockey team, and the whole status of our film industry, national opera and theatre companies would be transformed. The Canada/Wales book of the year prize would be a lively affair. I talked a lot about the time I had spent with the great Welsh/Canadian novelist Robertson Davies. And when I admitted that I had seen the ice-hockey star Bobby Orr play and that I ranked him up there with only Barry John and John Charles, the Canadians immediately offered me the Chairmanship of the Transitional Commission. Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, here we come. It's all ours.

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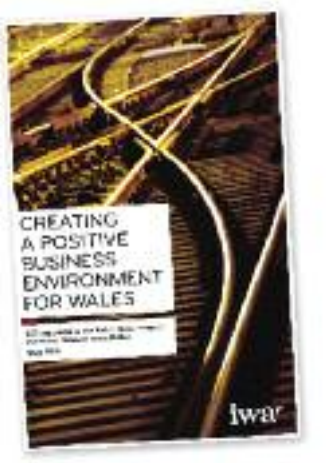

The private sector should play a far greater part in the delivery of economic development programmes if Wales is to rise from the bottom of the UK competitiveness rankings. The report recommends that a slimmed down civil service should focus on policy creation, monitoring and evaluation, while delivery should be undertaken by a limited number of independent public and private sector organisations. Central to this approach should be the creation of a 'Welsh business embassy' in London which would serve Welsh business interests by:

- Acting as a visible focus for Wales in a world capital.
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Adding life to years

Welsh Approaches to Ageing Policy
By John Osmond

The Older People's Commissioner in Wales should combine with the Children's Commissioner in advocating greater inter-generational awareness in schools across the country. This is one suggestion in a new IWA report *Adding Life to Years* which surveys Welsh policy approaches to ageing. One in four children born today can expect to live beyond 100. Author, IWA Director John Osmond, said: "Researchers at Bangor University have been investigating the concept of 'the resilient personality' whose ability to cope with difficulties and overcome problems is seen as being central to successful ageing. The question arises whether resilience can be learned or developed in young people in relation to their understanding of what life will be like in their older age."

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