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# Wales can do better



## On the day our crowdsourced Constitutional Convention drew to a close we launched our new report on the economy: An Economic Strategy for Wales?

After the Scottish referendum result we were anxious that Wales wasn't left out of a debate that was bound to be dominated by Scotland and England. And whilst the Scottish campaign had been notable for its engagement beyond the political classes, the response of the establishment to the result was to close down debate and move it behind closed doors. Despite having little time and few resources we launched an ambitious plan for an online Constitutional Convention to try and ensure there was a debate in Wales about the implications of all this change for us, and to try and move the discussion beyond the 'usual suspects'.

The eight-week project looked in-turn at the major themes coming out of the debate at the UK level - powers over the economy, responsibility for welfare provision, and the future of the UK - especially the implications of English devolution. Over 2,000 people engaged on the convention website, and many more through social media and the Click on Wales site.

We'll be properly evaluating the project over the coming weeks but the debate around the economy was striking. The recurring theme was not a call for more powers but a plea for better implementation and more imaginative use of existing policy levers.

In parallel with our Constitutional Convention we've also been working on our other priority themes - the economy. The report addresses the mood of our Constitutional Convention - we must do better.

As an independent think-tank we are not bound by political cycles and our analysis is intended as a corrective to low-tempo mood of much of the economic debate in Wales. As the report puts it:

*"Growth policies of successive Welsh governments up to now have been on a scale implying acceptance of only modest narrowing of the gap with the rest of the UK".*

We set out with searing clarity the gap that needs to be closed if we are to lift ourselves off the bottom of the wealth league table. For the Welsh economy to be on par with England's, Wales needs a growth rate which matches that of Eastern Europe in the post-Soviet era. True catch-up growth means the economy needs to add nearly £1½ billion of activity, more than the turnover of an Admiral, every year. That is not going to happen unless there's a marked shift in approach.

As an independent charity we can say that. That is why the IWA is so important, because we can speak truth to power. And we need your support - your financial support - to continue to be able to do that. But we don't just offer a critique, we offer a constructive set of solutions too.

Our report sets out a range of options for the kind of interventions that will be necessary to grow the Welsh economy. These are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive. Some need more work, whilst others are fully worked up and need to be delivered.

The point is not the detail of each proposal, that is for each party to decide, and each sponsor to make their case, but the acknowledgement that to close the wealth gap we need a step change in ambition and a serious overhaul of our capacity for delivery.

It is do-able. But the first step is recognising the challenge.

The IWA believes Wales can do better with an ambitious long-term programme to grow the economy sustainably and spread prosperity.

**Lee Waters,**  
**Director, IWA**



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# 2015 General Election

## A fork in the road

**Mark Drakeford** says voters have an important choice to make as the General Election approaches.

There is a temptation for any General Election to be regarded, by those of us caught up in them, as the most important we have ever seen. More often than not, that turns out not to be true. Some elections, however, do mark a turning point in the nature of politics and of the state.

Three occasions stand out in the modern era.

The 1945 General Election set a policy direction which has proved remarkably durable. The NHS remains – in Wales at least – recognisably based on Bevanite principles. Its belief that collective solutions produce the most effective response to common problems continues to resonate whenever such problems arise.

### The post-Thatcher world is not the same as the one she inherited.

The 1979 election produced a far closer result, proving that fundamental change does not require a landslide to produce it. Mrs Thatcher may not have succeeded in rolling back the frontiers of the state in a wholesale way – the share of national income taken by government was higher at the end of her premiership than at the start of it – but she did change the nature of the UK economy, more or

less ending heavy industry; decimating manufacturing industry; expanding financial services and putting us on the path to the great crash of 2008. The post-Thatcher world is not the same as the one she inherited.

The 1997 election ended the hegemony of the Conservative party in UK politics – it had dominated the 20th century. It is now nearly 20 years since the Conservative party has won an election outright, the longest time it has failed to do so in the era since universal suffrage began.

Now, the need to ensure that this failure continues in 2015 is absolutely imperative.

The Tory-led government since 2010 has been a dismal failure, socially and economically. But its promises for the next five years prove that if it were to win in May, we really ain't seen nothing yet.

It is not an idle threat to say, as the Prime Minister puts it, "to permanently reduce the size of the state". With the Autumn Statement, we know that this involves a reduction to levels of public expenditure last seen in the 1930s. The

economy is, at last, returning slowly to growth. However, on this point Cameron and Osborne are clear – public services will receive no share whatsoever in the growing cake that the public will have created.

This is why I clearly believe that the General Election of May 2015 will be a fork in the road election. Down one track lies the Conservative future in which collective solutions will have

been progressively eroded in favour of private and privatised futures. The old JK Galbraith description of corporate America – private affluence and public squalor – is already too true of contemporary Britain.

A Conservative victory in May will institutionalise that process to a point where it will overwhelm the solidarity defences, which, for 70 years, have helped to keep an increasingly complex and disparate society together.

Along the other fork lies a Labour government faced with real economic challenges but with a clear ambition to respond to them fairly; a commitment to provide public services with a proper share of a growing economy and a willingness to borrow to invest where the return on that investment would be clear.

All this matters hugely to securing the future of the UK – indeed to whether there is to be a future for the UK as a truly united nation – and to the future of Wales. That tired substitute for thought – the accusation that there is no difference between the political parties – has never been less true.

A further five years of unrestrained reductions in public expenditure will change the landscape of public services profoundly. The health service in 2020 will not survive a Conservative victory in 2015 in the shape and scope we see it today.

Voters making their way to the polling booths on May 7 will shape the destiny not simply of themselves but of many who will follow them in the future.



**Mark Drakeford** is the Welsh Minister for Health. He is Assembly Member for Cardiff West.

# The path to recovery

**Andrew RT Davies** says voters have a clear choice.

It seems like a lifetime away, that sunny May afternoon in the garden at Downing Street. David Cameron and Nick Clegg improbably putting their differences aside and agreeing to govern as a coalition in the country's interest.

Go back a few years further and that scenario would scarcely have been conceivable, but it is easy to forget what a royal mess Labour had made of the UK economy. The worst recession since the War, the country's gold reserves gone, unemployment, debt & deficit at record levels. A note left behind by the outgoing Chief Secretary to the Treasury that read, simply: "I'm afraid there's no money – kind regards and good luck".

The transformation in the following five years has been profound, with record levels of economic growth and stability in the financial markets, keeping interest rates low. Plenty to be proud of, but more work to do.

Between 2013 and 2014 a staggering 780,000 more people found jobs, the biggest annual rise in a quarter of a century. We have given a tax cut to 26 million hardworking people, all of whom now have more money in their pockets than under Labour.

Here in Wales, more than 150,000 people have been taken out of paying tax altogether and since the Coalition took office in May 2010, the claimant count in Wales has dropped by 38%.

Why would anyone want to undo all of that progress?

As the election date has loomed ever closer on the horizon, Ed Miliband's plans to 'weaponise' the NHS have backfired spectacularly.

Financial security has enabled the Conservative-led coalition to

protect NHS spending in England, whilst Labour's brutal slashing of the budget in Wales has had devastating consequences and made it one of the election's key battlegrounds.

Here in Wales, where patients have been subjected to a 16-year 'case study' on how the health service fares under Labour, one in seven are on a waiting list. It's not a record to be proud of. It's not a record anyone should wish to replicate elsewhere in the UK.

In contrast, the UK Government has taken difficult decisions and targeted investment in our great public services, whilst working to create a more balanced economy and improving public service delivery.

In education, for example, there are over a million more English children being taught in schools rated 'good' or 'outstanding' than in 2010. Here in Wales, meanwhile, Carwyn Jones freely admits to having taken his "eye of the ball" and his government has left a generation of Welsh pupils a hostage to fortune, whilst Wales slides meekly down the international rankings.

Voters are understandably wary of politicians who describe an election as a "once-in-a-lifetime" choice. That's invariably rank hyperbole, but it's fair to say that the UK does find itself at something of a crossroads on the 7th of May.

For the first time in many years there is genuine divergence between the parties. Voters have a clear choice: a steady hand, guiding us back to calmer waters – or the party who led us into the storm in the first place, and who freely admit their only plan is to borrow and borrow again.

The manifestos for 2015 haven't even been published, and yet Labour's shambolic 'Mansion Tax' pledge has already been spent eleven times over.

They preach evangelically about fairness and 'progressive politics', but the reality is that every time a Labour

**Voters are understandably wary of politicians who describe an election as a "once-in-a-lifetime" choice.**

government leaves office it does so with progressively higher unemployment than when it arrived.

They talk about 'government spending' as though there is such a thing as government money, but there isn't. It's your money and you have a right to expect responsible governance, not a Prime Minister – in Ed Miliband - who would be willing to ramp up the borrowing and stake the future of our country on a reckless financial gamble.

Ed Balls' economic thinking may still hold sway in Transport House, but outside of Labour circles even he can't name a single business who backs his plans. Bill Something? Or someone. It's all proof that a Labour government would hit you in the pocket. And that's the fundamental difference between Labour and the Conservatives.



**Andrew RT Davies** is the Leader of the Welsh Conservatives.

# A shambles or a new beginning?

**Peter Stead** says an indecisive General Election could be an opportunity to break out of conventional party politics.

If truth be known, there are many of us for whom politics is something more than a matter of moral and practical solutions. Politics provides a dominant narrative to our lives and more often than not jolly good entertainment. Unfailingly one's pulse quickens at the thought of a General Election approaching and all the excitement of candidates performing for us before that final evening, with the drinks and crisps at hand, when we settle down for an all-night show of punditry interrupted by declarations from school halls and gyms in towns we had never heard of.

The most memorable nights were those which ended stagnation and seemed to promise a new dawn. In 1964 I had travelled to Manchester for a student conference and from various public screens we gathered that Khrushchev had fallen in Russia and the Tories in the UK. On the following day our deliberations were interrupted by the news that Labour's majority was shrinking by the hour. But Labour were in and were safe. There had been long periods in the 1950s when we had thought that such a day would never come.

Wilson's victory remains my most vivid memory but there was initial excitement too in 1997 as Tony Blair ended 18 years of Tory rule. That night several bottles of champagne had been put on ice and after a joyous night of television I travelled to Stourbridge to address a Sixth Form Conference. I had

agreed to talk on 'Labour's Victory in 1945'. From what I remember, in my hung-over joy, I gave them more on Blair and Brown than Bevan and Bevin. History was being made even as I spoke.

Of course one would be delighted if the champagne would be needed as the results of this year's Election come in, but all the polls and pundits seem to be predicting confusion and even a shambles as third parties capture target seats and neither the Tories or Labour get anywhere near a clear majority. It was bad enough last time. Certainly there was a degree of confusion in the BBC studios and one will never forget the belated passion of a number of Labour leaders who wanted to defy the maths as they argued that Labour had not really lost. But at least in 2010 there was one clear winner. Nick Clegg had effectively won the TV debates and his party had won 62 seats. A new era of Coalition government had arrived.

All the evidence suggests that the British hate Coalitions, but a coalition has always seemed a sensible option that the Liberals have prepared us for ever since 1922. The Liberal rump has always been there to help out in any temporary moment of confusion: they were the inside third party as it were. Now however we are faced with a real joker's scenario in which the Tories could be dependent on UKIP support or Labour dependent on the SNP

whose aim is the break-up of the United Kingdom. In either case the morning after the Election is going to bring considerable constitutional confusion and city editors will be anxiously reporting on the state of the pound and the market.

A reading of the small print and political gossip columns assures me that parliamentary officials and party whips are well aware that the 8th of May could well represent the beginning of a new age in British party politics. Doubtless prayers are being said to ensure that there will be still sufficient Liberal representation to head off other parties. Meanwhile lots of thought is going into how a minority government of any hue could at the very least negotiate voting agreements with assorted third parties. There is however one other option that I hope receives serious consideration.

It is not difficult to explain the political fragmentation that has occurred in British politics. De-industrialisation has created a new geography of wealth creation at a time when many regions became overdependent on public expenditure. Meanwhile an ageing population was imposing enormous pressure on the NHS even as immigrants were posing new problems for the social services. These local and domestic issues were real enough but over and above that there were serious financial issues relating to banking and pensions as well as European issues which gave day-to-day



## The fact is that the chaos that the next Election threatens to create reflects the degree of alienation that now exists between the main parties and the electors.

politics a feverish atmosphere.

Above all it was a time when some reassurance was needed from the nation's political leaders. The fact is that the chaos that the next Election threatens to create reflects the degree of alienation that now exists between the main parties and the electors. In essence the parties have resorted to familiar stereotypes that reflect an inability to discuss or explain complex issues. The Tories stress financial stability and wealth creation without ever presenting those policies within a national framework. Labour still wants to wrap itself in the clothes of 1945 without really facing up to the problem of wealth creation.

The whole standing of politicians has diminished since the expenses scandal and the sound and images of

PMQs and the TV documentaries depicting life at Westminster have further given parliamentary politics a degree of unreality. All of this has been exacerbated in the months since the Scottish referendum by the way in which the major parties have become caught up in a daily routine of announcing policies on the hoof with a view to achieving one-day TV and press headlines. The object always is to get out of today's crisis. The utter seriousness of major issues is drowned in a routine of soundbite opportunism.

The urgent need of the hour is for a major consideration and subsequent decisions relating to the Deficit, our place in Europe, the constitution of the United Kingdom and the administration of the NHS and education. Will any of these

issues be solved in an era of minority governments and improvised coalitions? Will any of them be tackled if there is to be a new chapter of Cameron/Miliband Punch and Judy politics? How much better if on May 8th we see the three major traditional parties come together to form a National Government with the three aims of stability, wealth creation and social justice. Major commissions would be set up to resolve European, constitutional and NHS matters in a manner that would allow an escape from the historic social caricatures which now dominate our politics. Above all else the next Election must allow the United Kingdom to embark on a political era characterised by dignity and gravity and which allows a discourse reflecting the energies and hopes of the nation at large.



Peter Stead is a Welsh writer, broadcaster and historian.



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# UKIP: Laying the foundations for 2016

**Roger Scully** says that UKIP will have a big impact on Wales at the General Election despite being unlikely to win any seats.

If 2014 was anything in Welsh Politics, it was the year of UKIP. Prior to last year, UKIP had a very modest electoral record in Wales. Although they had just scraped the final European seat in 2009, in all other recent elections the party had performed dismally. UKIP won just 2.4% of the Welsh vote in the 2010 general election. They have never yet won a seat in the National Assembly, despite having talked up their own chances of winning at least one regional list member in both 2007 and 2011. And in the 2012 local elections in Wales, UKIP were an utterly insignificant force.

Thus, even though UKIP's poll rating in Wales began to edge upwards in 2013, I had no great expectations of the party for 2014. I thought that they would probably hang onto their one MEP in Wales, given that European elections are where they have long performed best. But I didn't expect that they would do much more than this.

Boy was I wrong! UKIP saw a huge rise in their 2014 European election vote share: their increase of 14.8% on their performance in 2009 was their third largest advance

anywhere in Britain. UKIP came within 0.6% of actually topping the poll in Wales. And they actually did top the poll in six of Wales' 22 local authority areas. Moreover, the opinion polls throughout 2014 showed that UKIP's advance was not confined to the European electoral arena. The party made substantial gains in voting intentions for both the general election and the National Assembly; the first poll conducted in 2015 projected UKIP to win eight seats in the devolved chamber in May 2016.

UKIP support base across Britain to be disproportionately older, white and male; it also tends to be less well-educated and socially conservative. Contrary to the media cliché of them as 'Golf-Club Bores', much of UKIP's support comes from elements of the working-class that have likely never seen the inside of a golf club: either the aspirational self-employed or, even more commonly, the disappointed 'left behinds'. There are many such people in Wales.

Yet we also know that, within England,

## ...within England, UKIP's support base lean heavily towards an English, rather than British, national identity.

Who have UKIP been attracting? We know where UKIP's support was located geographically in the 2014 European election, but what about the social basis for its support? Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin's deservedly-lauded study of the party, *Revolt on the Right*, show the

UKIP's support base lean heavily towards an English, rather than British, national identity. (This is rather ironic given the party's Union Jack-laden imagery and rhetoric, but it is true nonetheless). UKIP have never done very well in Scotland. Even in 2014 the party just scraped the final European Parliament seat

there, but the gap between its vote share in Scotland and that in England actually increased substantially in 2014 from that in the 2009 European election. Opinion polls in Scotland continue to show UKIP failing to make any substantial ground there. And up until 2014, much of Wales seemed to regard UKIP as similarly alien. Scotland has always been UKIP's worst-performing 'region' in Britain in European elections, but until 2014 Wales had always been either the second or third worst. Suddenly that changed. Moreover, UKIP won particularly strong levels of support not only in some of the most heavily anglicised areas of Wales, but also in some strongly Welsh-identifying valleys areas, such as Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr.

So, will UKIP be a significant force in the 2015 general election in Wales? At present it still appears unlikely that UKIP will actually win a seat in Wales. The party's poor performance at the last general election left them a long way behind in all forty Welsh seats: nowhere do they have a strong

second, or even third, place finish last time on which to build. None of their candidates in Wales in 2010 even managed the 5% vote share needed to save their deposit. Moreover, the recent Lord Ashcroft poll in the Vale of Glamorgan must have come as a disappointment to UKIP. In the 2014 European election UKIP narrowly won in the Vale local authority area (which does, we should note, cover a wider area than does the parliamentary constituency of the same name). Yet Ashcroft placed UKIP in fourth - not only behind well behind the Conservatives and Labour, who are fiercely contesting the seat, but also behind Plaid Cymru.

But if UKIP is not favourite to win in any particular seat in 2015, it may nonetheless do two things. First, the party may be able to lay some more solid foundations for the 2016 Assembly election, the prospects for which many senior figures in the party are, apparently, very excited. And second, UKIP may well have a big influence on which party does win in certain places.

For example, in Ynys Môn UKIP ran a very strong second place to Plaid Cymru in the European election. Much of UKIP's vote reportedly came from the more anglicised, working-class areas of the seat, where Labour have traditionally done well. If UKIP win a decent share of the vote in 2015 in Ynys Môn, this may significantly complicate Albert Owen's re-election campaign.

The idea that one could 'vote UKIP, get Welsh nationalist' may seem bizarre. But in the UK's increasingly complex multi-party politics, the local consequences of a First Past the Post electoral system designed for two-party politics will, almost inevitably, become ever more perverse. Even if they don't win any seats in 2015, UKIP may still have an important electoral impact.



**Professor Roger Scully is**  
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# Have we been here before?

## Parallels with 1974

Martin Johns sees similarities between 2015 and 1974.

General elections inevitably turn eyes to the past in search of clues for what might happen this time round or, sometimes, just a few nostalgic stories of when things were 'better'. Historians tend to be suspicious of both nostalgia and the idea that the past offers much indication of the future but for those seeking such inspiration 1974 is the most obvious recent parallel to 2015. That year there were two closely-fought general elections, and they took place against a backdrop of constitutional questions, economic turmoil and threats to the two-party hegemony.

The February 1974 election left Labour the biggest party but 17 seats short of an overall majority, the first time no party had won a majority at a general election since 1929. Popular disillusionment with Labour and the Conservatives contributed to the Liberals' share of the vote rising from 7.5% in 1970 to 19%, while Plaid Cymru and the SNP won 2.6% of the UK vote, double their 1970 share. The geographical concentrations in the nationalist vote saw them win 9 seats (up from 1 in 1970), whereas as the Liberals'



widespread but dispersed support meant they secured just 14 seats, an echo of the situation that will probably undermine UKIP in 2015. Having claimed the biggest share of the vote, the Conservatives tried to hold on to power but failed to reach a coalition agreement with another party. Labour refused to consider a coalition and instead formed a minority government.

In 1974, as now, there was a huge balance of payments deficit but the economic parallels are misleading. In 1974 the annual budget deficit stood roughly at

£4,000m. At today's prices that would be around £36.4billion. Today's annual deficit is significantly higher at around £105billion. Yet this blackhole in the nation's finances is better managed than in 1974, with both low interest rates and inflation ensuring relative economic stability. In 1974, in contrast, interest rates stood at 9.5% and inflation was 19% by the end of the year, both of which created unease and pessimism. Average earnings were rising faster than prices but that was partly down to industrial disputes that in themselves furthered a sense of economic crisis. In the early 1970s, the primary victim of the economic problems was thus the ordinary

taxpayer. Today, it is public spending. This probably concentrates the consequent pain amongst the weakest in society, with the result that economic issues are not to the fore in 2015 electoral concerns in the way they were in 1974.

In both 1974 and 2015, the London parties showed little enthusiasm over demands for devolution. A commission on the constitution had recommended devolution to Wales and Scotland in October 1973 but neither Labour nor the Tories had paid much attention to the issue

at the February election. The resulting nationalists' success forced a change at the October election but the commitments made by both parties had little impact in Scotland where the SNP saw its share of the vote rise from 22% to 30%, which gave it 11 seats. Plaid Cymru were far less successful, winning in October 10.8% of the Welsh vote and just three seats, all in its Welsh-speaking heartland. As in 2015, it might be suspected that such votes were often rooted in statements of identity and objection to the status quo that would be difficult to fight off whatever constitutional settlements London offered.

The size of the Liberal vote was evidence of how the disillusionment with mainstream politics extended to England and it is important not to think that the current apathy and anger is anything new. There was at least a rise in turnout at the February election to 79% from 72% in 1970. This was probably thanks not so much to the uncertainty of the final result but rather the question of whether the government or Nation Union of Mineworkers ran the country. This was how prime minister Edward Heath had framed the election after a miners' strike brought about a state of emergency and national electricity shortages.

By the October election turnout had fallen to 73% again and in Cardiff West it even dipped below 70%. During that campaign The Sun published a cartoon that depicted spectators asleep as Labour and Tories plodded slowly to the finishing line. Thus, unless one party can make the 2015 campaign an issue of principle, the parallels of 1974 suggest that the uncertainties over the final result will not lead to a significant upturn in voting numbers given the context where so many have lost faith in all the main competitors.

A final parallel is the European question. In 1974 Labour was split on whether remaining in Europe was a good idea but after February the issue faded somewhat within the party's ranks, as the costs and economic implications of withdrawal became more apparent. There was also little to suggest that it was an issue that deeply concerned the electorate. As in 2015, the question of Europe was

actually a mask for deeper tensions over sovereignty, bureaucracy and the decline of what people perceived as traditional British culture.

As Europe subsided as an internal rift within Labour, and despite having no majority and the scale of the economic problems it faced, the government elected in February 1974 was actually relatively successful. It ended the miners' strike, state of emergency and three-day week. It raised taxes and pensions, reduced the deficit a little, helped limit inflation, continued the shift to comprehensive education and encouraged the building of council houses, whilst discouraging their

*The size of the Liberal vote was evidence of how the disillusionment with mainstream politics extended to England and it is important not to think that the current apathy and anger is anything new.*

sale. It did put off action on some issues, while the opposition was able to enact changes to a few of the 38 bills that were passed, but 1974 showed that minority government can work.

Another election was called in October because no one in Parliament was enamoured with the unfamiliar position. They and commentators worried that the situation threatened instability and constant changes in policy direction. Yet the fear of a reprisal from the electorate meant none of the opposition parties were keen to bring down the government over any trivial issue or simply because they could. Thus the October election was brought about by the choices of the governing party and not the destabilising attempts of its opposition.

The success of both the minority government of 1974 and the insecure Labour administration that followed it was helped by the fact that the gap between Labour and Conservatives was not as wide

as might be imagined. Indeed, Labour was actually beginning a process of controlling public expenditure and the trade unions that is more commonly credited to or blamed on Margaret Thatcher.

Nonetheless, whatever present-day party hacks might think, the actual ideological distance between Labour and Conservatives then was surely wider and deeper than it is today. This means that, assuming the other behaves responsibly, either party could form a minority government without falling at the first hurdle. If the lack of profound ideological differences between Labour and Conservatives reflects popular opinion then nor should the public worry too much about a period of minority governments that fail to see out their full terms. In economic policy at least, this is unlikely to bring about any destabilising swings and reverses. If the 1970s offers any lesson, then it is the fact that economic instability is good for no one beyond a few speculators.

As in February 1974, the unfamiliarity of minority government means it would probably be amongst politicians that the idea is most unpopular. But they exist across Europe and such situations force co-operation. Far more unites than divides all the major UK parties and their supporters. A situation that forced co-operation for the greater good, and which encouraged people to think about issues and outcomes, is surely a good thing.

The three biggest challenges the UK faced in the twentieth century – the two world wars and the interwar depression – all produced coalition governments. None were unqualified successes but they all showed that partnerships do not have to be with 'minor' parties. The results of the 2015 general election are unlikely to put any party in a position to govern with a majority but they could encourage the informal co-operation and arrangements that put the national interests above party games. If that happens then politicians might just start to win back some respect.



Martin Johnes is the author of *Wales since 1939*.



# Is 40 years a short time in politics?

Image: Dafydd Wigley, Gwynfor Evans and Dafydd Elis Thomas as newly elected MPs under Big Ben in the 1970s.

**Dafydd Elis-Thomas** compares the beginning of his time as a Member of Parliament in 1974 with the forthcoming general election.

On being invited to reflect on parallels between 1974 and 2015 as we gear up towards a general election to the House of Commons at Westminster, it was the saying attributed to Harold Wilson 'a week is a long time in politics' which came to mind. Whether he actually said it or not, it resonates with the speed of democratic weekly activity in the short-lived first parliament of '74, and the subsequent deals and arrangements which kept the Wilson and Callaghan governments 'in power' up until 1978-9.

Majoritarian governments with an overall majority of supporting members in a parliament are considered to be political normality. This is why the media generates a chorus of manufactured concern about 'unstable government' over any other possible result. All other democratic legislatures, including the devolved ones in the UK, have a more proportionate system of election where the resulting party representation is intended to relate to voters' preferences.

To return to first 1974 parliament, its tone was set by Mr Speaker Selwyn Lloyd

when he pronounced at its very start that 'we are all minorities now'. My recollection is that the Government Whips really took that most seriously. A detailed tally was prepared in advance of the voting intentions of members intending to turn up, and compared with the published outcome in the division lists. No-one was taken for granted, and in my experience no coercion was attempted! But it did require responding to a weekly phone call from the Deputy Government Chief Whip usually

**That first parliament of 1974, since I had no previous experience to compare with, spoiled me for the rest of my legislative life.**

on a Sunday morning checking 'how many of your boys are turning up?' and staying till the final permission to leave after the last division, barring the occasional attempt at an 'ambush'.

That first parliament of 1974, since I had no previous experience to compare with, spoiled me for the rest of my legislative life. Contrary to the idea that a government can govern only by dictat, here was a system in which all members had to be consulted, and where because all parties were minorities, all views had to be taken into account.

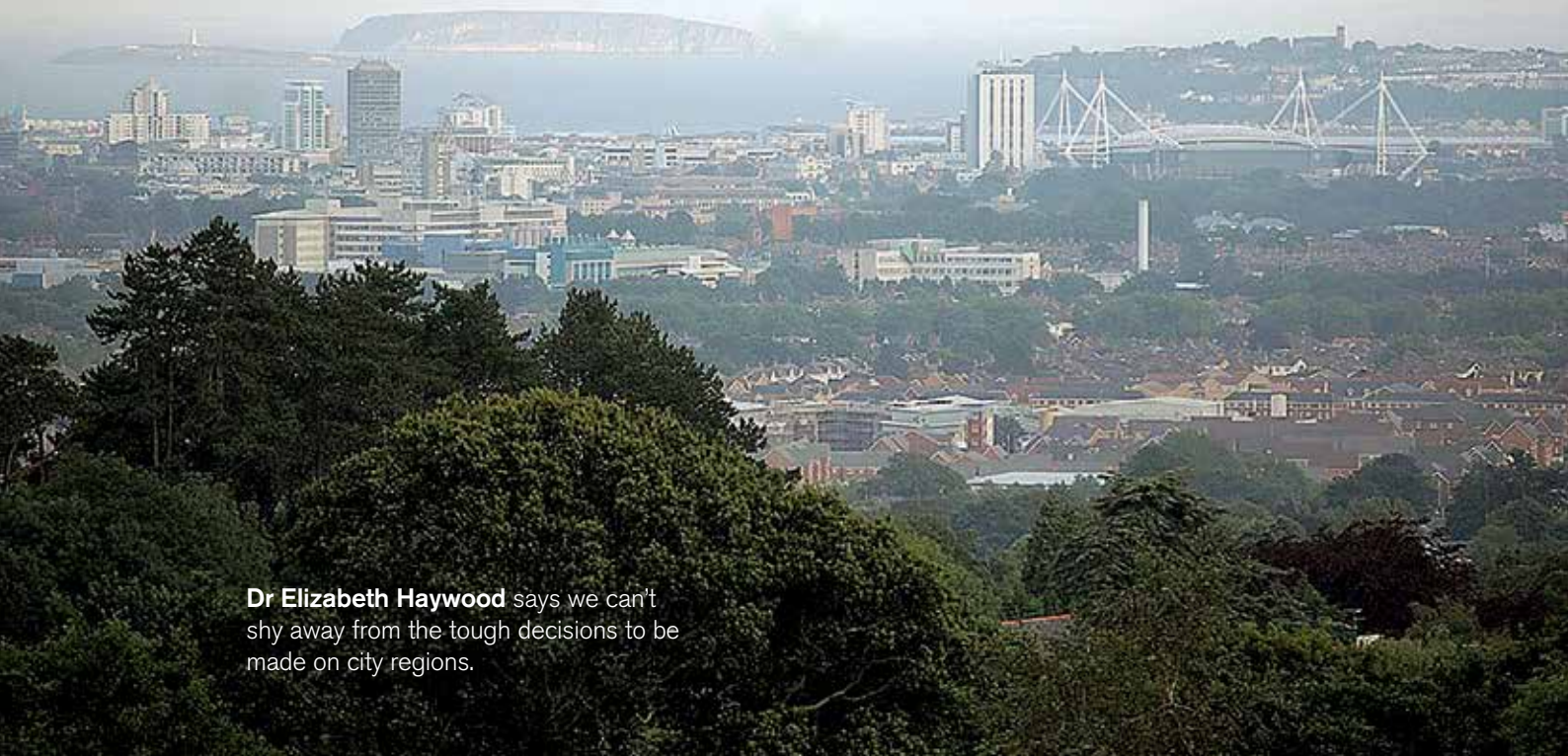
It came to its high point at what is known as 'confidence and supply'

motions, on the government's legislative programme in the 'Queen's Speech' or Budget Resolutions, or the very rare motion of no confidence in a Minister of Her Majesty's Government itself. Although this system of democratic participation unravelled on the famous night in 1978 when two of my independent northern Irish colleagues 'came over to abstain in person', and the Callaghan government finally lost a vote of confidence. It had lasted well over 4 years.

As we look to the very real possibility that this General Election will not give us a majority government at Westminster, we can see real similarities between 1974 and 2015. Perhaps 40 years is not a long time in politics after all?

**Dafydd Elis-Thomas** is the Assembly Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd, and former Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales. He is a Member of the House of Lords, and was a Member of Parliament from 1974 to 1992.

# City Regions in Wales: *progress, or not?*



**Dr Elizabeth Haywood** says we can't shy away from the tough decisions to be made on city regions.

“We believe [the Cardiff Capital] city region journey should begin with transport. This is because good connectivity provides the foundation and catalyst for the positive economic, social, and environmental changes that we want to see.”

*Powering the Welsh Economy Report, February 2015.*

“Our vision for the [Swansea Bay City] region is that by 2030 South West Wales will be a confident, ambitious and connected European City Region, recognised internationally for its emerging Knowledge and Innovation economy.”

*Economic Regeneration Strategy, 2013.*

I'm certainly not going to disagree with either of these two statements – I don't think anyone could who wants to see economic improvement – but I have to admit to real frustration that we're still **talking** rather than **doing**. My report identifying two city regions in Wales (around Cardiff and Swansea) was published almost three years ago. Its recommendations are echoed in both city regions' strategies (connectivity including the Metro, skills and planning happening at a regional rather than local authority level), and Cardiff University has picked up the recommendation on provision of regional economic data so that we can all keep tabs on what is happening.

But despite the First Minister's public support in 2012 for the city region approach, and the Economy and Transport Minister's continued desire for progress, traditional cracks remain in the policy framework and the difficult decisions don't seem to have been attempted. The one concrete result so far – and it was no small feat – was agreement by all the south east Wales players that the city region name must include the word 'Cardiff' – something so obvious to the business community, whose enthusiasm and support is a vital precondition for success, that it provoked a wry smile.

If the city region boards are to harness business commitment and enthusiasm, they will need to commit to specific objectives which appeal to business (together with timetables). More businesspeople will then be prepared to take a lead, which in turn will help Welsh Government keep the city region agenda on track.

However, I said in 2012 that 'for the City Region approach to be successful in Wales, everyone involved, from opinion formers at all levels of Government through to the business community, the education sector and the general public, will need to be prepared to 'have some skin in the game' and to take decisions based on the wider good of the region'. Have we seen that yet? The Williams Commission (on local government) failed to take any account of the likely impact of city regions, though whether this was down to a silo mentality or a turf war within Welsh Government I don't know. The Williams report even recommended Bridgend look

Putting the Metro at the heart of the Cardiff Capital Region's strategy was a pretty safe bet, given clear support from Welsh Government for the concept, but where is the delivery body, where is the timetable?

westwards for collaboration, when the city regions consultation had clearly shown Bridgend preferred to look eastwards (and had more economic links there). It is to be hoped that planning at a city region (rather than local authority) level *will* be a key part of the new Welsh Planning Bill.

Where are the proposals to pool funding for the good of a whole city region rather than continue with a parochial approach to divvying up finance according to individual local authority boundaries? Putting the Metro at the heart of the Cardiff Capital Region's strategy was a pretty safe bet, given clear support from Welsh Government for the concept, but where is the delivery body, where is the timetable? And shouldn't the City Region take responsibility for ensuring economic development (housing, business parks, college expansion – even medical services) is focused around nodes on the Metro network, as Stuttgart does?

'Powering the Welsh Economy' contains a series of 'what it could look like' columns for each of its four themes (connectivity, skills, innovation and identity) but they are disappointing. Why 'could' and not 'will'? Why are there no quantifiable objectives, other than those previously announced by others? That doesn't make me, as a Welsh citizen, feel as though I (or my children/

grandchildren) am going to get something out of this approach. I know the city region boards are advisory, but I would have liked to see a few specific recommendations (demands?) challenging the status quo and setting out how they would deliver more jobs and greater prosperity, rather than stating only that the Report 'is a start of a wider conversation with partners and communities across the Region'.

So, for example, under 'Skills', *Powering the Welsh Economy* thinks Cardiff Capital Region could be the region of choice for students, and see better alignment between its educational outputs and business needs. What about committing the Region to offer **all** its undergraduates a work placement opportunity, a suggestion made by the previous Vice Chancellor of Cardiff University? This would send a message to potential investors that we are serious about skills, give graduates an advantage when seeking employment, and introduce a wider range of existing businesses to the benefits of employing graduates.

If the city region boards are to harness business commitment and enthusiasm, they will need to commit to specific objectives which appeal to business (together with timetables). More businesspeople will then be prepared to take a lead, which in turn will help Welsh Government keep the city region agenda on track. And there is no doubt business generally thinks in terms of city regions, not administrative boundaries; this and their willingness to play their part was made clear in the last piece of research the South East Wales Economic Forum (SEWEF) carried out.

We can't wait forever to take some of the difficult decisions. That means Welsh Government delegating powers and responsibility to the city regions (perhaps a City Deal for Wales as a quid pro quo for local authorities accepting Williams-style mergers). And if city regions are the engines of growth, they must have priority in economic policy and funding decisions.

Dr Elizabeth Haywood is Former Chair of the City Regions Task Force.



# The trouble with bilingual education

**Mirain Rhys** looks at the issues around Welsh medium education for children where Welsh isn't spoken at home.

The ever-present argument that children from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds can't reach their full potential in Welsh medium education has yet again come to the fore. Recent statistics obtained by the BBC under a Freedom of Information Act indicate that children who are taught through the medium of Welsh but don't speak Welsh at home are less likely to overachieve by the time they reach the end of their primary schooling (i.e. obtaining a 'Level 5' or higher at key stage 2 (KS2) in the core subjects of English, Welsh First Language, Mathematics and Science).

Despite this, the statistics also indicate that the majority of children from non-Welsh speaking homes (over 90%) reach the expected 'Level 4' outcome in all core subjects by the end of KS2, and these results are very similar for children who are from Welsh speaking homes, as well as children in English medium schools.

In recent years, the Welsh Government has been keen to project their continued support for the future of the Welsh language, illustrated in the current Welsh language

policy document 'A Living Language, a Language for Living'. Welsh medium education plays a vital part in Welsh language development and maintenance, where the goal is to develop children into bilingual individuals, whatever their home language – but is this happening?

The benefits of bilingualism have been investigated worldwide and recent research from Wales has indicated that children who don't speak Welsh at home performed within the expected norms when assessed in Welsh for vocabulary and reading. They also performed on a par with children from English medium schools when assessed in English for vocabulary and reading (Rhys & Thomas, 2013). Despite this, the research also indicated how their home language was the language in which children were strongest, be that Welsh or English, indicating that although they might become proficient in both languages through school, the use of their stronger language was, however, preferred outside the classroom.

Although the current governmental

statistics are not surprising, they fail to highlight this evident gap between the increasing number of children receiving their education through Welsh, and the levels at which the language is used outside the classroom – arguably the real issue facing the future of the Welsh language. Of course, there will always be a small percentage of individuals who live their lives through the medium of Welsh, and who are lucky enough to be able to use it daily. But for the majority of children learning through Welsh, this is not a reality.

We already know that there are more children from homes where Welsh isn't spoken than there are from homes where it is spoken who attend Welsh medium education. Research also suggests that Welsh language transmission within the home is at a critical point, with the likelihood of a child using Welsh diminishing if one adult does not speak the language.

Despite an overwhelming level of support from non-Welsh speaking parents/carers for the continuation of Welsh

medium education, many often have valid reservations and concerns about their child(ren) being educated in a language they don't speak. These include concerns regarding their capacity to support their child with their homework, the level of immersion in the Welsh language and the extent to which learning through the medium of Welsh might stunt their overall academic development and well as their English language proficiency and development, to name just a few.

The store of research supporting bilingual education is broad, and this may go far in dispelling many worries parents/carers may have. In addition, the Welsh Government has put in place policies to encourage the use of Welsh language services and there is, in addition, a small, but existing number of organizations tasked with increasing awareness of the Welsh language as a tool (e.g. RhAG, Mentrau Iaith, Twf). Despite this, the reality is that many still feel like they have nowhere to turn for support relating to their child's minority language education.

Professor Colin Baker has often argued

**The Welsh language is a part of every Welsh citizen's life in one way or another, and its survival depends on each individual's attitude towards it.**

that a minority language cannot survive without efforts made to maintain the language within the three realms of society; education, the community and the home. Despite the current statistics indicating that by the end of Key Stage 2, the vast majority of children attending Welsh medium education are fully bilingual individuals, it seems that the development of informative, attractive initiatives for using the language outside the classroom need further development and promotion.

Funding for the Welsh language is always under threat, and re-visiting this long and trodden road cannot be the only solution. The Welsh language is a part of every Welsh citizen's life in one way or another, and its survival depends on each individual's attitude towards it. Everyone can be responsible for its future, from the odd 'Bore Da' on the bus or wearing the orange 'I can speak Welsh' badge to indeed making that decision to send your child(ren) to a Welsh medium school. As with most things in life, it is in our hands – and with better links between research, policy and practice the future for the Welsh language could be a bright one for all.

**Dr Mirain Rhys** is a Research Associate at WISERD, Cardiff University.

*This piece originally ran on [www.clickonwales.org](http://www.clickonwales.org).*

*To see what some of the readers said, have a look opposite.*



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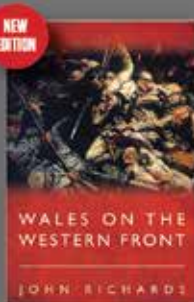


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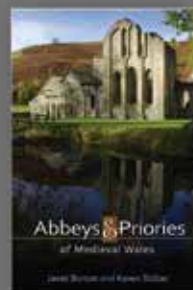


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### J. John Jones

Dr Rhys has stressed a comparison between ability in English amongst pupils in Welsh Medium schools and English Medium schools. The key subject to look at is Welsh in WM primary schools. Welsh is not just another core subject, it is the means of accessing the other core subjects, including English. ... For this reason we see significant differences in levels of attainment between English First Language pupils in WM schools and corresponding pupils in EM schools in maths and science. Put simply: do English L1 pupils have the necessary Welsh language ability at every stage of primary education to readily comprehend new concepts in Maths, Science and Literacy? Do ALL English L1 pupils in WM schools have the necessary self-confidence and Welsh language fluency to question teachers on areas where they have not fully understood instruction?

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### Ifor

Ysgol Glan Clwyd was established in 1956, Rhydfelen in 1962, and for much of the period since they were very much beacons in the darkness. It is only very recently that Welsh medium education has become widely available and demanded outside the so called 'heartlands'. ... Welsh-medium education is a long-term investment that will take generations to fully 'mature'.

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### SeaMor Bytts

'Natural bilingualism'... also referred to as 'simultaneous bilingualism' is what occurs when you have a Welsh speaking home in an overwhelmingly English environment (which is what Wales and 99% of its media really is). This is completely different to 'sequential bilingualism' which occurs when a speaker of one language learns another as a subject/hobby at a later date. The concepts of 'simultaneous' and 'sequential' bilingualism are absolute key terms in global research on bilingualism... with cognitive benefits being demonstrated to be significantly reduced for the latter. ... To discuss the benefits of bilingualism without using these terms would be like discussing the area of a circle without referring to pi.

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### Terry Mackie

Welsh as a living language as opposed to Welsh as a Government sponsored medium of statutory school instruction is a nexus of issues well beyond the scope of governmental influence or academic rationalisation. That's why the spread of more Welsh is now hitting the wall; 15 years of state-sponsored impact has come to its natural end. Money and law can only do so much. ... There are natural limits to public policy reach - and family, community and trade vernacular is way, way out of statist sight or grip. That's called plurality and democracy by most people. It's clearly upsetting and unacceptable for some other citizens and politicians who give variant meanings to these values. People exercise freedoms vigorously nowadays - and we tend towards ease and comfort. They speak and message how they prefer to speak and message and care greatly about how their children are to communicate and how they are to be taught.

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### W. Thomas

Parents choose Welsh medium education for a variety of reasons: "I wasn't taught it in school" was a comment I often heard when I taught in a WM school in the Rhondda. It would be unwise of those who criticize WM education to belittle these sentiments. People feel an attachment to their language and culture. "It's a good school" was another comment I heard quite often. Of course, there are good EM schools. What parents were often referring to were the extracurricular activities associated with the Urdd, Eisteddfodau and associated activities, rarely available in EM schools. The critics of WM education are in danger of creating serious divisions and unfortunate consequences in our society: - they are negative and advocating a can't do/ won't do attitude rather than respecting those who feel they can and at least try; - not respecting our unique culture (not created by us but by centuries of people before us) whilst advocating respect for other cultures is both hypocritical and demeaning to those of us who can appreciate both our cultures; They have options. At 11, pupils in Gwynedd can attend EM schools or schools with an English stream. In other parts of Wales the choice is there from the beginning. By all means analyse the progress of English language pupils in WM schools. By all means assess the language balance of subjects taught in Welsh or English in the secondary school, but don't denigrate the wishes of parents and pupils who in this corner of the globe wish to keep their culture whilst embracing English culture and hopefully reach out to others.

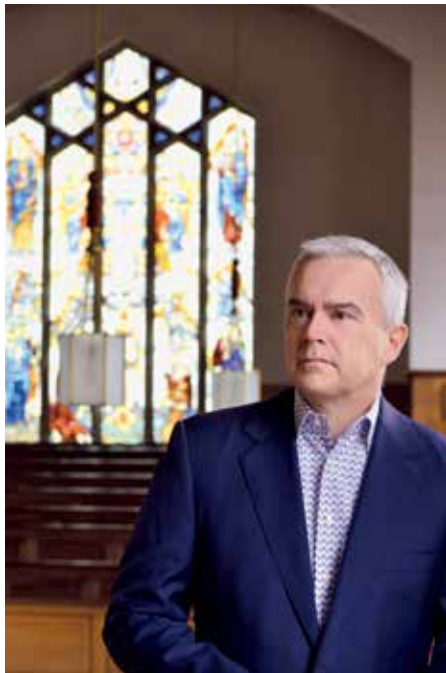
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### R. Tredywn

The dualistic system in places like Cardiff reinforces socio-economic filtering since the appeal of WM to parents may be as much the more middle-class nature of the school as the language of instruction. I would favour a unified system in such areas. If the Swiss can get their primary school kids trilingual why do we have to segregate ours to get them bilingual? However, the corollary is that elsewhere in Wales where Welsh is the community language with no particular social cachet it is perfectly reasonable that the primary language of instruction is Welsh. English speaking kids will learn more slowly but they have the compensation of immersion in a different culture that would otherwise be closed to them. If we were talking about French or Portuguese no-one would complain, accepting the trade-off. It is only an issue because Welsh is held in such low regard by many English speakers who know nothing of its rich literature.

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## Taking Hints from the Past: In Conversation with Huw Edwards



*London's multicultural, multilingual heritage is a well-documented and well-known element of its rich history. Yet the story of the London Welsh, considered to be one of the city's first ethnic minorities, is largely untold. Journalist and broadcaster Huw Edwards, himself a prominent member of that community having lived in London for 30 years, is working to alter that. His latest book, published by Y Lolfa, traces the tale of Welsh migration spanning several centuries through an examination of the role of London's Welsh chapels and churches in creating and maintaining Welsh communities away from home. Cerith Mathias spoke to Huw Edwards about his new book City Mission: The Story of London's Welsh Chapels.*

### **Cerith Mathias:**

**—What can we learn from the Welsh chapel communities in London about the mark made by the Welsh on the city?**

**Huw Edwards:** You can't understand the shape of today's London Welsh community, which is some 60,000 strong,

Welsh-born people, unless you understand the role played by places of worship. I'd include Anglican places of worship and Non-Conformist places of worship. For the best part of a century, between 1850 and 1950 they were the prime centres of social and religious cultural life of the Welsh in London. It's true that you have a London Welsh club, but that wasn't there until the 1930s so the chapels provided a network which was of course a religious network, but was much more than that – it really was the backbone of London Welsh life. We still have the results of that today, even though the network has declined, you still see patterns of London Welsh life which are clearly ones laid down by the chapel network over the last 150 years. It's something that any historian has to get plugged into; if you ignore that element, you are missing out a big chunk of the story. So for me, somebody with a great interest in today's London Welsh, because I'm one of them, I wanted to understand more about why the London Welsh are as they are, why they are loved and hated in equal measure in Wales it seems to me, and what accounts for that.

### **— Is the history of the chapel communities of both Wales and London something you've always held an interest in?**

We're all products of our backgrounds and I come from Carmarthenshire, which obviously is one of the strongholds of Welsh Wales and that chapel tradition clearly rubbed off on me. That can have different kinds of impact, so for the first ten years after I left Wales for London, I frankly didn't want to know anything about chapels. I'd had my fill of it really because I'd had a youth which was full of it and I rather liked the freedom of having a Sunday to myself and not having to go to services, even though there was a Welsh chapel around the corner from my first flat in London but I never went there.

### **—When did that change?**

It took a long time for that to change to be honest, for me to have the curiosity and the desire to return to that area, and I think there were lots of different reasons. Partly, having children and wanting them to have that experience. I started going to the Welsh chapel in Clapham and I then realised my ignorance. I hadn't understood that there had been a very big network of Welsh chapels in London, so when I started to dig a little deeper and found that on the eve of the Second World War there were 31 Welsh chapels in London, I couldn't believe it. And five Welsh-speaking Anglican causes - that was a complete revelation to me. So as a piece of social history, I was interested and that ignited a further interest and I started to look at chapels in my home town in Llanelli, because they were shutting so quickly and I felt that if nobody wrote the story it would be lost. Then a few years later I did the same thing for London. But I did bite off probably more than I could chew – it was a much bigger project than Llanelli; it took me five years to complete but it was well worth it.

### **—I was going to come to the five years of research. How well documented is the history of the Welsh in London? Did your research take you to some unusual and unexpected places?**

It's a very good question with some rather unfortunate answers. Lots of the chapels have been shamefully negligent in the way that they've frankly not protected their own documentation and heritage. It's very difficult sometimes to find original documents, you have to look in very obscure places but one of the delights of the researcher's job is finding things in unusual places. For example finding things about a Welsh chapel being built in Smithfield and finding that information at Lambeth Palace, the last place you think you'd find it. Back in 1785 the permission of the Bishop of London had to be sought to use a building for non-conformist purposes; so the Bishop of London had to be petitioned. And by luck I found a reference to a petition which had never been published before for the first Welsh chapel in Wilderness Row, and I actually found the document signed by the six Welsh leaders of that cause, which had never been seen

before – that was a real find and in such an unlikely place. There’s lots in the British Library and lots in the London Metropolitan Archive, which is a wonderful facility. There is a lot of stuff around but it’s not easy to find. And pre 1715, which is quite an important date to us, it’s incredibly difficult. There were lots of Welsh people in London in the 17th Century but it’s very poorly documented and that’s the area I would love to fill the gaps in.

**—So with such a vast history of the Welsh in London, is there a particular era that captured your imagination?**

Yes, around the early 18th Century. The first recorded instance of a Welsh sermon being preached in London is St David’s day 1715 by George Lewis, who was a chaplain to the Bishop of Bangor. And I have a big problem with that because clearly when you think about the numbers of Welsh people in London pre-dating that, it is impossible to believe that there was no Welsh preaching in London before then. No one has found any evidence and I am absolutely busting a gut to try and find something. I came very close at the Westminster Abbey Archives – a Welsh clergyman who had published a sermon in London in around 1670, and I nearly fainted with excitement when I saw this, but then was let down rather disastrously when I realised that he had written it in London, but he delivered it in North Wales. So it was very close. That’s what I want to find.

**—How healthy is the chapel community in London now?**

In my view it’s experienced a bit of a revival in recent years. But let’s not exaggerate: this is revival from a very low point. So the 31 chapels pre-Second World War are now down to less than half a dozen. You still have Jewin which is the oldest established Welsh

chapel in London which stands alone over in the Barbican in the City of London. I share my time between there and Clapham. Jewin needed a bit of help, because it was on the verge of closure. We’re not there anymore but it’s a battle just to maintain a presence. The problem with Jewin is that it doesn’t have an immediate constituency – people don’t live in the City so therefore they depend on a much wider catchment area and it’s really suffered because of that. When Jewin was built it was surrounded by Welsh dairy workers who actually lived around the church. No one lives around the church now, but we’re in a position where we’ve added members in the last few years, we’ve had some quite big fundraisers, we had a concert at Christmas which around a thousand people came to. We’re making an effort. But I’m well aware of the challenges. To answer the question, it would be wrong of me to say people are just hanging on; in Ealing for example there’s a good Sunday school, in Clapham there’s a Sunday school – lots of chapels in Wales don’t have a Sunday school. So you do have pockets of good activity but clearly it’s an ageing congregation. So the challenge for us is to get young people in.

**—What can be done to achieve that?**

Chapels have got to regain their place as much more than centres of worship – they have to provide a service to the community. On the Jewin level for example we’ve just agreed that a Chinese nursery school is going to use Jewin every morning of the week for the next two years. That brings in income for us and it makes the church more of a living thing. That’s just one example, but I think if you get back to the position where a London Welsh family is thinking about what to do at the weekend, and there’s a concert in the chapel or there’s a party for the kids on a Friday night suddenly the building is much more the centre of activity rather

than just being open twice on a Sunday. So I’d say you take a bit of a hint from the past. I would say there’s no secret to this at all; if you’re not relevant to your local community, you’re not going to survive.

**—As you’ve touched upon - the story of the Welsh in London is vast and varied, it goes beyond the chapel communities, and you’ve been exploring that for a new series for S4C, *Cymry Estron - Foreign Welsh*.**

It’s a very provocative title *Cymry Estron*, lots of people won’t know why I’m saying ‘foreign Welsh’. But it’s meant to be provocative, it’s asking people to look again at the biggest Welsh community outside Wales, which is in London. It’s a community which has influenced Welsh life. You can’t look at the University of Wales, you can’t look at the National Library of Wales you can’t look at the National Museum in Cardiff; you can’t look at the National Assembly without realising the role of London Welsh people in that. In this series, I tell the story of the London Welsh from the 13th century. We start in the Tower London with one of the Welsh princes who sadly loses his life in the tower and we bring it right up to the present day. What I’ve tried to do is look at the way London has changed. One of the great things about London is, having lived there now for 30 years, this is a city that is endlessly changing around you. That’s what I love about it, it never stands still. And I’m trying to see the London Welsh community in the context of a city that’s always changing. The London Welsh community has had to evolve, but it’s had to hold on to a few important principles and a few important traditions. I hope people get a sense of the variety of London Welsh life and the point I make at the start of the series is the point I hope will convince people – why talk about the London Welsh?, why pay attention to the London Welsh? I’m just hoping to show that if you’re interested in Wales today and why Wales is as it is today, good and bad, you’re missing a big chunk of the story if you don’t look at the London Welsh. They may be in London, but they’re part of our national story.

***Cymry Estron* will be on S4C this Spring.**

“I would say that the chapels have got to regain their place as much more than centres of worship. So they have to provide a service to the community.”

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# A polo mint government

**Gerry Holtham** says Wales needs a plan for its economy.

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The conventional view about industrial policy is that it should aim at providing the right conditions for business and industry to flourish and should not be too interventionist or prescriptive. The right conditions include good quality infrastructure and a trained and educated labour force.

Even countries that used to follow more directive industrial strategies, like Japan, with its Economic Planning Agency, or France, with its Commissariat du Plan have tended to move in the orthodox direction.

The view has grown that as Western economies developed away from the mass-production of standardised consumer goods – the so-called Fordist era – towards more diverse customised products, centralised intervention has become less useful.

Governments seldom know enough about market developments in fast-moving new industries to intervene productively. More often they prop up declining businesses trying to defend jobs or else back the wrong horse. The UK government had a particularly mixed record with its industrial interventions and sponsorships. From Concorde to the AGR nuclear reactor it has backed high-tech commercial failures at great expense.

If the UK cannot get it right, what price the Welsh government, which has much smaller resources of industrial experience and expertise? It already has some white elephants to show such as the Technium programme.

So much for the orthodox view. There is much to recommend it but it is not a sufficient guide to policy. It seems likely that a peripheral country like Wales, which has a lower income per head and lower levels of economic activity than the rest of the UK will stay in that situation without purposeful policy action. Welsh GVA per head is at only 72 per cent of the UK average level, roughly what it

was in 1999. There is a tendency for some of the more highly educated young people to leave and seek their fortune elsewhere while older people move in. In 2012-13, for example there was net emigration of 3980 people aged 15 to 29 and net immigration of 2430 people aged over 45. There is no obvious reason why these tendencies should reverse or why the free market would start pushing up the Welsh GVA towards UK levels. So what should the government in a small country like Wales do to foster economic development?

## The need for a plan

It should certainly look to develop infrastructure and training but what infrastructure should take priority, given the scarcity of resources? Wales has an Infrastructure Investment Plan but it is not yet underpinned by an explicit industrial or economic strategy. To maximise the benefit from infrastructure investment the government has to set priorities, concentrate resources accordingly and take some political risk. That will be easier if it explains to the public what it is trying to do and takes them along. Part of that is explaining that business and enterprise are good things that we should encourage with appropriate infrastructure investment.

Currently the Welsh government, via Business Wales, provides support services for smaller businesses and has in-house units attempting to encourage trade and inward investment. The government has also earmarked nine sectors where it claims to support investment and has created nine sector panels mainly of business people who are supposed to help the government identify opportunities for growth. The government has also designated seven enterprise zones and created seven Boards to administer them.

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**You won't get joined up government if a chunk of the government's central nervous system is missing.**

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## The two dangers of industrial policy

Industrial policy in a small country like Wales has to thread between opposing dangers. The first problem is attempting to do too much. Political pressures often push governments into this trap. Any attempt at concentrating effort, know-how and resources meets cries from those left out, with complaints of unfairness or post-code lotteries. Clearly Wales has not avoided this danger. Nine sectors span almost the entire economy; there is more in than out. That hardly counts as concentration. Diffusion is a more appropriate word. Similarly we have seven enterprise zones. They appear designed more to meet political objectives than out of any industrial or commercial logic; a contributory factor was that such zones were created across the English border and it was felt necessary to counter any pull in that direction.

Perhaps we should not worry too much about it, however, because a great weight of academic research shows that enterprise zones almost never succeed. They sometimes pull businesses from other less-favoured areas but seldom if ever generate an increase in new business. There does not appear to be a lot happening in a number of the Welsh enterprise

zones and perhaps it would be just as well not to try to invest in all of them.

If doing too much is one danger in a small country, another is crony capitalism. That does not necessarily imply anything corrupt or illegal. Yet big businesses and the prestige of their managers or proprietors can often have a disproportionate influence in a small country on politicians with no business experience. The risk is increased if the government civil service equally lacks such experience and Ministers come to doubt the acumen of their advisers. Wales has not escaped that fate either. It has been known for ministers to prefer the advice of business acquaintances to that of colleagues in government. Often, no doubt, the advice is sound and unbiased. Can we bet that it always will be so?

There is no airtight way of avoiding such difficulties but it would help if the government provided its industrial support in the form of soft loans or equity investment and phased out entirely grants to commercial companies. In many cases the grants pay for things the company would have done anyway so they just benefit shareholders. If a project is worth undertaking the company responsible will be happy to finance it with a soft loan or to accept an equity investment whereby the public sector takes a minor stake in return for cash. When that was suggested to a public official the answer was: "oh but firms would not take the money then". When public officials are so credulous public money is sure to be wasted. By investing not giving hand-outs, the government also creates a pool of capital that can be recirculated as earlier investments are paid off.

### **Consistency and public support**

Suppose the government enunciated a clear economic strategy with a limited number of objectives, set it out, invited responses and debated it in the Assembly before adoption. It would then be easier to resist pressures to divert resources to other areas or to appease particular business interests. The priorities would ideally be maintained consistently over a period of time and would help to direct spending on infrastructure. The pressure on politicians is always to announce initiatives and seize photo-opportunities but the boring fact is that the best results come from a well thrashed-out strategy implemented consistently over the long haul – building the thing your predecessor promised, not

promising something new.

Since 1999 the government has announced a number of targets that turned out to be over-ambitious – like increasing Wales' share of UK GVA up to 90 per cent, (from 72 per cent) or getting into the top 20 countries on educational standards as revealed in PISA reports. As those targets turned out to be over-ambitious, there has been a tendency to become less, not more, explicit on what we are trying to achieve. That is unfortunate. The government must

Yet economic and industrial policy in Wales is bedevilled by two misunderstandings that stem from the early days of devolution and have never been corrected. The first is a misunderstanding of the role of executive agencies that are responsible to Ministers but not part of the central civil service. There is an essential role for such agencies in a modern economy, whether it be a venture capital investment fund or a transport authority with statutory powers to deliver the Cardiff city-region metro, for example. They require

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## **The government must expose itself to some risk of embarrassment if it is to achieve anything. Real objectives should continue to be set, even if they are more modest.**

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expose itself to some risk of embarrassment if it is to achieve anything. Real objectives should continue to be set, even if they are more modest.

The sector panels have been going long enough now for the government to start pruning back its objectives but to be more explicit about them. It could take a view as to which initiatives really deserve complementary infrastructure investment or training support, and which should be merely wished well. Then it should see what the implications are for the geographical spread of investment in infrastructure and follow through decisively.

### **The opportunity and a problem**

When requirements exceed capital budgets it should raise private finance which is extraordinarily cheap at present, perhaps at hundred-year lows. Caution about PFI (private finance initiative) deals has served Wales well because the country avoided the expensive early phase of such investment when the public sector was finding its way and all too often paid through the nose for assets. That caution means Wales has debt servicing around one per cent of the public budget compared with 5 per cent in Scotland, for example. Now that the lessons of that early experience have been learned, finance is so cheap and contractors are scrambling for business, there is an opportunity to take advantage of earlier prudence and invest more heavily now.

technical and commercial expertise and enough distance from government to take risks without being overtaken by party-political sniping. Bringing the quangos under the arms-length democratic control of an elected Welsh government or Assembly was essential. Having an indiscriminate bonfire of all of them and transferring the functions into a necessarily cautious, risk-averse and politically hamstrung civil service was just a huge mistake.

The second mistake was to have "Polo-mint" government – one with a hole in the middle. There is no substantial First Minister's department, no strong Cabinet office and no real Treasury in the Welsh government. There is no body that is supposed to help frame an overall strategy or to coordinate the strategies of different ministries, which all too often operate with detached independence. If the First Minister wants to create an industrial strategy driving the infrastructure plan and to ensure that the policies of all departments are in harmony with it, he will have his work cut out. The institutions to help him are not there. You won't get joined up government if a chunk of the government's central nervous system is missing.

This essay draws on a paper by [Gerald Holtham on Industrial Policy and infrastructure in Wales for the Wales TUC essay collection: \*Debating industrial Policy in Wales\*](#).



# The Donaldson Review: A watershed or a wash-out?

**Louise Harris** looks at the changes to come for the education system as the Donaldson Review is published.

It's here! What the world had been waiting for and eagerly anticipating - the world of education, that is - the Donaldson Review. Professor Graham Donaldson has finally delivered his long-awaited labour of love, to a mass exhalation of breath from the midwives of the education sector. Or is it a case of "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose"? Just what will the Welsh education landscape look like, post-Donaldson...?

In its commitment to developing a 'coherent and integrated' curriculum for primary and secondary education in Wales, over the past two years the Welsh Government has undertaken a much-anticipated programme of review and redesign. There has been a staged approach to, what is universally agreed to be much-needed reform, with the Minister for Education and Skills, Huw Lewis, asking for patience from the teaching profession - contesting that we needed to 'take the time to get this right'. This patient approach has included a phase of consultation and review, focused on strengthening and supporting the teaching

of literacy, numeracy and wider skills that complement and consolidate the approach taken in the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework; running alongside a consultation on proposals to revise the Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase and the programmes of study in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 and initial teacher training.

It has been an extensive, exhaustive - not to say exhausting - process; but now it has delivered, what does it say? And (the big question): will it work?

Professor Graham Donaldson's independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales - "Successful Futures" - launched on the 26th February 2015 and was widely received as a well-crafted, creative vision of how to improve our education system - doing it "the Welsh way".

Described by the Education Minister who commissioned it, Huw Lewis, as "a compelling, exciting and ambitious vision", Donaldson has successfully delivered on his promise of a transformative, 'big picture' plan, set in a global context, containing what he himself describes as 'radical and wide-ranging' proposals to address the problems and challenges facing Education in Wales.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Interestingly, Donaldson describes the

bookends of the current home-grown system, the learner entry and exit points - i.e. the Foundation Phase and the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification at Key Stage 4 and beyond - as evidence of success, worthy of 'continued support'.

He also cites one of 'best things' about education in Wales as being the Welsh language and bilingualism and the focus on Welsh identity and the Curriculum Cymreig'.

So why the need for such extensive and disruptive 'transformation'?

Donaldson describes the need for change as 'fundamental'. His conclusive findings make for pretty grim reading: the curriculum has become 'overloaded' and, in parts, 'outdated', further complicated by the increasingly 'powerful accountability mechanisms', that have combined to create a culture of "anxiety and disengagement." Powerful stuff indeed. So, what is his take on how to combat this?

After reviewing school reform and best practice around the world, from OECD benchmarked PISA results, to Estyn's own evaluation of standards of achievement, alongside evidence from the rest of the UK, Donaldson suggests that we should move away from 'learning about' to 'learning to' - i.e. from "What?" to "How?" - placing greater emphasis on the 'development of higher-order skills, particularly creativity



(entrepreneurship) and digital literacy’.

He places Digital Competence as one of the new core skills – “Cross-curriculum Responsibilities” – to sit alongside Literacy and Numeracy at the heart of the Curriculum and Assessment process, stating that a digital competence framework and an accompanying ‘Routes to Learning Digital Competence’ should be developed and included as a Cross-curriculum Responsibility.

He contests that all this should be phased in, alongside a change in assessment procedures, to combat the clear and damaging imbalance that currently exists between the curriculum and assessment:

*“there is scope to revise the current arrangements to reduce the negative impact of these tests while retaining their useful functions... External, standardised testing should be used in combination with school tests and teacher assessment. Its frequency should be kept to a minimum.”*

The report shows there is a real desire among the profession for schools and teachers to have more autonomy to make their own decisions within a national curriculum framework about what that learning looks like and how assessment should be undertaken. To address the need for greater autonomy the proposed curriculum is designed as a national framework of expectations, giving schools and teachers more freedom on what and how to teach, to meet their pupils’ needs. The success of embedding the review and making change happen can only be seen in the classroom and be driven forward by the teachers and leaders in our schools. What will this change look like? How will it actually change things?

But this is more than just a mere numbers game: the risks to successful transformation of the system are many and varied.

According to the highly-influential education organization OECD, Welsh heads, teachers and stakeholders who met its review team last year described a risk of partial implementation or ‘reform fatigue’:

*‘schools are currently facing some challenges*

## Donaldson in numbers:

### 6 PRINCIPLES & VALUES

Donaldson is focused upon ‘Improving education the Welsh way’ with Six Principles and Values, intended to be the scaffolding for building on Wales’ ‘long history and tradition of valuing education’:

- Confidence and pride in Wales as a bilingual nation with the strength and assurance to nurture both languages.
- Learners are at the heart of all we do.
- Every child and young person benefits from personalised learning.
- The success of our education system depends upon the success of all children. Collective responsibility, supported by cooperative values of partnership, trust, mutual respect and support underpin how we work together.
- Developing the capacity for a self-improving system is key.
- Celebrate success, recognise excellence, and share both.

### 6 AREAS OF LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE:

- Expressive Arts;
- Health and Well-Being;
- Humanities;
- Languages, Literacy and Communication;
- Mathematics and Numeracy;
- Science and Technology.

### 4 PURPOSES OF THE CURRICULUM:

children/young people develop as:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life & work;
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world;
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

*in implementing the numerous policies and reforms’ (under the Welsh Government’s improvement agenda)*

*‘because there are so many’*

*- from the OECD, review of the Welsh Education System in April 2014, “Improving Schools in Wales”:*

So, despite the case for change, there remains the warning that none of this great stuff is going to happen quickly. Professor Donaldson says that implementing the changes he suggests for Wales would require phasing in, and perhaps take a decade to complete. This is just the beginning...

Twitter was busy the evening before the launch date, with teachers variously saying:

*“tomorrow may change everything or nothing for me”;*  
*“nothing’s really going to feel different for my school - not really”;*  
*“just like the arrival of a birthday - nothing’s changed but everything has changed and can never be the same again!”*

Plus ça change or plus c’est la même chose...?

It’s the oldest cliché in the book, but time alone will tell if Donaldson is the watershed it seems to be: open the floodgates...



**Louise Harris** is CEO of the Big Learning Company and Chair of the IWA’s Education Group.



## Getting to grips with change

Reform and reorganisation have become interchangeable terms in the debate on the future of Welsh public services. The man charged with coming up with recommendations which command cross-party support, Sir Paul Williams, set out his views on the response to his report one year on from its completion at the latest in our IWA Debates series.

### On leadership...

Whilst the debate has concentrated on local government reorganisation the report of the Commission was about public service governance and delivery. There were sixty-two recommendations in our report and I think the recommendations on improving leadership in the public sector in Wales are probably the key ones.

We need to grapple with the issue about why in Wales we have poor and patchy services. The Public Sector in Wales is the biggest employer with probably some of the most highly paid leadership jobs.

We've made an industry of producing reports and reorganisations that have not concentrated on delivery and outcomes. I think it's a travesty. We must tackle this issue, and start to change the whole cultural approach - it's just simply not good enough that we accept second best.

One of the retorts we had time and time again from public service leaders in Wales when we were taking evidence was "best practice is a poor traveller", almost as if that absolved them from delivery. At the end of the day to benchmark against Welsh peer organisations is really a recipe for mediocrity. You have to go out and look for world-class performance and benchmarks and then find out why on earth can't we do it in Wales, or more importantly, how we do it - and it's by engaging, it's by the way in which you can carry organisations with you, carry the communities with you, have those difficult conversations and step up to the plate. All very difficult, but I think unless we actually deal with this root and branch, what we'll have is more of the same again. As Jeremy Beecham said [in 2006] when he presented his report, "you've got 5 years to do this"; when we looked at it nearly ten years later we found local service boards that were no more than a bureaucratic process, no drive to deliver services that were fit for purpose.

*“I’ll give you the permission to innovate, once you’ve consistently achieved and rolled out best practice, across your organisation. Then you can go on and innovate”*

## On barriers to progress...

We have a culture which actually ducks performance and outcomes, we’ve just become experts at producing reports with little accountability for delivery and this has to change.

We have been very good at the analysis and very good at the policy but poor on the implementation. We need to make a distinction between management and leadership, not all managers are leaders and not all leaders are managers. Management is about doing it right, leadership is about doing the right thing. These are very important distinctions.

One of the problems I have, particularly with some so-called inspirational leaders or charismatic leaders, is that they love to talk about innovation. My view is: “I’ll give you the permission to innovate, once you’ve consistently achieved and rolled out best practice, across your organisation. Then you can go on and innovate”. What we’ve got is a thousand flowers blooming - too many initiatives with too few which take root. We can’t do whole system [change] and roll it out.

We need a serious conversation about the technical competence of management. And how it works hand in hand with leadership, and how some managers graduate to leaders. We need leaders throughout organisations not just at the top. There isn’t just one style of leadership, you need different sorts of leaders for different sorts of problems and people come in and come out of the situations, so it’s a dynamic.

*“Why are we surprised that the austerity period is going to be longer and deeper than people ever imagined?”*

## On austerity...

How long will it take for the penny to drop? Why are we surprised that the austerity period is going to be longer and deeper than people ever imagined? Talking to some leaders in the public sector you gain the impression that if you just hunker down and do more of the same we’ll get through this. You will not! And if you thrive as a manager or leader, you step up to that challenge, and you have to figure out ways of doing things differently otherwise you shouldn’t be there, quite frankly. So, I know that might sound rather harsh but I think that is the challenge. That was the joy for me when I was a leader and a manager, dealing with the challenges in front of you. I’m sufficiently long in the tooth, so I can remember periods of no growth.

We have a generation of leaders and managers that have only worked in a growth situation. It can be difficult out there but that’s what leaders do. And there’s the issue about ignoring the private sector... Ignore it at your peril! You have to learn from the private sector. You’ll have to sharpen your game and you’ll certainly need to be connecting with the staff and the trade unions, because you don’t have the exclusive rights to all the best ideas. So, coming back to the central point, I think that if we get into victim mode, it doesn’t help us. We have to operate with the challenges that we have, we don’t have a choice.

The Commission identified and lost count at over 900 public sector

organisations in Wales. Now, within that number there has to be a lot of wasteful bureaucracy just has to be. Before addressing structural issues we started asking constructive questions about what if organisations were working together and you developed synergy, that’s bound to free up resources? Start engaging with communities about how and where to make the tough choices. Start asking what things could be done better or differently through social enterprise, cooperatives, mutuals or whatever. There’s still a lot to go for. Unfortunately what I’m seeing is front-line services being offered up on the altar of retaining existing structures. That doesn’t seem right to me. You need to start with protecting the front-line services as much as you can and see what you can take out in terms of back office functions. In our report, we recommended immediately to get on with establishing all Wales public sector shared services, because its low-hanging fruit, where are we twelve months later I don’t know?



**Sir Paul Williams** is former Chair of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery.

To hear the full panel discussion from the IWA Debate, ‘Where next for Public Services?’ please visit [audioboom.com/channel/iwa](http://audioboom.com/channel/iwa)

# A crachach solution?

**Paul Griffiths** says we shouldn't accept the remedies for public service woes set out by Paul Williams.

Paul Williams will find common ground with everyone who has an interest in the delivery of public services in Wales when he says that we need to improve our performance in public service delivery, that we need better leadership and we need to make change happen in the face of ever rapidly changing circumstances.

In reality these objectives are shared by all countries at all times. We always need more of the leadership which fosters innovation and delivers better public services. This is just as true in high performing countries such as Finland or Denmark as it is in Wales. When we recognise these truths in Wales we do not need an exercise in self flagellation, we do not need to tell ourselves that we are living in the worst of all possible worlds because that would be untrue. In Wales our public services are a mix of the good, the mediocre and the unacceptable. We need to celebrate what we do well just as often as we expose what we do poorly.

Our schools have always delivered GCSE results pretty much on a par with England and given that average household incomes are 20% lower in Wales we have all too often been satisfied with that benchmark. The introduction of the Programme for International Student Assessment tells all parts of the United Kingdom that its rather staid school curriculum does not give young people

the problem solving skills that have been developed elsewhere.

Our delivery of health and social care undoubtedly has its highs and lows and, as elsewhere in the UK, we are facing challenges in responding to rapidly increasing demand. The fact that we have a baseline of being older, more prone to illness and with deeper pockets of deprivation makes these challenges all the greater. A resurgent Welsh economy

**In essence the Williams remedy is that we need fewer, larger organisations for public service delivery and fewer leaders who are subject to a simpler, hierarchical accountability to the Welsh Government.**

attracting hundreds of thousands of young migrants would do wonders for our average health statistics.

We can all accept the diagnosis set by Paul Williams: we need improved performance, better leadership and an enhanced capacity for change. What we should not accept are the remedies set out in the report of the Williams Commission. In essence the Williams remedy is that we need fewer, larger organisations for public service delivery and fewer leaders who are subject to a simpler, hierarchical accountability to

the Welsh Government. It is an elitist and statist view of the world which holds that public bureaucracies should be organised pretty much as the British Army was organised in 1914. Leadership is concentrated into as few hands as possible. Control and decision making is simplified and centralised. Power is exercised from the top to the bottom. Accountability is one-dimensional, from the bottom to the top.

For Williams bigger organisations mean better performance, fewer leaders mean better leaders, change comes from the centralisation of power. In its simple and elitist view of the world I think of the Williams Report as being of the crachach, by the crachach, for the crachach.

If only we would look beyond the United Kingdom we would find that the most successful systems of governance and administration are based on entirely different principles to those of the Williams Report. Throughout the

We need change in Wales. We need to empower local people to challenge and contribute to the public services they receive in their communities.

mainland of northern Europe we find that local authorities are far smaller on average than the unitary authorities of Wales, even though they hold wider responsibilities. These systems of governance deliver high quality, efficient and effective public services.

As we evaluate the remedies of the Williams Report, we might remember the advice of the Mabinogion: “a fo ben bid bont”; leaders provide bridges between people, leaders create active and complex networks, bridges upon

which we can all work together to shape our own communities. In contrast, the Williams Report regards leadership as a rare commodity which is best concentrated. The Williams Report regards politics as a zero sum game in which power is finite and best not shared.

We need change in Wales. We need to empower local people to challenge and contribute to the public services they receive in their communities. This does mean far more robust performance

information more widely distributed and utilised. It means that leadership skills are developed at the front line in local councils, schools and primary care systems, leaders that manage the networks between local people and the myriad of delivery organisations that make up the inevitable complexity of the modern world.

**Paul Griffiths** was formerly Senior Special Adviser and Head of the Strategic Policy Unit at the Welsh Government as well as Head of Corporate Affairs at the Welsh Local Government Association. He is now Labour County Councillor for Pontyclun in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

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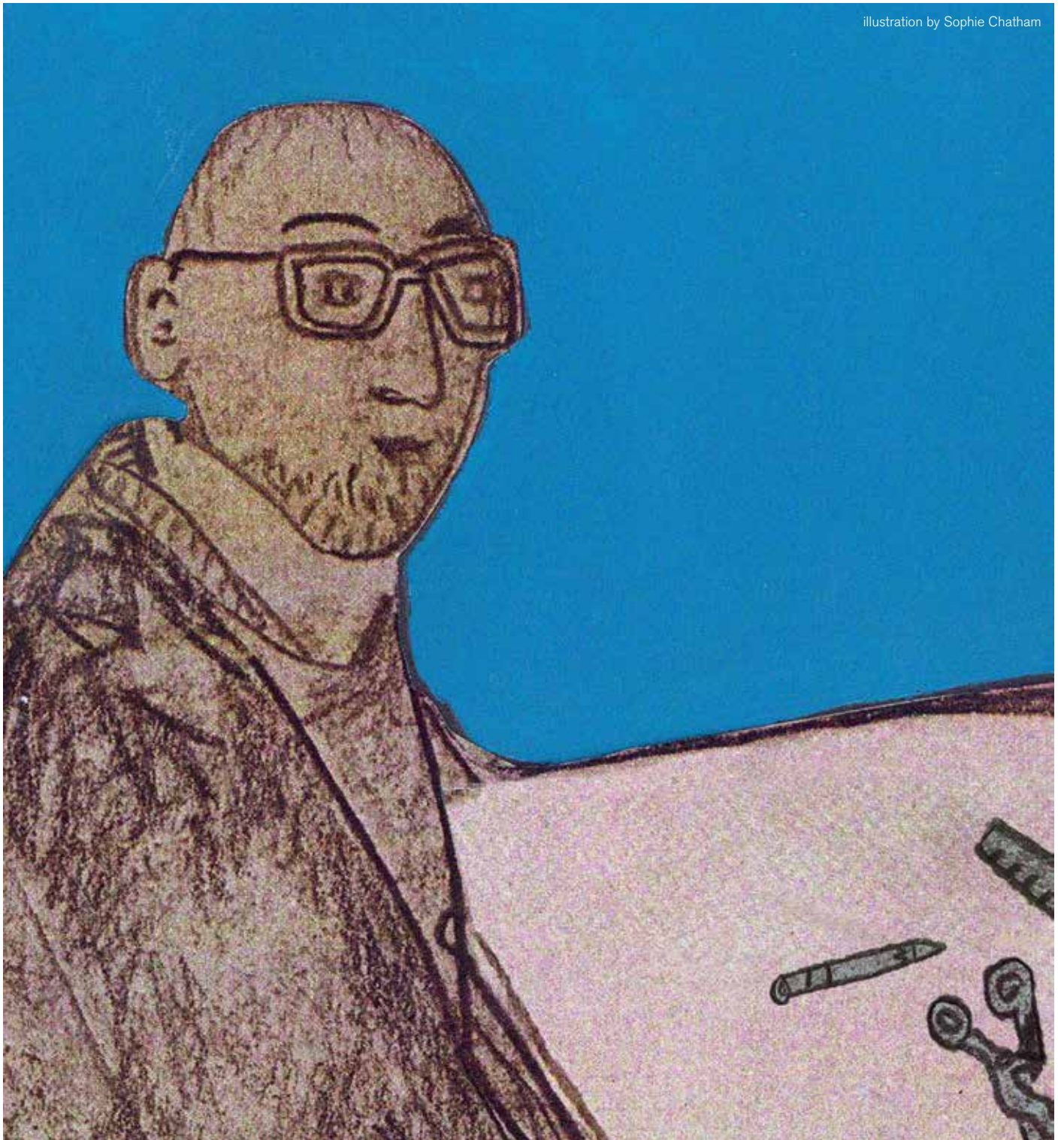
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# “I have a need for art”

Trevor Fishlock profiles Martin Tinney.

“I knew what I wanted to do, to run a proper professional operation, a gallery with my name on it, my own space, staging exhibitions, promoting art.”

**Martin Tinney** was a medical student short of money when he fell in love with a painting. He had to own it, of course. How many of us know the feeling? The trouble was that he couldn't afford to buy the picture and pay his rent as well.

Beauty won – and he confessed all to his landlady. To his relief she gave her art-struck tenant a sympathetic smile. ‘Pay me when you can,’ she said.

Art and music have been the passions of his life since his boyhood in Ireland. ‘As a teenager travelling abroad my first call was always the museums and galleries.’ At school he had to choose between art and a career as a doctor. ‘I studied medicine at Galway and kept art on the side. I could hardly do it the other way round.’

But he never lost sight of his dream of running a pioneering art gallery. He worked as a doctor in Scotland and Nottingham, then pondered his next career move. ‘I knew London well but I thought: why not try Cardiff? I came here thirty years ago because I did not know it well. I liked it immediately. For one thing it had the Welsh National Opera, and I'm a big opera fan. I aimed to leave medicine sooner rather than later.’

‘I knew what I wanted to do, to run a proper professional operation, a gallery with my name on it, my own space, staging exhibitions, promoting art.’

He had a liking for adventure and no fear of risks. ‘The question of risk goes right back to my boyhood. What is the worst that can happen? My father died when I was thirteen and my mother was a widow of thirty-three, left with seven children. So we stopped having holidays; but we were a happy family and grew up to be successful.’

Starting out in Wales he saw that it was necessary ‘to go to Bath and London to see proper professional galleries’. He admits that the going was tough when he opened a gallery in his own name in Cardiff in 1992. For the first five years he took no salary and his partner subsidised him. His first exhibition, in 1992, was of paintings by Harry Holland. And he had his first exhibition abroad in San Francisco, showing work by Welsh artists, including Gwilym Prichard.

‘I specialised in Welsh painting because no one else was doing it. It was a niche, an identity. I had a brand.’

‘At early exhibitions, in London and elsewhere, people saw the signs referring to artists from Wales and walked on, just ignored them. But gradually we were taken seriously. It's necessary to stick to your guns, to your integrity and belief, to show quality. I could have been more successful had I been prepared to show less demanding work. But I liked the challenge, the stimulation. And, as I say, I'm not afraid of risk.’

‘Going to galleries and shows in London and abroad I was putting a professional stamp on the gallery and managing the work of artists. It's a symbiotic relationship. You have to get on with the artists and they have to trust and believe in you, as you believe in them. I think it helped that as a former doctor I was used to dealing with people, picking up on personality.’

The Tinney gallery is a leading private commercial gallery in Wales and has handled the work of many artists, Welsh or working in Wales. ‘When I took such work out of Wales it had a terrific reception and I have clients in America, Europe and the Middle East and institutions like the Tate

Gallery and the National Museum of Wales.’

In 2002 Martin Tinney moved to St Andrew's Crescent in Cardiff and behind the facade of a Victorian town house created an admirable and spacious gallery on three floors, re-mortgaging his home to finance it. Although the going was hard at the beginning he reckons he was in the right place at the right time when Cardiff began to boom. He has seen the market mature and the growth of many more galleries in Wales and the burgeoning of Welsh artistic talent.

In 2010 he bought Oriol Tegfryn at Menai Bridge so that to his delight he has ‘two galleries, south and north, working in harmony’. But he finds himself ‘baffled by the number of people in south Wales who have never seen the beautiful north of their own country and aren't curious about it’.

He is delighted with the way things have turned out in the thirty years since he asked himself: why not Cardiff? ‘I have great support from people, taking their own art seriously. I come from a cultured country and so I enjoy Wales, the music, the eisteddfod, the presence of the Welsh language.’

‘I have a need for art, always have. But the last thing I want to talk about at a social gathering is art. I want something else – and let it be stimulating.’



**Trevor Fishlock** is an author and broadcaster.

# The wisdom of the crowd

**Tom Bodden** reviews the IWA's Constitutional Convention.

The way power is shared between the nations of the United Kingdom is in the political melting pot. Prime Minister David Cameron has outlined UK Government thinking on the immediate future for enhanced devolution to Wales. But what does Wales want? The IWA's Constitutional Convention has aimed to find out.

This eight week long national conversation, using 'crowdsourcing' via a special website and social media, found that discontent over controversial UK policies, like the 'spare room subsidy,' is fuelling calls for a different way of doing things in Wales.

More than 2,000 people had engaged in more than 17,000 page views in the first weeks of the project - with average session of 5 minutes each, far higher than the industry average. They were asked what does English devolution mean for the rest of the UK? How do we make Wales a more prosperous and fairer country?

Welfare is a divisive term in modern politics, and this division has become

clearer than ever with policies such as the 'bedroom tax'. The 'spare room subsidy' is a Coalition Government policy, which has a greater impact in Wales than any other part of the UK. Should Wales have the power to ditch this policy? Responses to this question revealed fears among politicians that the transfer of control over welfare from Westminster to Cardiff would be unaffordable and expose the scale of our poverty in Wales.

Powers over welfare are being devolved to Scotland and for the first time there will be different welfare policies in one part of the UK, a radical shift from the common 'safety net'.

Paul Chaney, a Reader in Public Policy at Cardiff University School of Social Sciences argued as part of the convention that that Welsh Government should have powers over welfare.

*"Successive Welsh Governments have espoused a more expansive vision of welfare, generally eschewed private sector involvement in service delivery and used existing powers imaginatively in areas allied to social security/welfare."*

From next year, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 will mean significant divergence in social care policy.

*"Such developments raise the question why shouldn't this be formalised? Why shouldn't parties have broader scope to promise more expansive welfare provision in Wales, or resist cuts imposed by Westminster, should they obtain a mandate in Assembly elections?"*

Former Labour MP and Welsh Minister Jon Owen Jones was wary of the implications of such reform: "Would we do better if welfare powers were held in Cardiff? I doubt it. Mainly because we need English taxpayers to fund much of the costs and I worry that they may stop doing so."

Peter Black, Welsh Liberal Democrats social justice spokesperson, questioned how a government dependent on another for a fixed grant, and with only limited borrowing powers, could cope with disproportionate growth in demand. "Devolution is a desirable outcome in many policy areas but it is not a panacea and nor should it be promoted as one."

There remains a consistently high level of public support for the Assembly to be handed more powers. But responses on the economy phase of the constitutional convention also revealed concern over existing Welsh





Now Manchester has been given £1bn of public spending which their new mayor will control and a £6bn NHS budget, what about the impact on Wales of devolution in England? Neil McEvoy told the convention the present devolution debate and activity was 'chaotic', and 'driven by events, hunches and electioneering'. "We need to have a much deeper national constitutional conversation including citizenry, business, unions." Geraint Talfan Davies said: "With decentralisation of powers and funding in England, we would see English regions reassert themselves. It would not be consistent in depth or timing across England, but it would be a powerful force."

An interesting initial outcome from the convention is the balance between powers and performance. "Ask people what they think about the performance of the Welsh Government on some policies and they may say that it is poor, but they still think there should be more powers devolved" said the IWA's Lee Waters.

The convention has been asking what are the problems, what is stopping Wales achieving what it wants to achieve? In many cases, especially around the economy, the debate is less about powers - with the exception of energy - and more about performance and policy.

Full details of the IWA Constitutional Convention can be found at [iwaconvention.co.uk](http://iwaconvention.co.uk) or via Twitter @iwa\_wales or #iwaconvention. The project ran from January 26 and to March 20.

**Tom Bodden** was the Daily Post's Welsh Affairs Correspondent from 1992 to 2014.



Government policies rather than a general clamour for extra powers.

Some of the highest rated ideas called for measures to address the skills young people need to cope in the future jobs market; or more efforts to take advantage of tourism as a signpost to a better quality of life.

Support for enhanced powers did emerge over a target for 100% 'consumption' from Wales-based renewable energy sources by 2030, with a massive increase in research, development and business support in 'smart grid' and 'smart storage' sectors.

Energy efficiency was identified as 'a huge employment creator as well as the cheapest way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In a snapshot poll, 77% said it is in Wales' interests to have the power to approve energy projects of up to 350 megawatts in line with recommendations by the Silk Commission.

As part of the latest UK Government devolution proposals, energy projects up to 350 megawatts would be decided by Welsh ministers. This would include most onshore wind farms and renewable technologies to harness tidal power.

Former environment minister Jane Davidson tweeted #IWAConvention pointing out that she had been arguing for energy powers for Wales for years.

"The current system doesn't work. Wales has a huge natural energy resource."

Another contributor called for Wales to "Emulate the ambition of Denmark and Scotland" but admitted that this would not be easy. For this to happen we need very strong leadership from Welsh Government and all powers over energy. Both of these are currently lacking."

A lively discussion was sparked around what children should learn at school, to prepare them for their future careers, with a warning that 47% of all US jobs were at risk of computerisation. Was Wales prepared for this radical change in employment - or unemployment?

*"I now employ a 'google' workforce, they don't know everything but they can find it out. Cultivating ambition and a readiness to learn and do well are vital. Young people who are enthusiastic, interested and engaged are infinitely more employable."*

The TUC argued: "Many of the jobs 'which have not yet been created' are likely to be in high volume, low value areas of employment unless many more employers decide it's in their interest to invest more."

# The IWA Podcast

The IWA's constitutional convention has been happening on a wide range of platforms including [iwaconvention.co.uk](http://iwaconvention.co.uk), ClickonWales, Twitter and Facebook. We've also been gathering opinions for podcasts on our Audioboom Channel. See some of the best bits below, and visit [audioboom.com/channel/iwa](http://audioboom.com/channel/iwa) to listen.

## Could Wales be a leader in green technology?

Sion Barry and Lee Waters

**Lee Waters:** "You've suggested that we should try and focus on becoming a green technology country?"

**Sion Barry:** "Wales does have the potential, with the right support and the right focus, over a 10-15 year horizon... it can't just be led by government it has to be private sector engagement. We talked of carbon storage and capture, there is still a great deal of coal in South Wales, if there was a way that we could re-commercialise that coal and capture the carbon and store it somewhere. So why not spend a few million pounds creating a carbon storage and capture world leading institute here in Wales? If you do do this and you're holding the intellectual property, well that can reap huge benefits if that's sold globally under licence, so why can't it be done here in Wales?"

**Lee Waters:** "Wales has a USP of natural resources and we're not fully capitalising on that because of limited powers but also because of leadership."

**Sion Barry:** "We can't do everything... but this is an area where I think we have potential to make a real change to the Welsh economy, in terms of creating jobs, creating intellectual property, but also creating green technology."

## Why are we so nervous about welfare devolution in Wales?

Michelle Reid and Linda Whittaker.

**Linda Whittaker:** "People are nervous about (welfare devolution) because of the funding of it. At the moment it's demand led – so if the demand for it goes up then the budget automatically goes up. However, I believe if it's devolved then the Westminster Government will transfer the amount that we are currently spending. So in reality as our demand goes up, with significantly increasing people of pensionable age and we know that our unemployment levels are increasing, there just won't be the money to fund it and that money will have to come from health, from education, from other public services. And I think that's why people are nervous."

**Michelle Reid:** "There's a perception amongst people, who've been fed by a media and almost a kind of modern day hysteria has been built up around welfare and welfare fraud. The public believe that something like 30% of the benefit bill is fraudulently claimed whereas in reality its only 0.07% of the entire benefit bill. So I think there is a big heart and minds issue, to help people to have the real information and the real facts, in order to come to their own opinions about it rather than a media led, ratings led, narrative that we have at the moment."

## Do you agree with the bedroom tax?

 We asked people around Cardiff Bay what they thought.

"I think it's going after the wrong target...the biggest problem is lack of housing and lack of affordable housing and lack of social housing."

"I think the basis of it is fair, however there doesn't seem to be any room for people to move on. There is a lack of housing with 1 and 2 bedrooms."

"If people have been allocated homes for a need which is no longer there... there has to be some sort of flexibility in the housing market stock to allow other people in need to take those places."

"I agree with it if it's a new allocation... But I don't think that you can bring something like that in retrospectively and punish people who have lived in a council house for 20 years."



Hear more from our podcasts on [audioboom.com/channel/iwa](http://audioboom.com/channel/iwa)



Mumph's view of the Welsh Politician of the year award winner Stephen Crabb MP

## The St David's Day declaration - Not the last word.

The St David's Day announcements could be little more than a footnote for Wales' devolution story, says **Vaughan Roderick**.

According to legend "do the little things you have seen me do" was the final message Saint David gave to the Welsh faithful. It's hard to escape the conclusion that Welsh politicians took that advice all too literally in drawing up the package of measures

announced by David Cameron and Nick Clegg at the Millennium Stadium as March approached.

The process which led to the announcement began within hours of the Scottish referendum. With David Cameron set to tie the fulfilment of the Unionist parties "vow" to Scotland to the question of English votes for English laws it appears that he felt the need to say something, anything about Wales and Northern Ireland. This is what he came up with.

"In Wales, there are proposals to give the Welsh government and Assembly more powers. And I want

Wales to be at the heart of the debate on how to make our United Kingdom work for all our nations."

It was left to the Welsh Secretary Stephen Crabb to spell out what that meant and he did so at an IWA conference in November.

"I am determined that Wales should not play second fiddle in the current debate on devolution. I want us to use this opportunity, this unique moment in our nation's history, to look positively at how we secure the best possible devolution settlement for Wales.

"I want to move forward in a realistic, open-minded and pragmatic

# The decision to seek a four party consensus for each individual element of the package effectively handed a power of veto to each of the parties.

way...In short, I want a clear, robust and lasting devolution settlement for Wales: A settlement that ends the constant, tiring debate about powers which has characterised Welsh politics for 15 years..."

The process established to create that 'robust and lasting settlement' though appears to have been flawed. The decision to seek a four-party consensus for each individual element of the package effectively handed a power of veto to each of the parties, ensuring in the words of Welsh Liberal Democrat leader, Kirsty Williams that the process would be "held back by the slowest member of that particular team."

That dynamic ensured that the proposals produced by the second stage of the cross-party Silk Commission became more of a ceiling than a floor and since those proposals were already insufficient in the view of Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats anything less was bound to disappoint.

In effect what was produced was not the 'robust and lasting settlement' that Stephen Crabb had hoped for but a significant transfer of powers can best be seen as another step in Ron Davies' 'process not an event' or even Neil Kinnock's 'slippery slope'.

To be fair to the Welsh Secretary far more has been achieved in moving the Silk proposals forward than would

have been likely under his predecessor, David Jones and virtually all the proposals contained in the agreement are likely to be realised whatever the result of the coming general election.

The move to a 'reserved powers' model has been the subject of political consensus in Cardiff Bay for some time and embarrassing defeats in the Supreme Court were probably sufficient to convince naysayers in Whitehall and Westminster that the 1990's division of powers was no longer defensible.

Handing over the powers for the Assembly to control its own name, size and electoral system was another long-standing demand from Cardiff Bay and vigorous lobbying by Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler ensured its inclusion.

The handing over of a package of responsibilities over areas like fracking, bus and taxi regulation and energy will be welcomed in the Bay and are relatively uncontroversial while the promise of a funding floor will take some of the heat out of the argument over the Barnett Formula.

The package doesn't come close though to meeting Carwyn Jones oft-repeated demand that everything that's offered to Scotland should be offered to Wales nor to transfer power over policing - a move that many see as the first step towards the devolution of criminal justice.

On the other hand the UK Government had to abandon its rather ham-fisted attempts to push the Welsh Government into holding a referendum on the transfer of powers to vary income tax rates in Wales.

Those issues remain to be argued over and settled during and after this May's election.

So where do we go from here? It's likely that a Conservative or Conservative-led Government would deliver more or less the package that was unveiled by the Prime Minister and his Deputy.

A Labour majority Government would probably stage a great show of ripping up the coalition command paper before introducing a package more closely aligned with the Silk proposals in areas like policing and Air Passenger Duty.

Perhaps the most interesting dynamic would result from negotiations in a hung parliament. Both Plaid Cymru and their SNP allies and the Liberal Democrats would be likely to seek commitments that went far further than anything currently on offer leaving the much-trumpeted agreement as little more than a footnote in the devolution story.



Vaughan Roderick is the BBC's Welsh Affairs Editor.

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# Solar Power - Are we getting the most out of the sun?

Jon Townend says Wales should be exploiting its solar potential.

For many observers, solar power is regarded as the energy source of the future - it is improving in efficiency, falling in cost, relatively quick and easy to install and generally has minimal environmental impacts other than visual.

Wales is well placed to exploit this potential and enjoys good levels of solar irradiation, particularly around the coastal zones, where it is comparable to the south-west of England. However, until now the establishment of large systems with electricity outputs significantly greater than domestic scale has tended to be focused in south Wales, with very little deployment through the central areas.

One of the main barriers to nationwide progress is a lack of capacity for connecting new solar projects in the local electricity distribution network in Wales - the Grid.

The last UK Government pointed out in its 2003 Energy White Paper, *Our Energy Future - Creating a Low Carbon Economy*, that 'the nationwide and local electricity grids, that were created for a world of large-scale, centralised power stations, will

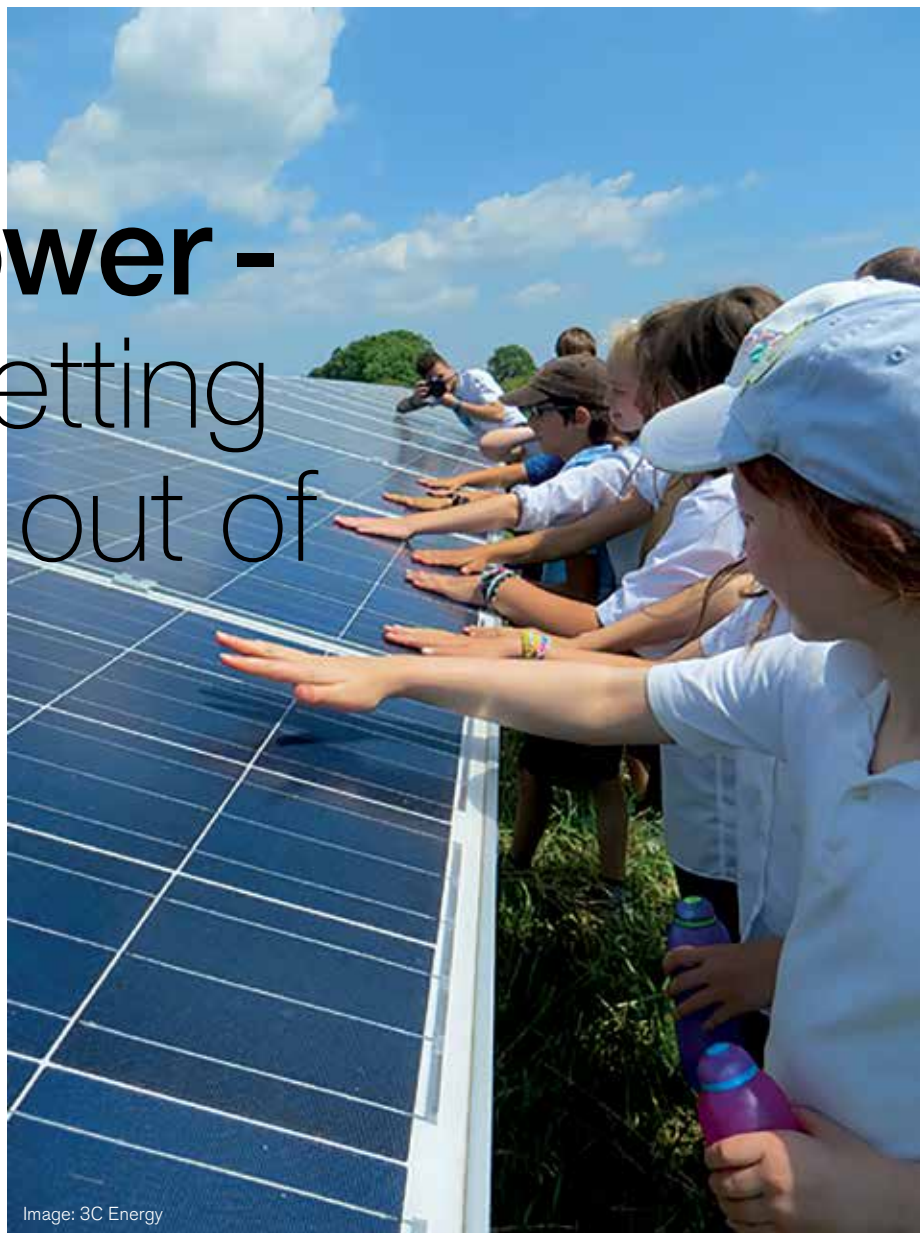


Image: 3C Energy

need restructuring over the next 20 years to support the emergence of far more renewables and small-scale, distributed electricity generation.' Government policy since then has promoted the concept of distributed or decentralised energy generation sourced from various renewable technologies, with generating plants located close to the point of use.

Since 2010, the deregulation of energy generation and support for smaller-scale installations has also made it easier for new entrants and, in a period of economic recession, the solar PV sector has attracted a significant amount of business activity and inward investment for the deployment of solar in Wales.

That said, deployment on private

housing stock also appears to have been limited by the drastic cut in the Feed-in-Tariff support for solar in 2011, and the squeeze on household spending. Deployment on commercial rooftops has not taken off either, largely down to the preponderance of commercial premises that are occupied by short-term tenancies - meaning that the most significant area of deployment has been in 'utility-scale' solar farms of anything from 1MW to 30MW installed generating capacity.

It appears that the distribution network operators (DNOs) had not anticipated the increase in demand for new connections and have 'not planned sufficient upgrades to the distribution networks to accommodate the rapid uptake of



Images: 3C Energy



renewables, particularly in south Wales - an issue that now represents a serious constraint on any significant deployment over the next three to five years.

The solar sector has been criticised for the impact of development on the landscape. However, this reaction seems to have been less-marked in Wales where, at present, planning policy is being interpreted as more supportive of renewable energy schemes than is the case in England. It is now 'clearly important' to the industry that public support should be maintained through effective communication of the benefits of renewables, the case for decentralised energy generation and an understanding of the inevitability of the resulting change in the landscape.

There are also some indications that imminent changes to Welsh planning policy could help to improve the prospects for the solar sector. In October 2014, the Planning (Wales) Bill was introduced and this will give Welsh Ministers far reaching

powers to change the ways that local planning authorities operate and alter the role of the WG in taking planning decisions on some applications.

The Planning Bill will introduce more consistency into the planning process and enable companies that seek planning consent to more easily understand the way that decisions are being made throughout Wales, rather than the large variation in practice that is currently in place.

Until now, the development of the solar sector in Wales has been largely led by commercial developers allied to end-buyers accepting relatively modest returns on investment, typically ranging between 7% and 10%. The fact that this return includes the guaranteed government subsidy support through either the Feed-in-Tariff or Renewable Obligation schemes has been crucial for investors to secure bank debt. Without that guaranteed Government financial support it is uncertain that investment of any significant scale will continue to be forthcoming.

However, there are still significant opportunities for the further deployment of solar PV systems in Wales at all scales, providing a reasonable, relatively secure return on investment can be maintained. Furthermore, there is enough 'entrepreneurial capital' available to support the activities of businesses in Wales in the solar sector.

Where this activity will be focused is difficult to predict at the moment, especially in light of uncertainty over the outcome of the UK general election and the direction of future energy policy. Since the Electricity Market Reform White Paper in 2013, and the introduction of Contracts for Difference (CfD) for energy generation which promotes large-scale generation projects, it is also unclear if there is still a consensus across the main parties to provide continued support for the deployment of smaller-scale renewables as part of a dispersed and decentralised energy strategy - meaning that, at present, the introduction of CfD is generally being viewed with uncertainty by the solar sector.

With the announcement in late February of the devolution of energy policy to the Welsh Government, the business community will now be hoping that the Welsh Government will recognise the need to maintain investor confidence and that crucial decisions will need to be taken on how best to maintain the growth of a vibrant and innovative SME sector in solar in Wales.

The solar sector has been criticised for the impact of development on the landscape. However, this reaction seems to have been less marked in Wales where, at present, planning policy is being interpreted as more supportive of renewable energy schemes than is the case in England.

Jon Townend is MD of 3C Energy.

# The Supreme Court- A threat to devolution

**Manon George** says a Supreme Court decision to reject a Welsh law does little to clarify the devolution settlement.

In the same month that the UK Government announced more devolution to Wales, the Supreme Court narrowly declared the Recovery of Medical Costs for Asbestos Diseases (Wales) Bill, a private member's Bill sponsored by the Labour AM Mick Antoniw, outside of the legislative powers of the National Assembly for Wales.

This was the Welsh Government's third trip to Parliament Square since receiving enhanced law-making powers following the affirmative referendum in March 2011. The Supreme Court found the first two Bills referred by the Attorney General for England and Wales, the Local Government (Byelaws) (Wales) Bill and the Agricultural Sector (Wales) Bill, to be within the Assembly's competence. But this time, in what could be described as an 'own goal' for Wales as it was the Counsel General himself that referred the Bill to the Supreme Court for decision to avoid inevitable future challenges by insurance companies, it was decided that the

Supreme Court had to decide (1) whether the Bill came within the subject-matter competence relating to "organisation and funding of national health service" under the heading "health and health services" in Schedule 7 to the Government of Wales Act 2006 and (2) whether it was incompatible with the rights of compensators and insurers under Article 1 of Protocol 1 ("A1P1") of the European Convention on Human Rights to the peaceful enjoyment of their possessions.

The majority of the Supreme Court Justices, led by Lord Mance, held that the Welsh Ministers "do not have general fiscal powers" to levy charges for Welsh NHS services and that the Bill was not sufficiently "related to" the "organisation and funding" of the NHS to bring it within the Assembly's competence because, by imposing charges on compensators and insurers rather than patients, the Bill seeks to "rewrite the law of tort" instead of making provisions in relation to health services. On A1P1, it was decided

**This was the Welsh Government's third trip to Parliament Square since receiving enhanced law making powers following the affirmative referendum in March 2011.**

National Assembly did not have the legislative competence to enact the Recovery of Medical Costs for Asbestos Diseases (Wales) Bill.

The Bill made employers in Wales, through their compensators or insurers, liable to reimburse the Welsh Ministers in respect of NHS treatment for employees with asbestos-related diseases. The Bill also extended the scope of the compensators' liability insurance policies to cover these costs.

In determining the validity of the Bill, the

that the Bill interfered with the rights of compensators and insurers to the peaceful enjoyment of their possessions as the new liabilities pre-dated the Bill, consequently making it retrospective.

Lord Thomas and Lady Hale, on the other hand, would have held the provisions of the Bill to be within subject-matter competence, interpreting the "organisation and funding of the National Health Service" as including a general power to raise funds for the NHS

through the imposition of charges on patients who could recover those charges from employers. In another contrast to the majority, they considered the interference with the A1P1 rights as proportionate to the economic and social purpose of funding Welsh NHS services for asbestos victims. However, they agreed that the provision requiring employers' insurance contracts to be read as if they covered liability for reimbursing the Welsh Ministers for asbestos-related treatment to be incompatible with convention rights because of its retrospective effect.

This judgment came as a disappointment to many following the Supreme Court's decision in the Agricultural Sector reference where the Justices appeared to give a generous interpretation of the Assembly's legislative authority. In deciding that the Bill, which established an Agricultural Advisory Panel to control the employment terms and conditions for agricultural workers in Wales, did relate to the devolved subject of 'agriculture', the Court unanimously held that as long as a Bill is fairly and realistically related to a devolved matter and not within an exception, it does not matter whether it is also capable of being classified as relating to a reserved matter.

However in this latest reference, Lord Mance did not consider that the main aims of the Bill were sufficiently "related to" the "organisation and funding of the National Health Service". This indicates that the boundaries of the Welsh devolution settlement are not clear as previously thought after the Agricultural Sector reference and has generated even greater demand for a move to a reserved powers model, including by the Counsel General himself. That said, based on the majority judgment, the Bill would still be outside competence under a reserved powers model because of its incompatibility with human rights, but there may have been more certainty prior to the passing of the Bill whether it was within competence or not. Nevertheless, according to Lord Thomas and Lady Hale, it could still be brought within competence, as long as it amended so not retrospectively extend or override the provisions of existing liability insurance policies.

The majority's judgment sits slightly uneasily with the UK Government's St David's



Day announcement that the Assembly should be able to change its name to 'Welsh Parliament' by suggesting that the legislature's judgment as to what is in the public interest, as well as the legitimacy of the aims of the legislation, can be questioned by the courts. Lord Thomas on the other hand, echoing the Court's judgment in the Scottish case, *Axa General Insurance v Lord Advocate* [2011] that "it would be wrong for the judges to substitute their views as to what is rational or reasonable for the considered judgment of the democratically elected legislature", did not see a basis "for contending that the Welsh

Assembly is not reasonably entitled to reach a judgment that there is a strong public interest in doing so", neither could he see the "basis for questioning as reasonable the judgment of the Welsh Assembly that it would be desirable that the funds so raised would directly benefit those suffering from asbestos-related diseases."

This judgment does little to clarify the boundaries of the Welsh devolution settlement and it remains to be seen whether this reference will signal the end of the Welsh Government's visits to Parliament Square. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales)

Bill might be the latest example of how challenging it is to legislate and pursue a clear and separate policy agenda under the current model of devolution. The UK Government's St David's Day recommendation of a reserved powers model is to be welcomed but there is still a long way to go before reaching a "clear, robust and lasting devolution settlement" that's necessary to enable the Assembly to be an effective and efficient 'Welsh Parliament'.



**Manon George** is a Lecturer in Law at Cardiff School of Law and Politics.

## Analysis from Emyr Lewis:

The contrasting judgments of the majority and minority give an interesting insight into a radical difference of approach in the Supreme Court towards the Welsh Assembly which could result in a substantial reining-in of the Assembly's competence.

Whilst the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd, took an expansive view of the laws made by devolved legislatures, the majority of the Supreme Court judges backed Lord Mance.

Perhaps most significantly, in terms of the impact not only on Welsh Assembly legislation but also Scottish and Northern Irish devolved legislation is what Lord Mance had to say about the A1P1.

Certain parts of Lord Mance's judgment appear to suggest that it is legitimate for the Courts to investigate (in the context of A1 P1) the extent to which Assembly legislation is in the public interest, and also to investigate the sufficiency of the consideration given to legislation by the Assembly before it is passed. Neither of these could be done in respect of an Act of Parliament, because of Article 9 of the Bill of Rights which has been interpreted as protecting Parliamentary proceedings from judicial scrutiny.

This approach is an interesting, and rather alarming, contrast to that taken by the Supreme Court in the case of *Axa v. Lord Advocate*, where there were warnings

against judges substituting their views for those of a democratically elected body.

In a powerfully (some might say passionately) argued part of his judgment (Paragraphs 119 to 124), Lord Thomas strongly defends the primacy of the Welsh Assembly as a democratic institution in connection with issues of public interest and policy: the judgement of the Welsh Assembly as to the public interest and social justice should be preferred on matters of social and economic policy to a judicial view of what it regards as being in the public interest and representing social justice.

In this passage, he makes a telling comparison with the situation of "English laws" in the UK Parliament:

"I cannot see why in principle the United Kingdom Parliament in making legislative choices in relation to England (in relation to matters such as the funding of the NHS in England) is to be accorded a status which commands greater weight than would be accorded to the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland and Welsh Assemblies in relation respectively to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. As each democratically elected body must be entitled to form its own judgement about public interest and social justice in matters of social and economic policy within a field where, under the structure of devolution, it has sole primary legislative competence, there is no logical justification for treating the views of one such body in a different way to the others,

given the constitutional structure that has been developed. The judgement of each must have the same effect and force."

It is fair to say that the Supreme Court's decision has increased the uncertainty about the Assembly's law-making powers, after the Agricultural Sector (Wales) Bill case had appeared to establish an orderly and principled approach to interpreting Schedule 7. Perhaps that was inevitable in the current case, the Recovery of Medical Costs for Asbestos Diseases (Wales) Bill, which involved for the first time (in connection with Welsh legislation), persons whose commercial interests were affected making representations to the Court. It would be too glib to characterise the difference between the two judgments in terms of whether commercial interests or social justice took priority. Nevertheless, the contrast in forensic approach taken, assumptions made and indeed phraseology used suggest that there are fundamental differences of principle at work relating to the relationship between the courts and the devolved legislatures.



**Emyr Lewis** is a Senior Partner at Blake Morgan. He is also a Senior Fellow in Welsh Law at the Wales Governance Centre, Cardiff University.

# The jury is still out on tuition fees policy for Wales

Gareth Evans assesses an IWA debate on the future of tuition fees in Wales.

The issue of tuition fees and what students should or should not contribute to the cost of their higher education remains a topic of considerable debate.

A decade of posturing, since top-up fees were first approved in January 2004, has resolved very little and we are seemingly no closer to a settled consensus. It was with that in mind that as part of the new IWA Debates events series the Institute of Welsh Affairs hosted a timely debate on higher education funding and student finance arrangements in Wales.

A panel of four were asked whether the time had come to lift the cap on tuition fees and if, in times of unprecedented austerity, the Welsh Government's existing policy of subsidising students ordinarily resident in Wales was sustainable.

Celebrated economist Professor Nicholas Barr, currently operating from the London School of Economics, had first stab and outlined why graduates – not students, who “are broke” – should continue to share in the cost of their degrees. “Higher education has major social benefits, but it also has major private benefits. And therefore, it is both efficient and fair that the beneficiaries

should pay some of the costs,” he said.

“A second reason for sharing is [that] countries can't afford to pay for the cost of a mass, high-quality higher education system – that was true long before the economic crisis.”

Prof Barr's scene-setting was both rational and pertinent. As long as progress into higher education remains

“Higher education has major social benefits, but it also has major private benefits. And therefore, it is both efficient and fair that the beneficiaries should pay some of the costs.”

optional, it is entirely right that those who choose to extend their studies contribute to the inevitable cost incurred. The reality is, we cannot have it any other way and the fact we continue to debate the best way forward on fees is a reflection of the constant squeeze on our public finances.

Prof Barr resolved that a core characteristic of well-designed student

loans is having income contingent repayments, so as graduates pay their dues proportionately and according to the terms of their employment.

To do otherwise would fly in the face of concerted attempts to widen access and risk pricing some prospective students out of the market altogether.

Plaid Cymru's education spokesman, Mid and West Wales AM Simon Thomas, was next up and provided a sobering analysis of the predicament facing the current crop of university learners. He cited studies by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Sutton Trust that showed the majority of undergraduates now at university will still be paying off their student loans well into their forties and fifties, with three-quarters of them being unable to clear their debt even after 30 years. Mr Thomas subsequently reiterated his party's desire to abolish tuition fees – as a so-called “investment in our future” – but conceded free tuition at undergraduate level was not practical. He said: “I do recognise that in the current constitutional arrangements and in the cross-border flows of students, Wales cannot have a tuition fee-free system. We have in our own consultation on this estimated that the cost would be

an extra £336m per annum and, quite frankly, Wales can't afford that.”

Mr Thomas welcomed the Welsh Government's decision to publish a “factual summary” of its ongoing review into higher education funding and student finance arrangements prior to next year's Assembly election. He said it was right that all parties would be

allowed to make clear their “principles and views to the electorate” ahead of review chairman Sir Ian Diamond’s final submission in September 2016.

Dame Teresa Rees, an expert on university fees and a former adviser to the Welsh Government, drew on her vast experience and offered valuable context into higher education policy across the UK. A keen supporter of devolution and pro vice-chancellor at Cardiff University for six years from 2004, she has chaired two independent investigations on higher education funding. Dame Teresa, like Prof Barr and Mr Thomas before her, suggested the concept of free university admission was implausible – as well as immoral. She posed the question: “Why are we asking a hospital porter to pay towards the education of the hospital doctor in such a way, out of taxes, which means that other things those taxes could go on – like childcare for the hospital porter – cannot be funded?”

Dame Teresa said it was “absolutely critical” that lifting the cap on tuition fees translates into more support for students who are less well-off and, without it, widening access would suffer. “I think there’s also a huge gap between the amount of state money put into graduates at the moment, compared with people who are not going to university,” she said. “What about pre-school learning? What about the huge number of children in Welsh schools leaving without any qualifications whatsoever? That’s a national disgrace.”

Hannah Pudner, who was director of the National Union of Students (NUS) in Wales at the time of the debate in April, was last to speak and warned that postgraduates and part-time students are often sidelined in the tuition fee debate. Allied to that, she said discussion should extend to all facets of education funding, not just the cost of tuition itself. “Student support and funding, in its totality, is far more than the tuition fee grant and loan. Ultimately, students do not drop out of university because of their fee loan – they drop out of university because they can’t afford to live,” she said.



“Right now, students in Wales are choosing between a decent meal and a text book; heating or a field trip; [and] a dentist appointment or equipment.

In that respect, it could be argued that students in Wales fare rather better than their peers in England, where financial incentives such as the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) are no longer available.

An income-assessed weekly payment of £30, the EMA helps young people aged 16-18 who wish to extend their studies after school leaving age to cover the cost of books and other equipment relating to their course.

Ms Pudner said: “Right now, students in Wales are choosing between a decent meal and a text book; heating or a field trip; [and] a dentist appointment or equipment. True, widening access is more than just getting disadvantaged people into higher education; it’s about

keeping them there – quite literally, staying the course.”

Rightly or wrongly, the Welsh Government has made supporting home-grown students, wherever in the UK they study, one of its defining policies. The idea that access to higher education should be on the basis of an individual’s potential to benefit and not on the basis of what they could afford to pay, has been its mantra.

It is, of course, a very noble aim and one which even the most ardent critic would find difficult to oppose. But in such austere times, the foremost issue was always going to be one of cost.

Can Wales afford to subsidise all of its students wherever in the UK they chose to study? The jury, it seems, is still out. But while educationalists dispute the best way forward, those in other sectors – most notably health – will forever argue they are more deserving of public investment.

It is a balancing act that is never likely to appease everyone and the compromise appears settling on the lesser of all evils. Whatever happens, the countdown has started and politicians of all hues will have to show their hand.



**Gareth Evans** is Education Correspondent for the Western Mail and Wales Online.



Image: Gofal

# Help for young people undercut by austerity

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**Liz Andrew** says the demand for young people's Mental Health services is exceeding capacity

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It seems that not a week goes by without the plight of young people and their families seeking support for their mental and emotional health being featured. That the situation is receiving so much attention can only be a good thing as we approach a General Election. The introduction of the Mental Health Measure in Wales in 2010 provided an enormous step towards improving accessibility to appropriate mental health services for all, regardless of their age or ability.

The intention of the Mental Health Measure remains laudable. Unlike previous mental health law it does not

focus on the compulsory admission and treatment of people, but on individuals' rights to access services designed to meet their mental health needs. The law, which only began to take effect towards the end of October 2012, establishes rights to independent advocacy and the right to timely and accessible reassessment of needs following discharge.

Perhaps the most noticeable change was the implementation of Local Primary Mental Health Support Services (LPMHSS), to support Primary Care Professionals in meeting the needs of individuals - in particular through a formal requirement to increase access to psychological interventions such as CBT, Counselling or Solution Focussed Therapy.

Theoretically, the Measure supports so many other strategic values: the opportunity to access holistic biopsychosocial care (the idea that

psychological and social factors need to be taken into account and not only biological ones), the provision of evidence based care, and the importance of early intervention. Nowhere is early intervention more

The law, which only began to take effect towards the end of October 2012, establishes rights to independent advocacy and the right to timely and accessible reassessment of needs following discharge.

important than in the treatment of children and young people.

The Mental Health Measure arrived with funds to support implementation and the Welsh Government has since provided funding for existing mental health professionals to train in psychological interventions. However, there has never really been an opportunity to significantly increase the workforce. This suggested that there was an expectation either that there would be no increase in demand (as it

making strategic changes aiming to provide the lightest touch possible. Whilst at first glance this may appear to be 'prudent healthcare', in fact there is a chance that, for children and young people, it isn't. There really is not sufficient evidence to suggest that delivery of consultation, provision of a healthy buffet of psychoeducation groups, and a very limited number of individual sessions for the most needy, is going to adequately address the complexity of a child presenting with

## What about children and young people whose needs are beyond mild to moderate emotional distress or behavioural difficulties? Unfortunately, the front doors are open but the back door is firmly locked.

could be met by the same capacity) or that early intervention would reduce the demand on secondary services.

Having been part of the network of people managing Part One of the Measure across Wales for two years, I think it is fair to say that what we observed was that LPMHSS did a brilliant thing - they opened the door to people who previously would not have had any mental health care beyond what their GP could provide. We were seeing people who would never have met threshold for secondary mental health services or specialist Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). So, the front doors were well and truly open. Where services are equitable (that is truly age inclusive where children and adults are received into the same service), a disproportionately large number of these were children and young people. In some local authority areas, 25% of the 400 referrals received every month were for people under the age of 18.

Some LPMHSS are surviving by

emotional distress. You see, children do not and cannot exist in isolation. Children's emotions and behaviour are best understood in the context of their unique temperament (including their strengths and difficulties) coupled with the environment in which they are growing up. Prudent healthcare would, I believe, mean investing wisely in those practitioners who are most skilled to assess, understand and intervene. Such practitioners would need to have a thorough understanding of child development, behaviourism, attachment theory and family systems theory.

We need to act early with the practitioners most skilled for the job. This is one of the first principles of prudent healthcare. Do only what you can do. Many people can engage a child in distress and many can support the development of self-esteem, however I have a strongly held belief that we need to frontload really good assessments and understanding of why children present in distress that would guide the delivery of evidence based care.

What about children and young people whose needs are beyond mild to moderate emotional distress or behavioural difficulties? Unfortunately, the front doors are open but the back door is firmly locked. In a bid to manage capacity, and having lost some of their staff to primary care services, specialist CAMHS across Wales have developed stringent entry criteria. Whilst dedicated practitioners are striving to continue to provide care to all who need it, there is a chance in a period where demand clearly outstrips capacity that services become skewed towards attending to risk behaviour. In the meantime, those who don't meet the entry criteria (whose needs are nonetheless significant), struggle to find the right source of help.

There are some fabulous examples of practitioners being creative and resourceful about this but it feels that the elephant in the room is that everyone is trying to do more with less.

The demand for young people's mental health services is growing at a rate that current service configurations cannot manage, and all the time we are delaying or preventing access to the right care delivered by the right person at the right time. The intention of the measure was not wrong or misplaced (even if it was more adult-centric than most of us would have liked) but it is trying to be delivered in a period of austerity. I wonder how it would have been if there truly was parity of esteem between the funding of physical and mental health care; funding that would allow us to deliver the correct 'dose' of care underpinned by models that are appropriate to children's needs without compromise. What a great way to improve children and families lives and to lessen the future burden on the health service and society.



**Liz Andrew** is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist.

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# Freedom Writers

Fflur Dafydd explores the advent of a PEN Centre for Wales, and the possibilities for its role in a global community of writers at a critical time for freedom of expression

In October 2014, an elated Sally Baker, former director of the Ty Newydd Writers' Centre in Llanystumdwy, travelled back from PEN International's Annual Congress in Bishkek, having embarked on a new venture. She had managed, through having a vote passed, to establish the first ever Welsh branch of PEN International, giving Wales its own voice and identity within the larger body of PEN International - an organisation created to defend freedom of expression and to promote writing, access to literature, and education, worldwide.

And it had not come a moment too soon. While Wales's inclusion in this global organisation seems to many to be a rite of passage, Baker is well aware that previous attempts to establish a Wales PEN Centre - over many decades, by many different writers - have all been short-lived. This marks a new period, therefore, a shift perhaps, in the focus of the Welsh literary community, finding itself now, post-devolution, in a politically 'viable' situation; it is a shift which has certainly created a degree of solidarity among many Welsh writers, at a time where it could make a difference to writers worldwide. As Sally Baker says: 'Welsh writers now have a confidence in the relevance of their place on the international stage, and membership of PEN will enable engagement with issues of language, identity and freedom of speech in a global

context. I am thrilled that Wales PEN Cymru was so warmly welcomed into this organisation which campaigns for so many issues close to Welsh writers' hearts.'

Perhaps one of the defining features of PEN International (and Wales PEN Cymru, by proxy), is the fact that it is a non-affiliated organisation, making Wales PEN Cymru one of the only truly independent organisations currently open to writers in Wales. It can work in conjunction with, and yet independent of, bodies such as Literature Wales, Wales Arts International and Wales Literature Exchange. Many writers feel that there is currently a need in Wales for fresh debate on the arts that can occur outside the constraints of public funding - funding which, however indirectly, affects what is being said in Wales's creative works, as well as how it is being said. While many writers depend on public funding to get their works heard, published, translated and performed, there is certainly some ambiguity about how this affects the originality and boldness of the creative vision. The Index on Censorship have already opened up a debate about these matters in Wales, and it has become clear that many writers in Wales believe that not only is censorship imposed from within, but that the needs and demands of an audience do impose a kind of self-censorship before the writer has even begun.

P.E.N once was an acronym for Poets.

Essayists. Novelists. Today it has expanded its membership to include bloggers, film makers, journalists, and those actively involved in the arts - and translators will certainly feature heavily among the members in Wales, being such a crucial, valued part of our literary culture, allowing Welsh voices to be heard worldwide, and bridging the gap between the English-language and the Welsh-language writers in Wales. And even though we are still in a relatively privileged position, in terms of our right to speak out, in the language of our choice, Welsh writers are more than conscious of the fact that writers elsewhere are harassed for expressing ideas, words and actions which are contrary to the views of oppressive regimes - and that this strikes a particular chord with a country that is still in the early stages of self-government.

For Wales to contribute internationally on such issues is testimony to our commitment to effect change and be part of a global enterprise to campaign for writers punished for their writings and, equally importantly, to make cultural connections with other countries in order to explore what is going on in our own culture. While Wales might not be oppressed in the same way, it is interesting to note that Wales PEN Cymru joins the organisation at the exact time that PEN International has committed itself to



Wales PEN Cymru's admission to PEN International is endorsed. Image: Suzann-Viola Renninger.

fight for the linguistic rights of minority cultures, an issue which we in Wales have addressed, as a bilingual and multicultural nation, over many decades. Already there are plans in the pipeline to work alongside Uzbek writers in Kyrgyzstan, and to enable other writers who write in endangered languages to study our bilingual education systems in Wales, hoping that we have something valuable to offer.

Owen Sheers, English-language Chair of Wales PEN Cymru has just returned from Mexico, where he was able to forge strong links between Wales PEN Cymru

the PEN international community will force a focus upon the recent killings and disappearances, with apparent impunity, of Mexican journalists. Translation projects and events with Mexican writers in Wales will also be happening later this year.' There are also plans for projects with PEN Ghana, who are equally eager to set up similar cultural activities. Many of these centres are asking specifically for the assistance of Wales PEN Cymru, rather than the long-established English PEN (the first PEN centre, formed in 1921) knowing that the identity of Wales PEN Cymru will

**Ultimately, an organisation such as this sees itself as a group of writers hoping to make an impact elsewhere – using their own, unique vantage point as a means of reaching out to the wider literary community.**

and PEN Mexico. 'PEN Mexico supported our campaign for a centre in Wales, and with such pressing concerns over freedom of speech in the country presented themselves as natural partners in our establishment year. Wales PEN Cymru will be sending journalist Dylan Moore to a three-day event in Mexico City, PEN Prgunta (PEN Asks) at which once again

resonate strongly on a global platform.

Ultimately, an organisation such as this sees itself as a group of writers hoping to make an impact elsewhere – using their own, unique vantage point as a means of reaching out to the wider literary community. It is not, as some have already started suggesting on social media, yet another platform for Welsh

writers on an international stage – but rather about those committed writers being part of an international narrative as a collective, being a valid part of a global effort to secure freedom of expression within the arts. Wales, more so than many countries, knows what it is to be silenced, to be sidelined, to be insecure about our identity, to have our mother tongue, and our various languages, debated and dissected and threatened. This gives us an opportunity to speak up – not through our writing alone, but through our actions, our commitments, and our vision.

During the last meeting of PEN's Executive Board, news came in about the death of a friend and colleague of the PEN community, Lobsang Chokta, who was stabbed in Delhi in mysterious circumstances. As Vice-President of PEN Tibetan Writers Abroad, Chokta was a tireless champion of literature, freedom of expression and linguistic rights, a committed member of the PEN family and an unwavering advocate for imprisoned Tibetan writers, language and heritage. Such an incident, the type of which now seem to occur with alarming regularity, seemed to reaffirm our commitment, to urge us on, to keep campaigning, to keep going, to start small, but think big. As our newly elected President, Menna Elfyn, said: 'It is fitting, is it not, that we have joined a worldwide organisation which was set up as a consequence of the First World War, the oldest human rights organisation in existence. Its original principles, advocating peace and friendship, remain at the core of what it's about. It is also fitting that it comes into existence at the end of year long events to mark the beginning of the First World War. PEN in Welsh means head, but poetry, according to RS Thomas, 'is that which arrives at the intellect 'by way of the heart'. Let PEN lead the way from the head to the heart.

**Fflur Dafydd** is Welsh-language Chair of Wales PEN Cymru, and a multi-award winning novelist and singer-songwriter.





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# We need more than Dr Who

**Lee Waters, IWA Director:**

What potential is there to increase the representation of Wales within programmes like Casualty, Holby and Doctor Who? Because they're not reflecting 'Wales' in any way and it really wouldn't interfere with the creativity a great deal to have a bit more Wales on screen.

**Ben Stephenson, BBC Head of Drama:**

Well, none of those shows are set in Wales, so it might be hard to do that naturally without it feeling a bit strange.

**LW:** Yes, but it is a bit strange watching a scene in Cardiff on Dr. Who and you're pretending it's London...

**Sue Vertue, Executive Producer, Sherlock:**

Sherlock is supposed to be in London, so we're outside in London's streets but we come to Wales a lot to do everything else. We can't portray Wales in that anymore than we do, but what we do have is an awful lot of Welsh crew, and the amount of money we pay into Wales is huge. So, you've got to take Sherlock and Dr. Who for what they are, you can't always say: "Yes, but where's the Welsh bit?".

**BS:** Also, shows being set somewhere but not filmed there is a part of television ecology, in America, all shows are filmed in LA, pretty much, but they're set everywhere else. But yes, you're

absolutely right, of course there should be more representation, but I'd rather do it on its own terms with integrity than tell producers to force people in, which I don't think is a particularly creative decision. If Chris Chibnall was from Wales Broadchurch would be in Wales, if Sally Wainwright was from Wales Last Tango in Halifax would be in Wales. I haven't yet found that One this year that I think is as brilliant as those, but I will, I have absolutely no doubt about it.

**John Geraint, Creative Director, Green Bay Media:**

You've left yourself off the hook too easily, and frankly you sound like Alan Yentob in 1994. And what I mean by that is: twenty years ago for Mark Thompson I did a piece of work which showed that one percent of BBC factual

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As part of the IWA's Cardiff Media Summit in December Media Commentator Maggie Brown led an audience discussion with BBC Head of Drama, Ben Stephenson, about the way Wales is portrayed on screen...

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came from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland put together, until the BBC made a policy decision to put a quota on it. And creative people hate quotas, but they're the only way that things change.

**BS:** Oh, I don't agree. I really don't agree.

**JG:** Well, are you not wondering why Hinterland came to you as an acquisition, not as part of your in-house? Should you not have been involved in that from the very beginning?

**BS:** We actually turned it down because we had a lot of male-led detective shows on BBC One.

**JG:** But you stood here and said: "I haven't found a show in Wales this year" but you

## ...So, you've got to take Sherlock and Dr. Who for what they are, you can't always say: "Yes, but where's the Welsh bit?"

programming was made outside England and 99 percent was made in England. And Alan Yentob said: "I can't do anything about it, I've got to commission the best ideas. I can't do anything else, that's my job". And you know what, every year 99 percent came from England and 1 percent

didn't find it last year, you didn't find it the year before, nobody in the BBC has found it for the last 15 years. And you're telling me that that can't change by a policy decision.

**BS:** Oh, it *can* change. I don't believe

it'd be the right policy, I don't believe a creative organisation is built on quotas, I don't believe they're serving audiences. I think once you have one quota it's very difficult to stop all quotas. I already have a huge number of quotas, it becomes hugely limiting. What I believe is that the more you talk about it, it will happen. Five years ago all the conversations were about women on BBC One. Everybody said: "let's do a quota". I said "no, let's just talk about it, let's make it a priority", and this year there's not a single person talking about the representation of women on BBC One or Two, because we've had Maggie Gyllenhaal, Sarah Lancashire and Keeley Hawes, extraordinary female roles. And that has not come from a quota. I do not believe we can be the best broadcaster in the world while having quotas.

**Maggie Brown, Media Commentator:** But women's roles, were really, really ventilated in the national press, they became a cause célèbre. The question of whether you have Wales represented on screen is a matter that's obviously of great

concern to people in Wales, the rest of the United Kingdom don't really think about it. So if you don't have a quota, where's the lever to get those promises?

**BS:** I'll expose my worries: you do it for Wales and you base on the percentage of that population and then you have to do it for London - in truth the most unrepresented place on television with the lowest amount of approval - you have to do it for South England, you have to do it for Cornwall, you have to do it for the North-East, you have to do it for everything and suddenly you have a matrix where the last thing anyone cares about is a good program and then what happens is that you commission ideas and you tell people to set them in places, so you say: "you know how you recently set it in "blah", do you actually mind setting it in Cornwall? Because we need to hit that quota". And that's where you end up. I totally understand where you're coming from, I totally see why you're frustrated - I'm sure I would be frustrated - but I believe we can do it organically. I can see

why you don't believe that but I don't believe that quotas is going to be the way to make great television in the end.

**Paul Islwyn Thomas, Boom Group:** I share both arguments here, because ultimately we want to get excellence on the screens. There are brilliant writers in Wales and I'm sure there's some fantastic development going on to find that really tries to define Wales in a network context, that brings the big audiences, that nails it. But there hasn't been that piece, John Geraint is right. In factual programs we've tried to do that too, and it's kind of happened to a point in factual programs, Call Centre is an example. But, to help move it along, because we've got to get somewhere rather than fight about it, I suppose: "what is it that we should be doing to encourage our producers?"

**Bethan Jones, Executive Producer BBC Wales:** We do hit a quota for what we make here, which is different to quotas on portrayal. Portrayal is something that I'm very concerned about, and we're constantly working with writers from Wales- and



sometimes not from Wales- on ideas that we want to develop set in Wales. We don't always get it right but we are constantly working on it, and we're also working with younger writers and through the Drama Award to bring on some really exciting new young Welsh writers. I think the other thing is portrayal of Wales isn't just Wales's job - I mean, I'm just thinking about *Our Girl*, where Iwan Rheon was the lead in that, and that was a Wales portrayal. It's also quite interesting that certain things that we've tried to set in Wales, we've tried to get leads from Wales but they haven't been available to us. So it's not that we're not trying.

**Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director of BBC Wales:** I think sometimes we can talk as if we've forgotten the extraordinary journey that Welsh production has gone on in the last ten years. The defining quality has been that it hasn't been a safe bet, these have been colossal creative bets that have been placed, and they haven't just paid off in Wales and in the UK, they've paid off globally, and we shouldn't forget that. The constraint is that in terms of investment in local programming, Ben, I think one of the concerns is those early rungs for writers, particularly in the English language. In the



hours, it's extraordinary; and what it replaced was acquisitions. So acquisitions on BBC One used to be about 300 hours, *Star Trek* prime time, and there's not an hour in prime time now about acquisitions apart from films. So, we forget that actually us, ITV, Channel 4, Sky, we are

## “I think sometimes we can talk as if we've forgotten the extraordinary journey that Welsh production has gone on in the last ten years.”

Welsh language *Pobol y Cwm* provides a very significant stable for writers to cut their teeth - but in the English language unless we can do significant co-productions like *Hinterland* it's network or bust. And I wonder to what extent that is a worry for you in terms of maintaining the talent's pipeline of writing into network drama.

**BS:** It's not, really, because I think that there's more talent coming now than there's ever been. We did some facts and figures comparing the output of BBC Drama now to 1982: there's 300 more

investing more in drama than we have done ever as a business, it's a billion pound business, drama in this country. So, there are so many opportunities

**MB:** But isn't Rhodri also addressing the point that Ken Skates, the Minister for Culture, made earlier that BBC Wales isn't able to make drama for BBC Wales network? Is that the problem? The English language...

**RTD:** Yes, I think what actually happened is more complex, in the sense that with

less money you work smarter, so *A Poet in New York* is a classic example of BBC Network and BBC Wales coming together, *Indian Doctor* is an example of BBC Worldwide, BBC Daytime and BBC Wales working together. There is drama, the notion that BBC Wales isn't producing portrayal drama about Wales, that's a fallacy: we can discuss the magnitude of it and whether it's enough, but it's out there. But I think what Ken Skates is putting his finger on is the license fee. There's a huge decision coming down the line in probably 24 months time, and probably the biggest decision the BBC has faced in a generation. We have discussions about English language local television in Wales, we talk about the need for S4C to have sufficient funding in future, all roads lead back to the license fee. And we mustn't forget this: in all the specific distinctive arguments we make about Wales, in the end all of decision-making hinges on a decision taken on the license fee next time around, and we mustn't forget that bigger picture.

You can listen to an audio recording of the full event via the IWA channel on Audioboom at [audioboom.com/channel/iwa](http://audioboom.com/channel/iwa)



## The most cosmopolitan of all Welsh historians

A tribute by **Peter Stead** to the historian John Davies

Historians are trained to identify turning points and the more perceptive of them sometimes highlight moments when history fails to turn. Blessed indeed, however, is the historian who lives through a period of decisive change, all the while playing a key part in the unfolding story, and who then lives on to become the prime recounter of and guide to of the corner that had been turned. Just to consider the fascinating career of John Davies is to become aware of a crucial half-century in which a new Welsh identity was forged.

By any reckoning John was one of the most interesting and important players in ensuring that a post-industrial and devolved Wales would be a country fully aware of those dynamic aspects of its

history which needed both to be treasured and recast as forces that could give texture and meaning to a somewhat bemused generation. The positive nature of the new Wales can clearly be seen in the way in which our national political, cultural and political leaders now lead the way in paying tribute to John, the historian who helped them to understand the country that they had been bequeathed.

It was fifty years ago that John joined the staff of the Swansea History Department in which I was a student. The news of his appointment occasioned a frisson in the coffee bars. 'Isn't he a Nationalist?' I impudently asked the Head of Department: 'We need all shades of opinion' explained Professor Glanmor Williams. John came among us in

dramatic fashion, a good-looking man in, always formally dressed in a dark suit that betokened political significance, walking quickly with exaggerated politeness and and speaking in equally exaggerated senior-common room tones: 'Shall we adjourn for some luncheon?' he would ask. In our first conversation I explained that my parents had inducted me into a Welsh identity defined by the chapel and sport. 'I have no interest in either' John explained. That was my introduction to a more complex and vital Wales than I had ever bothered to consider.

Tributes to John will rightly concentrate on the ways in which he made his country fully aware of how both History and Language were living forces and could be used to release new

## He loved travel and no traveller has ever gone to foreign parts knowing so much about where he was going.

energies and institutions. As we reflect on his public role we should give thanks too for the rich complexity of both his mind and personality. As a historian he had been meticulously trained at Cardiff and Cambridge: his initial work on Cardiff and the Butes was of the utmost importance and is an indication that in less political times John may well have inspired a badly needed fuller interest in the story of social complexity and wealth creation in Wales.

We should also remember that John was the most cosmopolitan of all Welsh historians. We always called him 'Bwlchllan' but in fact John belonged to the world. He loved travel and no traveller has ever gone to foreign parts knowing so much about where he was going. Obviously he was the right man to edit a Welsh Encyclopaedia, but he could have rushed off similar volumes for any country

in the world. He could detect minorities and minority languages in places where the rest of us couldn't even find a country. We should always treasure the image of John writing his definitive *Hanes Cymru* on the beach in Sicily. He travelled lightly: on one European trip he opened his large case to reveal only a small toilet bag, a crumpled passport and a magnificent royal blue dressing gown: enough for one week.

Above all we mourn a wonderful friend. John was a delightful man and it was with considerable pleasure that those of us who knew him in academe saw him charm a nation in his broadcasting. There was nothing of the fanatic or zealot about him: his wonderful laugh and smile were testimony of his humour and, as evidenced in his Encyclopaedia, his mischievousness was a wonderful weapon. He was as sensitive a person as one would ever meet.

Women had been particularly important in his life and from his mother, sister, daughters and wife Janet he had acquired insights that eluded many of the male groups that dominate public life. There were always new friends of all ages and both sexes and they were just as likely to come from Brittany, Kosovo, Valparaiso or the Punjab as Ceredigion or his native Rhondda (and how he loved that ironic badge of distinction). John was above all perhaps a romantic, in love with Wales as if the country was really a person. He was easily moved to tears but just remember today that wonderful smile that came whenever the people of Wales did something of which we could be proud. We should all envy that kind of love and learn from it.

 **Peter Stead** is a cultural historian of 20th Century Wales

*An event to celebrate the life and work of John Davies will be held at Cardiff City Hall at 5pm on Friday 17 April.*

### Tributes posted on Click on Wales

 **Crwtyn Cemais** says:

*I purchased John Davies' 'Hanes Cymru' soon after it was published. At the time I was living and working in France and had been for many years. The opportunities for speaking Welsh were few and far between and as my French improved, my mother tongue got rustier and the chance of finding reading material in Welsh seemed to be non-existent. Then one day I found myself browsing the bookshelves of the 'Librairie internationale FNAC' bookshop in Paris where, in the English-language section, under 'British History', two Welsh words, 'Hanes' and 'Cymru' leapt out at me – I couldn't believe my eyes, or my luck! I bought the book immediately. I treasured it then and I treasure it now. John, diolch o galon.*

 **Richard Yeo** says:

*Whilst backpacking as a twentysomething in 1996, I unexpectedly and utterly randomly had the pleasure of first meeting John across the breakfast table at the Fairlawn Hotel in Calcutta. I next bumped into him over a decade later (I distinctly remember a copy of Anita Brookner's *Hotel Du Lac* popping out of the pocket of his well worn gilet!) and, following a re-introduction, proceeded to join him as a member of the quiz team at a local ale house in Cardiff Bay. The incentive of a bottle of red as the first prize coupled with his unwavering intellect, more often than not led to victory.... and the consequential in-house consumption of the aforementioned prize before 'kicking out' time. John would, more often than not, leave with purple lips from partaking of the winnings. I'll miss his company dearly.*

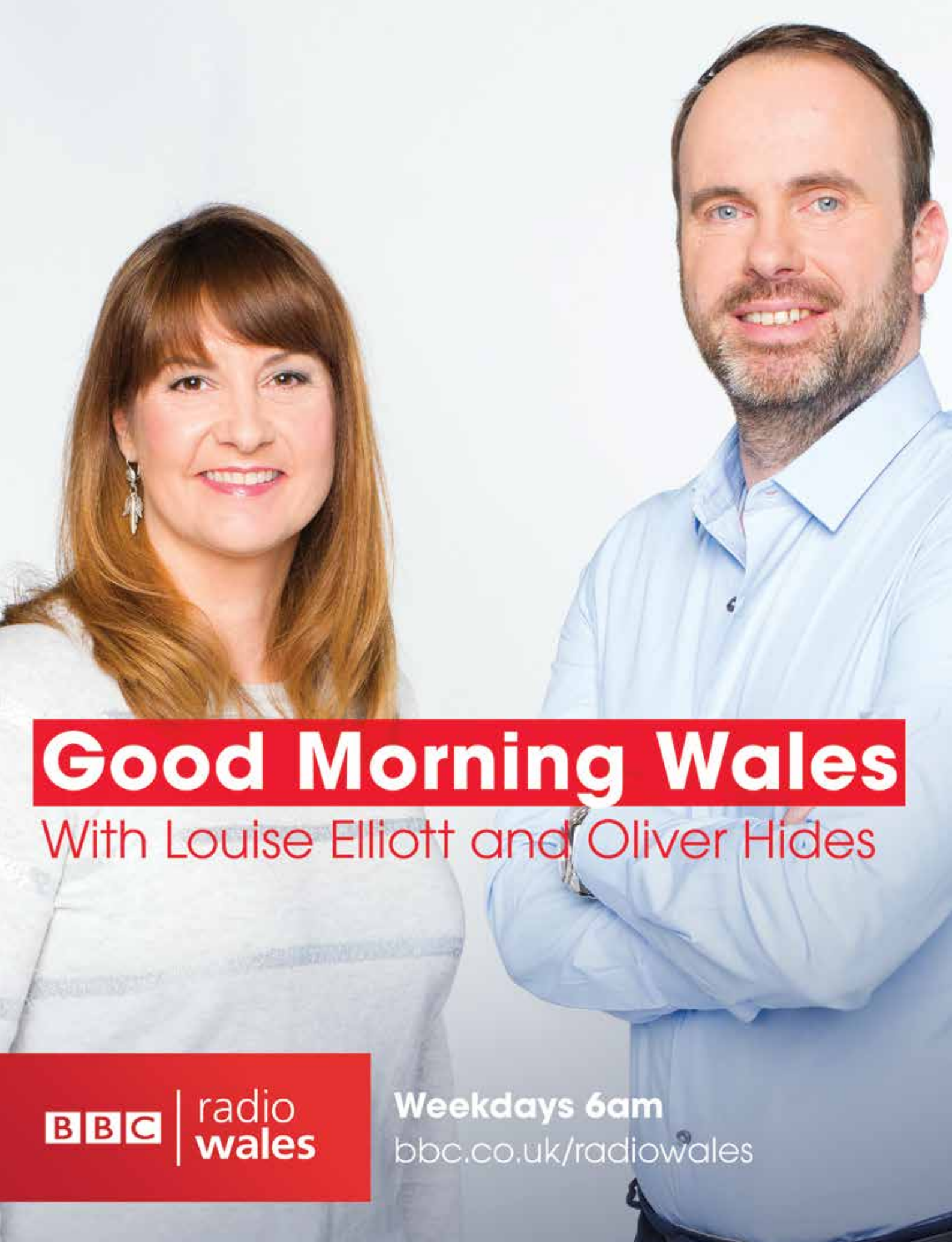
 **Nigel Stapley** says:

*John Bwlchllan was a supportive, strong, calm and reliable presence for so many of us in Pantycelyn down the years, and gave the (sometimes unbiddable and headstrong) residents the freedom and the confidence to organise the social, cultural and political affairs of the hall much as they wished.*

*Professionally, he also gave the lie to those who insist even today on describing any attempts to build, re-vivify or even study in depth our own nation's story as being "narrow" or "parochial". He was a world citizen and a 'gwir Gymro', and rightly saw no contradiction between these two attributes.*

*And let us remember also the quiet dignity with which he 'came out' in his sixties. No-one who saw the programme in which he went public about his sexuality could fail to be moved by it.*

*Cawr o ddyn. Pob heddi i ti, John*



# Good Morning Wales

With Louise Elliott and Oliver Hides

**BBC** | radio  
wales

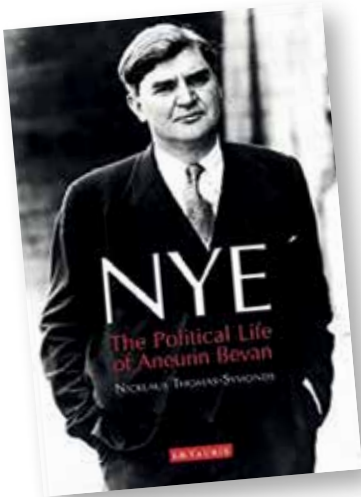
**Weekdays 6am**  
[bbc.co.uk/radiowales](http://bbc.co.uk/radiowales)

# Reviews

Nye: The Political Life of Aneurin Bevan | A Time to Laugh | Proud | Esmé: Guardian of Snowdonia | Harvest Moon, The Life and Work of Artist Aneurin Jones | The Actaeon Tide | A Class Apart: Learning the Lessons of Education in Post-Devolution Wales

## Working-class hero

Andy Bevan



Nye: *The Political Life of Aneurin Bevan*  
Nicklaus Thomas-Symonds  
I B Tauris, 2015, £20

Aneurin Bevan is still very much with us, 55 years after his death. He is cited daily, usually in current debate about the health service, and we are surrounded by reminders of the man – especially in Wales. His statue, at the end of Queen Street, seems to urge shoppers to assail Cardiff Castle. At Gabalfa, a pub is named after him. More reasonably, a few miles further north up the A470, a Health Board and a thinktank bear his name – along with dozens of Closes, Courts and Crescents on social housing schemes. So, this new biography by Nick Thomas-Symonds reconsiders the life and legacy of someone who still *matters*.

And everyone in Wales to the left of the Tories seems to want a slice of Aneurin

Bevan. The poor man has been sanctified and sanitised over the years to make him fit the political tastes of some real trimmers who have long ago made their peace with the rule of Big Business and the ‘free market’. Bevan would have been appalled. Nick Thomas-Symonds reminds us in the early chapters of his biography of the seam from which Aneurin Bevan was hewn as a class war socialist and an inveterate opponent of the Tory Party and the British ruling class.

Yet, as we move through the pages towards more recent times, Thomas-Symonds starts to tell a conventional story about a left-winger who abandons the brutish and naïve simplicities of his youthful years; the ‘statesmanship’ and ‘pragmatism’ of the ‘mature’ Bevan are emphasised. ‘Aneurin Bevan was a man of power,’ Thomas-Symonds tells us. ‘His period as a Cabinet minister had brought out the best in him.’ Earlier, and again rather conventionally, we read: ‘The creation of the NHS was an incontestable achievement which, even putting aside the rest of his political career,

makes Bevan one of the greatest twentieth century government ministers.’

There is a case to be made, though, for an *alternative* assessment and one which is truer to Bevan’s origins and stated purpose; a narrative around the loss to office of the labour movement’s foremost left-wing leader. From that point of view, Bevan’s political zenith would be from the founding of *Tribune* in January 1937 to the Labour landslide itself in July 1945. At *Tribune*, he worked closely with other anti-Stalinist socialists, including George Orwell (who had returned from the ranks of the POUM militia in 1937) and Evelyn Anderson, author of the magnificent *Hammer or Anvil*, analysing with forensic precision the zigzags and blunders of the Comintern in Germany 1928-1933. Jennie Lee’s pro-ILP view of the world was a vital factor too – and Thomas-Symonds gives due credit.

*Tribune* – with a huge influence among the most active rank and file Labour Party members – and the Left Book Club played the role of a super-effective thinktank, disseminating socialist ideas. This role

‘The creation of the NHS was an incontestable achievement which, even putting aside the rest of his political career, makes Bevan one of the greatest twentieth century government ministers.’



## One of Bevan's constant themes, learning from the soldiers' bitter disappointments with the broken promises of 1918, was that the Tories could not 'win the peace'. Bevan argued for the breaking of the wartime coalition at the earliest opportunity.

became even more crucial when Labour joined the wartime coalition government, with an electoral truce between the main parties. In those circumstances, *Tribune* spoke for those in the labour movement who felt disenfranchised by coalition politics. And Bevan spoke loudest and most effectively of all through the pages of *Tribune* and from the backbenches in parliament. Despite the coalition straitjacket, and as a long-established anti-appeaser and anti-fascist, he systematically attacked Churchill and the Tories, upholding an independent working class angle on the war against Hitler and the fight for workers' rights at home.

One of Bevan's constant themes, learning from the soldiers' bitter disappointments with the broken promises of 1918, was that the Tories could not 'win the peace'. Bevan argued for the breaking of the wartime coalition at the earliest opportunity. He sensed very early on that a desire for radical change would lift a Labour Government to office once Hitler was defeated and that wartime measures regulating private enterprise in the planned interests of the war effort would make Labour's tasks in nationalising basic industries more straightforward. In the heady days after VE Day, a revolutionary mood swept Britain. Above all others, Bevan gave it a voice.

In July 1945, Bevan accepted Attlee's shrewd offer of a cabinet post. The sheer

detail of his new tasks and the constraints of 'collective responsibility' meant that the left lost its outstanding leader. Bevan is revered, of course, as the founder of the NHS. But the plain fact is that an NHS had been promised, with cross-party support, in the Beveridge Report of 1942 and a Tory Minister of Health, Henry Willink, had started negotiations on a National Health Service with the BMA in 1944 (unhelpfully for Bevan as it turned out). In any event, Bevan's final measures for the establishment of the NHS in July 1948 arguably made some harmful and unnecessary concessions. Other Labour ministers (like Jim Griffiths) could surely have made at least as good a job of delivering Labour's manifesto pledge for a comprehensive NHS free at the point of use.

Did Bevan find himself being 'co-opted' (in Ralph Miliband's phrase) by the trappings of power? Did he at times lose touch with his stated lifelong mission? In any event, during the last year of the Labour Government, Bevan was moved to the Ministry of Labour and Hilary Marquand took over at Health. This last year in office was marred by the new Chancellor Gaitskell's insistence on imposing health service charges (for specs and teeth) and the consequent resignation from office of Bevan, John Freeman and Harold Wilson. This is widely held to have been a major factor in Labour losing the 1951 General Election

(despite winning more votes than the Tories).

In opposition, Bevan became a thorn in the side of the Labour leadership, focusing on the need for an ill-thought-out 'third way' in world politics between the big blocs of the US and the USSR. His criticisms of Labour's foreign policy ultimately led to the threat of expulsion (narrowly averted) in 1955. After Labour's defeat at the General Election of 1955, Bevan sought a rapprochement with Gaitskell and, at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton in 1957 he broke the hearts of the 'Bevanites', including Michael Foot, by renouncing unilateral disarmament. All of this is reliably traced by Thomas-Symonds.

Nye is compact, concise, accessible and - with the exception of his tendentious and desultory treatment of the New Left of the 1970s and the 'Hard Left' (sic) of the 1980s - well referenced. In dealing with the 1950s and the 1980s, the modern reader needs to weigh the approach to policy and party discipline of Gaitskell and Kinnock - two Labour leaders who never won a general election - against those of Bevan and Benn - who never had the opportunity to lead the Labour Party. Thomas-Symonds strikes a neutral and explanatory stance in relation to the long-gone 1950s but, quite unnecessarily for a biographer of Bevan, takes a partisan but unargued stance (effectively against Benn and his supporters) for the 1980s.

In understanding the controversies which shaped Aneurin Bevan, Thomas-Symonds offers a well waymarked path. Somehow, though, the passion is missing and the reader may feel the need to seek out also Bevan's own words in *Why Not Trust the Tories* (1944), *In Place of Fear* (1952) and his last Conference speech of 1959.



**Andy Bevan** spent nine years with VSO between 1988-1997 supporting development projects in Africa. From 1997 to 2013 he worked on the EU's Voluntary Service programme and in 2000 co-founded ICP Partneriaeth. He is the author of the IWA's Senedd Paper 'A real citizen's service for Wales'.

## Lessons from history?

Tony Bianchi



*A Time to Laugh*

Rhys Davies

Parthian, 2014, (originally published 1937)

'When these struggles of the workers become a matter of history, a hundred or so years hence,' says Tudor Morris, 'they will be seen as rather noble.' 'That depends,' his mother replies, 'whether that Revolution of yours is ever achieved and the result found to be the better way.'

*A Time to Laugh* is the thirty-ninth title in Parthian's Library of Wales series, edited by Dai Smith: an important act of reclamation of out-of-print or forgotten classics of Welsh literature in English. The novel itself, the middle volume in Rhys Davies' Rhondda Trilogy, is itself an exercise in historical recovery. First published in 1937, its story is set in the 1890s and depicts, with much imaginative licence, key milestones of that decade: in particular, the 1898 strike against the Sliding Scale system for setting miners' wages, the subsequent lockout and the emergence of the South Wales Miners' Federation. The author draws on his own childhood memories of the later Cambrian Combine strike and the Tonypandy Riots to add further drama to the story.

The novel is a kaleidoscopic recreation of the Rhondda's coal klondike: vibrant, squalid, volatile. Accordingly, it shifts gear

throughout, from the furious to the comic to the lyrical, always bearing close witness to the struggles it depicts, both personal and collective. It inhabits its putative place and time. But it is also a retrospective engagement with those events, an attempt to understand them anew in the light of present conditions. In his other 1937 publication, *My Wales*, Davies speaks of 'a race of people abandoned and useless, ruined and hopeless' in the 'black galleries of a real hell'. This is the vantage point from which he considers the previous generation's ordeals. Like Tudor Morris' mother, he invites us not just to relive the past but to reflect on the way it moulded the future we have inherited. The novel dramatises, with frantic, desperate urgency, past battles for solidarity. But then it asks: what did that solidarity ultimately amount

he dedicates himself to relieving the suffering of the impoverished families of 'The Terraces'. His love life follows the same trajectory, as he rejects prudish solicitor's daughter Mildred in favour of 'elemental' Daisy.

But Tudor is not an unqualified hero. He is part of the author's self-questioning mechanism, a means of scrutinising his distance from his subject matter, and in particular his tendency to romanticise the working class. He allows Tudor to be mocked by Daisy for his bourgeois fastidiousness. His mother directs a sceptical gaze at his new-found zeal. And those whose cause he espouses are often themselves dubious: 'Endurance, that's what we've got to learn,' says Tudor. 'Endurance don't feed the guts,' comes the reply. In one of the novel's most

**Tudor's romanticism has a strange underbelly. At first he sees rioting miners as 'sub-human, baboons'. Later, however, it is precisely their animal qualities that fill him with excitement. He feels 'oddly exhilarated by the enmity. They were superbly alive...'**

to? What has it bequeathed us?

Tudor Morris, the novel's hero, is a young doctor. His profession is both a novelist's device – doctors get to mix with all levels of society – and a mirror of the author's own middle class upbringing as a grocer's son. Set apart from the industrial proletariat, his conversion to their cause and, in turn, his adoption by them as leader and exemplar, becomes the central thread in the narrative fabric. Eschewing his privileged background,

effective juxtapositions, his 'wild harangue' of a maiden speech is followed by the harrowing visit of a woman patient so ill, so impoverished and so blighted by tragedy that she desires nothing but death.

Tudor's romanticism has a strange underbelly. At first he sees rioting miners as 'sub-human, baboons'. Later, however, it is precisely their animal qualities that fill him with excitement. He feels 'oddly exhilarated by the enmity. They were superbly alive...'

The word 'alive' is much repeated. He takes a half-guilty delight, too, in the miners' 'dangerous atavism'. Even his love for Daisy grows from the same root. In her voice he hears 'a fragment of some pagan hymn caught out of the dark wood'. For much of the time Tudor sounds, anachronistically, like an acolyte of D H Lawrence.

And this is where the novel becomes problematic. Within its glorious cacophony of voices, that of the author is the most unstable. From the outset, Tudor's atavism bleeds into the narrator's own worldview. The people of the valley are 'an aboriginal race'. Rioters 'infest... like swarms of rats.' Even hard-won solidarity can, from this perspective, get blurred into mere collective euphoria. In one of the novel's most vivid and comic sections, we are treated to a spasm of religious revival. The implication is clear. Class war may be no more than this. So, later: 'The satisfaction of the fight became like a wallowing in a religious orgasm.' Even in the affirmative portrait of miners' leader, Melville, 'burning mysticism' is his chief attribute.

And yet, despite all reservations, the final millennial epiphany on the mountain is delivered, it seems, without irony: 'Let them return to the earth and see that there lay their strength and their faith.' For the Welsh, as Davies said elsewhere, 'are still bucolic and simple.' And there we are, back with Lawrence's Celtic 'moony magic'. Rhys Davies did, of course, know Lawrence well and admired his work. Lawrence, you feel, sits on his shoulder, prompting at times, brushed aside, even mocked, at others. Add to this Tudor's ostracisation by the self-righteous as a sexual deviant and we may also have a nod in the direction of the author's own experience as a gay man: an experience that could not, in the 1930s, be investigated except in the most oblique of ways. (Chris Williams' foreword suggests other, perhaps more subliminal, signifiers of this kind.) It all makes for an uneasy but engrossing mix of industrial pastoral and a fervent, often desperate, yearning for emancipation.

*A Time to Laugh* was reissued a few weeks after *Pride* hit the screens, together with its sister documentary about the

## Leaders Without Men; Men Without Leaders.



**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF "MABON":** Where's our army? Has anyone seen our army?  
**AIDE-DE-CAMP:** Please, general, I saw by the "Western Mail" on Saturday that our army has gone to battle.

*Western Mail* cartoon by J M Stanforth satirising the lack of communication between miners and their leaders at the start of the 1898 strike.

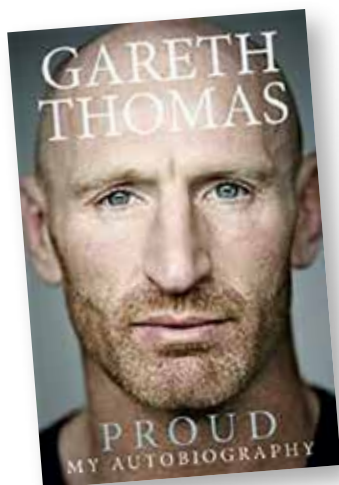
1984-5 miners' strike, Owen Gower's *Still the Enemy Within*. These, too, engage with past struggles, albeit more recent ones. The temptation to celebrate solidarity for its own sake pervades each, whether it be simply to enjoy its warm glow or to recapture a lost sense of purposefulness. But they keep the central questions alive. And Rhys Davies' febrile, sometimes incoherent, attempts to extract meaning from history are surely as understandable as the much more ideologically driven efforts of, say, Lewis Jones (*Cwmardy* was also published in 1937) or Lewis Grassic Gibbon in his *Scots Quair* trilogy (1932-4). As we watch the crowds

gather in Greece, Spain and elsewhere, they remind us that we have been here before, that the struggle of the many against the few continues, and it's far from clear that we are any better equipped to engage in that struggle than we were the last time around, or the time before.

**Tony Bianchi** is a freelance arts consultant, a poet and novelist. He writes in both Welsh and English. His forthcoming novel is *Harry Selwyn's Last Race*

## Sex, lies and rugby

Lewis Davies



*Proud*

Gareth Thomas with Michael Calvin  
Ebury Press, 2014, £20

Towards the end of the book, Gareth Thomas runs through a list of injuries he's sustained over the years; broken bones, lost teeth, several concussions and then a stroke. It's a tough physical game. Thomas was one of the leading players of his generation, with over a hundred Welsh caps, a captain of his country in both rugby codes and of the British Lions on a tour of New Zealand. He is an iconic figure in Welsh life, immediately recognisable, and he has carved a new media and business career since retirement from professional sport. In *Proud*, written with Michael Calvin, we are taken on the journey of his life so far: from Eighties, recession blighted Bridgend where Thomas is a struggling schoolboy who left without a GCSE but with a talent for rugby, through the highs and lows of an international career that spanned over fifteen years, three World Cups, stints as a player in Toulouse, at Cardiff in the new regional game and for the short-lived north Wales rugby league franchise The Crusaders. It is quite a sports story.

We get a sense of what it might mean to be a professional player: the insecurities, the pressures to deliver a win and secure a £5000 bonus or a lucrative contract, the fickle coaches (Graham Henry is likened to a bad school teacher), the compromises

The rumours that claimed that Gareth Thomas was gay started quite early in his career and despite a media scrutiny that occasionally revved to a vicious clamouring and occasional threats to 'out' him he managed to live an intense and what must have been an exhausting double life.

with a journalists hungry for a story - the relationship is complicated and Welsh rugby a peculiar soap opera and rumour-mill.

*Proud* is a step above the bland rugby biographies that have been a staple of Welsh bookshops for twenty years, usually ghostwritten by *Western Mail* journalists earning some extra cash. Michael Calvin is a writer who has won the Sports Book of the Year for his *Nowhere Man*; in *Proud* he captures the contradictions, compromises and strength of a man who became the first person to play top-level professional sport and declare to the world that he is gay. In rugby this took some doing as the physical welcome to rugby league demonstrated, as did the occasional abuse he received from bigoted supporters in both codes. But this was balanced by the dignified applause from Toulouse supporters on his first game as an "Out" gay man for Cardiff Blues. Gareth Thomas wears the support he has received since "coming out" well. He has moved beyond the confines of rugby to become an icon, a businessman who has set up rugby academies, an ice-skater on a celebrity show and to live and be accepted as a couple with his now partner Ian.

*Proud* is at heart an emotional book. Thomas wants to talk about what it means to him to be at the centre of a rugby culture, a leader of men, a keeper of secrets. What it means to be in love with a woman with whom he wants to have children and also a gay man. He wants to talk about winning, losing, the life after rugby, the inevitable memories. There are forays into philosophy, religion and the poetry of Owen Sheers. He realises his life has been full of contradictions and he has been capable of living a lie and he's been good at it. He wants to explain why.

Towards the end of the book he wants to get a few things straight with his long-time Bridgend rugby friends and mentors Compo Greenslade and the Welsh international wing Glen Webbe. He asks them the question 'So when did you realise I was gay? I knew you were protecting me, but why didn't you say anything?' The conversation reveals a bit of a conundrum. The rumours that claimed that Gareth Thomas was gay started quite early in his career and despite a media scrutiny that occasionally revved to a vicious clamouring and occasional threats to 'out' him he managed to live an intense and what must have been an exhausting double life; a married man genuinely in love with his wife while also enjoying a decade of chance casual sex as a single gay man in the bars of Soho.

Compo and Webbe recall a Saturday night out in Cardiff with 'the Bridgend boys' and a bar called Minsky's that specialised in gaudy drag acts and late night drinking. They both thought that Thomas took a bit too much of an interest in the professional talent and when Webbe saw him again at the club they decide to start a rumour among the team that he's gay as a bit of a laugh. Soon the rumour is out of hand, it's just not the Bridgend boys, half the country seems to know someone who knows. Compo and Webbe don't believe it but the thing is - it's true. Thomas doesn't speculate on why Webbe was there a second time but then Minsky's was a good night out.



Lewis Davies is currently playwright in residence at Rhosygilwen Hall. His first novel was/is *Work, Sex and Rugby*. He was twice player of the year for Bryncoch 2nd XV.

## A sympathetic portrait

Francesca Rhydderch



*Esmé: Guardian of Snowdonia*  
Teleri Bevan  
Y Lolfa, £9.95

In 1934, at the age of just twenty-three, Thomas Firbank bought Dyffryn Mymbyr, a 2,400-acre farm perched high up in the Glyderau mountains in north Wales. Six years later he published a memoir, *I Bought A Mountain*, which rapidly became an international bestseller. But by the time the book was published, the Second World War had broken out and Thomas had joined up with the Coldstream Guards. He would never return to Dyffryn, or to the woman who had featured so memorably in his autobiography, his wife Esmé. In *Esmé: Guardian of Snowdonia*, Teleri Bevan, former Head of Programmes for BBC Wales radio and television, takes up Esmé's story.

The Surrey-born daughter of one Tancred Disraeli Cummins, a Manchester businessman, and Dora Hague, who hailed from a family of prominent artists, young Esmé was keen on amateur dramatics. She was soon spotted by influential actor and manager Sir Frank Benson, and joined his renowned acting school. He found her a few small parts in London productions, and she was starting to make her way as a professional actress when she was struck down by mumps. She returned home to her parents' house in Deganwy where, once

she was recovered, she took up riding at the local riding school. It was here that she met Thomas Firbank, marrying him just a few months later.

The couple's short marriage, separation and divorce are dealt with swiftly by Bevan: the breakdown of their relationship was rarely even mentioned by Esmé herself, and friends and family also kept quiet on the subject. Teleri Bevan similarly chooses in her sympathetic portrait – perhaps a little conservatively – to respect her subject's privacy, focusing instead on Esmé's less celebrated achievements as a farmer and conservationist.

This indomitable woman is reminiscent of the stoic fictional heroines of Welsh-language writer Kate Roberts, who was born not far from Capel Curig, in the tiny village of Rhosgadfan. A snapshot of Esmé's life during these years appears in a letter from S. C. Wells, a fan of *I Bought a Mountain* who came to holiday in the area during the Second World War: 'She works with two men from dawn to dusk and, in spite of her slight physique, she can beat most men in a hard day's work, such is her strength and endurance. She has let the farmhouse and lives alone in the caravan on the bank of a river in which she bathes daily, in the icy cold waters of Snowdon.' According to Wells, Esmé would often head off at the crack of dawn to drive a flock of sheep distances of up to twenty miles, and then hitchhike home.

However, the bulk of this memoir is given over to the establishment and day-to-day running of the Snowdonia National Park Society. Not many biographers could turn a bundle of minutes and agendas into such a lively account, fleshed out by interviews with Esmé's family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours. Esmé was clearly not an easy person to pigeonhole – she was after all an actress turned sheep-farmer with a nose for rural politics, who loved nothing better than to dress up in her best clothes. The most striking photograph in the book is one that sums up this unusual, compelling combination: Esmé, wearing a ruffle-hemmed dress in preparation for a trip to town, strides along a muddy lane in a pair of white Mary Jane shoes. By now she was married to the man next to her in the photograph: Major Peter Kirby, who had been in charge of Sandhurst's battle camp

at Capel Curig during the war. This time the union was destined to last – Kirby was a man with a practical streak who shared Esmé's love of rural life and interest in conservation.

From 1967, when she founded the Snowdonia National Park Society, and then the Esmé Kirby Snowdonia Trust in 1991, Esmé gave a huge amount of her time and resources to the legal protection of the beautiful, unspoiled landscape of Snowdonia.

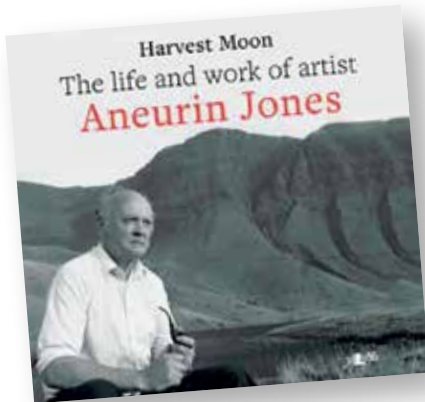
From 1967, when she founded the Snowdonia National Park Society, and then the Esmé Kirby Snowdonia Trust in 1991, Esmé gave a huge amount of her time and resources to the legal protection of the beautiful, unspoiled landscape of Snowdonia. Some claimed her as a 'heroine'. Others fell out with her and refused to be interviewed for this faithful biography. Overall, though, Esmé was accorded a 'quiet respect', Bevan tells us, which since her death in 1999 has outlived her in the form of continuing conservation work. The best summing up of Esmé's dedication to the spirit her adopted place is provided by Esmé herself: '...Maybe I am biased,' she wrote. 'To me they are not just another mountain – the Glyders are, and always will be, my home.'



Francesca Rhydderch is the author of *The Rice Paper Diaries*, winner of last year's Wales Book of the Year for fiction, and a former editor of *New Welsh Review*.

## An opportunity missed

Jonathan Glasbrook-Griffiths



*Harvest Moon, The Life and Work of Artist Aneurin Jones*  
**Aneurin Jones**  
 Y Lolfa, £19.95

Nearly a decade on from the death of Sir Kyffin Williams, Aneurin Jones is acknowledged by many to be Wales' most popular living artist. Trained in Swansea at a time when a mastery of line and form were still considered to be of far greater importance than the pursuit of individual self-expression, Jones is a painter and in particular, a draughtsman of consummate skill. Widely exhibited within Wales as well as further afield, his familiar depictions of farmers, corrugated iron topped farmsteads and Welsh cobs in hand have become as much a national archetype as Sir Kyffin's ubiquitous images of Snowdonia and its denizens ever were. That Jones' ability to depict his fellow countrymen

and their surroundings so sympathetically is a direct consequence of a childhood spent growing up in rural mid Wales underpins much of his recently released autobiography, *Harvest Moon, The Life and Work of Artist Aneurin Jones*.

Although now a longstanding resident of Ceredigion, Jones was originally raised on a farm in the small community of Cwm Wysg on the border between the old county of Breconshire and Carmarthenshire. Recounting his early years affectionately in an unpretentious and down to earth prose style, his recollections of youth during the interbellum and Second World War is a manly tale of hard work liberally embroidered with light-hearted stories of superstition and larger than life characters whose prowess at breaking a horse or ability to anchor the tug-o-war earned them folkloric status. Evidently keen not to overplay what was clearly a happy childhood, the more disagreeable facets of agrarian life are not overlooked entirely either, as his short chapter chronicling the ruinous winter of 1947 attests, as indeed does the drowning of a wayward sheepdog as he unwittingly sat atop a door whilst it thrashed beneath him.

Told chronologically as well as thematically, the text is interspersed with appropriate imagery drawn from throughout Jones' long career, although, as might be expected, the majority of artworks date from the period after 1986 when Jones retired as Head of Art at Ysgol y Preseli in Crymych, Pembrokeshire, to pursue his artistic career full time. Abounding in anecdote and lightweight reminiscences almost to the exclusion of anything else, in contrast to his sometimes-vivid use of colour, Jones manages to maintain a monotone throughout his narration that

sees him treat even the most significant milestones in his life in much the same way as any of the other less remarkable events recounted. Unsurprisingly from someone embarking on their eighty-fifth year many of Jones' memories are infused with a sense of nostalgia for a simpler way of life far removed from the realities of form-filling, micro-chipping and focus on diversification that makes modern farming an increasingly unattractive proposition to a younger generation.

Whilst there can be no doubting the significance of his own rural heritage to his work as an image maker, from an art historical perspective Jones' decision to prioritise his upbringing at the expense of his formative years as an artist in Wales is to be regretted. Although a volume on the history of Swansea Art School already exists, as someone who ultimately chose to become a painter rather than a farmhand it is disappointing that less than a third of *Harvest Moon* is given over to his time as an art student in Swansea or to his experiences as he later sought to establish himself as an artist in Wales. This at a time when many of his contemporaries still had to relocate elsewhere to ensure a living for themselves. Sadly, despite several teasing references to his own sartorial eccentricities and various good-natured hijinx enacted during his student days, anyone expecting a tale to rival the antics of an earlier generation of Welsh bohemians such as Augustus John, Sir Cedric Morris or Evan Walters will be disappointed. His vivid but brief pen portrait of the irascible German painter Friedrich Könekamp notwithstanding it is again to be regretted that at a time when their many acquaintances are fast diminishing Jones overlooked the opportunity to flesh out further any of the interesting yet still poorly documented characters that crossed his path. Swansea Principal Kenneth Hancock or Jones' former lecturers Bill Price and Fred Janes, all men who in one way or another made a lasting impact on his chosen career path, immediately spring to mind.

Already the subject of two publications in the Welsh language, Y Lolfa's latest art offering unfortunately possesses more than a touch of the home publisher about it. This time aimed at Jones' Anglophone admirers the book is liberally illustrated throughout with

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At a time when many an artist of lesser importance has found their efforts celebrated so, such recognition is indeed long overdue.

numerous examples of his paintings, drawings and occasional family photograph; however, the somewhat irregular interplay between text and colour plates makes for a sometimes less than satisfactory reading experience. Likewise the volume is also let down visually by the use of unsightly chapter headings intended to highlight the predominant colour of the painting opposite, an unnecessary device more suited to a chemistry text book than an art publication.

From the long list of subscribers listed at the back of the book it is evident that there exists an appetite to see Aneurin Jones' life and artworks endorsed in print. At a time when many an artist of lesser importance has found their efforts celebrated so, such recognition is indeed long overdue. No doubt for those backers for whom an evening spent in with John Craven and his colleagues on *Countyfile* is time well spent, *Harvest Moon* is probably just what they had in mind. However, for those devotees seeking to broaden their understanding of a period in Welsh art recently dominated in print by a reverence for the avant-garde posturing of the 56 Group, *Harvest Moon* represents an opportunity missed.



Jonathan Glasbrook Griffiths is currently applying the finishing touches to a biography of the artist Evan Walters.

## Sea, surf and spirit

James Vilares



*The Actaeon Tide*  
Tom Anderson  
Parthian, 2014, £8.99

New Chair of the Welsh Academy, Tom Anderson, has turned away from his usual surf-themed travelogues to fiction with the late 2014 launch of *The Actaeon Tide*, and it's a fascinating fictional debut that refuses to be pigeonholed. Part crime-thriller, part supernatural mystery, *The Actaeon Tide* brings the best of the writer's talent for characterization and descriptive detail - 'mackerel-skin layers of cloud' is a highlight - prevalent in his surf-writing to this new genre.

So it's a departure, certainly, though not so far away from the shore as you might think. The setting, after all, is Anderson's hometown of Porthcawl, his hero an avid surfer. So fans of his early writing will be pleased that Anderson's lyrical talent for evoking the many guises of the sea, so beautifully evidenced in *Chasing Dean*, is an ever-present feature of this novel, too. In fact, so strong is Anderson's preoccupation - geographically, emotionally, metaphorically, spiritually - with the sea, that only a handful of scenes in the book that take place out of sight of the coast.

Anderson, then, keeps to the things he knows best. The sea, of course, and a small-scale detective agency too: apparently

Anderson spent some time in a similar job in his younger days. And it is here in the Whiteout detective agency, under the tutelage of the eponymous, larger-than-life Starsky White, Porthcawl's answer to the tenant of 221B Baker Street, that we meet Noah, the constant and recurring joy of the book.

Anderson has found a strong narrator here. A bit of a philosopher, and able to rise to any challenge set by the author, Noah is equally at home pursuing existential thought processes in his moments of quiet by the sea as he is giving a gripping account of the next piece in the unveiling mystery. And as with all great narrators, Noah is caught between two stools, suspended between the ideal and the mundane, between the artist (or in this case, surfer) and the clearly talented investigator, between a sense of control and of uncontrollable forces at work on him. Noah, as Anderson himself, has a spiritual relationship with geography, a sense of place that encompasses the powers beyond his control:

*My other other place. If it can't be the sea. Let's go there, drift quick, just for a power-up. So that I can get through the next bits:*

Closed eyes, Starsky's voice retreats, the interior of his car and the small print lose their grip over me. I push my floating mind across the country and head for the hills... It's the summit of the biggest hill behind the Crawl and I climb here to remind myself not to care. D'you ever get that burning, that upwelling - a sense you're banging your head against a wall? There's so much I want to be, to do, and most of it can't be up to me. Some

A bit of a philosopher, and able to rise to any challenge set by the author, Noah is equally at home pursuing existential thought processes in his moments of quiet by the sea as he is giving a gripping account of the next piece in the unveiling mystery.

people are born to pull strings, and others are born puppets. But up here I get it.

...My size feels great. A puppet - but right now, for once, looking down on my own show.

Add to this perspective, this psychogeography, the impending danger that threatens to destroy both present comfort and future idyll, and you have a wonderful tension, which, aside from the mystery driving the plot, makes Noah a character of genuine depth and real humanity.

*The Actaeon Tide* reanimates mythology, standing on the shoulders of tales from the deep past, shoulders which, like the ocean passing from tide to perpetual tide under an ever-present congregation of surfboards, are aptly reinvented with a 21st century flavour. And it's the presence of Alice, an unearthly yet alluring presence in the book, that is the focus of this mysticism, brought in by Whiteout to consult on that which Noah and Starsky, from their uber-rational perspectives, can't countenance. A times the supernatural element, the inherent mystery of which builds much of the early tension, becomes too vague. This is nowhere more apparent than when Noah wakes in the night to find himself hand-cuffed to the bed, and Alice's explanation is typically amorphous:

'We're ok,' she adds, almost inaudible. 'As long as we stay just as we are...It isn't you. That's perfect. You're outside of the main thread now. This is exactly right.'

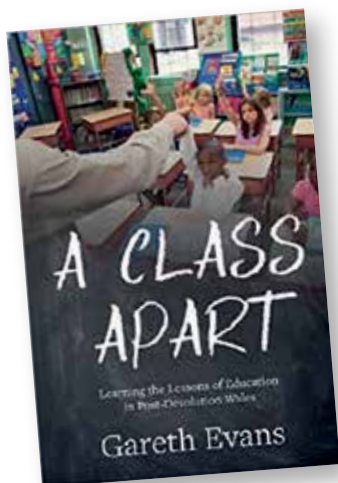
This episode is, frustratingly, never explained. But for the most part *The Actaeon Tide* treads a clear path between the facts of detective work and the feelings of mythology. It's a supernatural thriller after all, and one whose mystery is the very ride that takes you, finally, to shore.

One final element worth noting is Anderson's moodboard on Pinterest, an interesting innovation using all the power of social media to add value to the novel. It's a dark, brooding set of images curated to bring life to the story, and it's well worth seeking out.

**James Vilares** is a writer and critic; he works in the Strategic Development, Research and Commercial Division of Cardiff University.

## Education - a report card

Dr Julian Skyrme



*A Class Apart: Learning the Lessons of Education in Post-Devolution Wales*

Gareth Evans

Welsh Academic Press, 2015, £16.99

**“Devolution gave Wales an opportunity. It opened new doors and gave Welsh ministers freedom to break from the unilateral education system that had existed previously.”**

The effectiveness of educational reforms in post-devolution Wales are the subject of Gareth Evans' *A Class Apart*. The Education Correspondent of *The Western Mail*, he began his role around the time of Leighton Andrews' appointment as Education Minister and the book focuses on the policy reforms that Andrews, and his predecessor Jane Davidson, implemented during a tumultuous period for Welsh schools, colleges and universities.

With a shadow cast across Welsh education standards in the past decade, the book begins by highlighting a forgotten and inconvenient truth: in the period prior to devolution, Wales' education system was actually performing above England on most measures.

The Welsh Government needed little encouragement in forging its own

educational course in the immediate post-devolution years. The former drama teacher Jane Davidson, Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills between 2000 and 2007, is associated with the 'made in Wales' policies in this period. The book points to how many of her policies have stood the test of time, such as the child-centred Foundation Phase, Welsh Baccalaureate and commitment to comprehensive education.

Noting 'there was some doubt as to whether the Assembly Government was taking an alternative course for the sake of it', Evans employs hindsight to question many aspects of this particularly inventive period of Welsh education policy. The scrapping of primary Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) and secondary performance tables, the growing funding gap in education between England and Wales and the 'huge disappointment' of the Programme for International Assessment (PISA) results in 2006 are employed as cases in point.

Evans spends little time on the 'largely uneventful' reign of Jane Hutt between 2007-2009. Instead the majority of his analysis focuses on the work of one man, the former head of public affairs at the BBC and Barry-educated Leighton Andrews, who was Education Minister between 2009 and 2013. Evans does not hide his admiration for Andrews' more direct and combative approach, saying 'He had his own style that was not to everyone's liking, but he was, arguably, exactly what Wales needed'.

The account of Andrews begins with his 'Made in Wales' policy to protect Welsh students from the trebling of tuition fees. But most attention is given to his 20-point plan for educational reform in Wales. Following more damning PISA results in 2010, Evans called this 'the most radical raft of educational proposals ever introduced in Wales'. Add to this Robert Hill's 85 options for improving every facet of educational delivery, and it's easy to see why Evans was not short of material.

Drawing on an impressive range of interview sources and statistical evidence, Evans offers a forensic examination of Andrews' less consensual approach with the teaching profession, unions, local authorities and even his own department. He covers the



protracted merger discussions among higher education institutions in south Wales with some revealing behind-the-scenes accounts. And like most accounts of the UK education system, the book is comparatively light on the further education sector, which Evans

by the first comprehensive interview with Andrews since he stepped down. Convinced he has 'unfinished business', Evans probes him over whether he'd return to education if asked by the First Minister, to which Andrews replied 'Well if he asked me, of

professionals and the policy community, the addition of a subject index would allow even quicker access to its extensive analysis.

Evans should be praised for revealing the personalities and politics behind key policy developments in an accessible, uncompromising, but fair, style. As Wales embarks on further educational reform, the biggest contribution of *A Class Apart* might be to remind future policy makers that 'there must be far greater collaboration between providers . . . an onus on quality and not quantity . . . and most of all we must learn from past mistakes'.

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attributes to the 'good work and high esteem in which it is held'.

The concluding chapters follow Andrews' dramatic resignation in 2013 for breaking the Ministerial Code and the early tenure of his successor Huw Lewis. The book is enriched

course I would.' So watch this space.

As the first chronological account of education since devolution, *A Class Apart* makes essential reading for anyone involved in the Welsh education system. Given the book's appeal to researchers, education



**Dr Julian Skyrme** is Director of Social Responsibility at The University of Manchester. Hailing from Rhondda Cynon Taff, he takes a keen interest in the Welsh education system.

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# Newport Rising

## Dylan Moore

Michael Sheen's *Valleys Rebellion* documentary made for viewing almost as compulsive as his subsequent speech on the NHS. Not only because the actor assembled an impressive array of contributors or that the views of politicians and 'celebrity' contributors were balanced with those of ordinary people, but also because of the extent to which the programme captured something of the zeitgeist. *Valleys Rebellion* celebrated the long, proud history of radicalism in south Wales without pretending that its legacy has not largely disappeared; it presented the grim facts about the current state of democracy – and the hardships of everyday life – but, crucially, it avoided throwing its hands up in despair.

When I arrived in Cardiff to enrol at university in the autumn of 1998, it seemed the city was undergoing a facelift symbolic of a shift in national consciousness. 'Europe's Youngest Capital' was preparing to host devolved power, and – as if to celebrate – the old docks were transformed into a waterfront leisure village, the bands of so-called Cool Cymru took over the charts and a new sporting cathedral was erected in the city centre. Now, having recently moved to Newport, I find myself reflecting on how something about Wales' third city in 2015 reminds me of the capital those seventeen years ago. Here, too, is an urban regeneration that is more than mere architecture; something different, and bracing, is happening to the very character of the city.

David Cameron and Nick Clegg may have chosen the Millennium Stadium as the venue from which to present the 'St David's Day Agreement', but such bombast only served to underline the London leaders' lack of understanding of quite how much Wales has changed since devolution. They should have come to Friar's Walk. A bright new future is promised at the city centre retail and leisure

project that lies at the heart of Newport's regeneration. Centred on a Debenhams department store, a Cineworld multiplex and a raft of the usual eateries – Nando's, Gourmet Burger Kitchen, Frankie and Benny's – cynics may say the whole venture is a symptom of relentless, empty capitalism. Housing developments and a new university campus along the banks of the Usk simply mean the homogenising force of globalisation has at long last arrived in a city long ravaged by socio-economic deprivation. And yet.

*Valleys Rebellion* does not reference Friar's Walk directly, but does begin with our guide standing at the development's perimeter fence. Sheen narrates, while pictures remind us of the destruction of the 'mosaic mural, made of two hundred thousand pieces of tile and glass', infamously destroyed in 2013 to make way for the new shopping centre. At the time, the actor's open letter to Newport City Council in the *South Wales Argus* brought wider attention to the intense local outrage at this wanton act of cultural vandalism and the sheer stupidity of laying waste to the city's one memorial to the most important thing to have ever happened here.

Manic Street Preachers have long occupied lyrical territory that exposes the gap between Wales' noble tradition of popular radicalism and our contemporary politico-cultural malaise. James Dean Bradfield strums 'The View From Stow Hill', a song about the 1839 Newport Rising: 'you can still see the bullet holes [in the Westgate Hotel]'. But amid the 'cheapness', 'casual litter' and 'misguided tweets' that surround the narrator, in the view from Stow Hill – down which the Chartists marched – 'you can still sense a little hope'. And it is Hope around which *Valleys Rebellion* swirls, and on which any kind of future for south Wales depends. 'It's not apathy we have a problem with,' says the commentator Owen Jones, talking about the plight of de-industrialised communities across Britain. 'There's no shortage of anger out there and no shortage of fear. But there's one thing missing, and that's hope. And without hope, people become resigned.' He goes on to quote Tony Benn and 'the burning flame of hope', which he says has been taken away from people. And yet, thankfully, Owen Jones is wrong. There is hope. Even in Newport. 'Look up to the skies,' urge the words of Nicky Wire's song: 'avoid... the pitiful nihilism.'

Since arriving in the city, I have become involved with not one but two community

projects that offer a glimpse of such hope. Both are based on Stow Hill. Cwtsh is the rebranded former Stow Hill library. Closed down two years ago due to Newport City Council's budget constraints, the library has been rescued, renovated and reinvented as a 'micro arts centre' by a community group of volunteers. It is an excellent example of what happens when people come together to resist austerity, not by demonstrating but by *doing*. Some might argue that such heroic volunteer activism should not have to happen – and in many senses they are right. But the choice we face today is between letting market forces steamroller our hopes and dreams, and continuing to live in a post-industrial cultural wasteland, or acting together, getting organised and creating the Wales, and the world, we want.

Sanctuary is a project run by Bethel Community Church – further down the hill on the approach to the Westgate Hotel – that works with asylum seeker and refugee communities in Newport. It is one of a huge number of initiatives – for the homeless, for students, for parents and children – run by a relatively small congregation who nevertheless profess a desire 'to be an influential part of the local community and to make a difference in people's lives'; the church has a 'vision... to be seen, heard and felt in our city'. My small role is to share tea and coffee, play pool and table tennis, and befriend my fellow new Newportonians: those who have arrived in the city not because house prices are cheaper here than in Cardiff but because they have been sent here arbitrarily under the UK Government's dispersal policy. These men – there is a separate group for women and children in the daytime – have fled forced conscription by the dictatorship in Eritrea, the unspeakable atrocities of the war in Syria, the largely unreported human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And what they find here in Newport is not only sanctuary, but also friendship, community, and above all hope.

Michael Sheen ends *Valleys Rebellion* with a call not to arms but to a way of living: he challenges us to create 'a living testament' to the Chartists' sacrifice. 'They came together and they acted together, and they forced change.' In Friar's Walk, there will no doubt be some marker of the historic struggle, but I am pleased to report that Newport's ultimate mosaic is already under construction, in the very fabric of our shared commitment to a better world.



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The IWA Fellowship has been developed as a special category of membership as a mark of recognition for those who have made, or are making, a significant contribution to the life of Wales. To discuss becoming a fellow of the IWA please call Lee Waters on **02920 484 387**.

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