

agenda

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make Welsh science a real priority

First Minister Rhodri Morgan has announced three priorities if he is successful in maintaining his government following next May's election. These would be the eradication of child poverty, climate change, and developing a Welsh science and technology policy. Expressed in these general terms, few would question them as worthy aims.

However, tackling them will largely depend on actions by government at the UK level. Reducing child poverty will largely depend on tax and benefit decisions made by the UK Treasury. The challenge of climate change extends far beyond the frontiers of the UK, and even Europe. All we can try and do at both UK and Welsh levels is to persuade India, China and other non-signatories to sign up to international agreements to reduce CO2 emissions by setting a strong sustainable development example ourselves. A Welsh science and technology policy might be thought rather closer to home. But here, too, we are dependent to a great extent on decisions made by the UK science funding councils. Nevertheless, it is something that the Welsh Government could do a great deal about. A problem is a lack of consensus by Welsh policymakers on what a science and technology policy should comprise.

In September 2006 the Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee in the National Assembly, chaired by Labour AM Christine Gwyther, published what was widely agreed to be a thoughtful, well balanced and forward looking report on a science policy for Wales, with 18 clear recommendations. These included: (i) Appointing a full-time Chief Scientist in charge of an Office of Science and Technology, following a lead set by the Scottish Executive; (ii) Establishing an industry-led Science and Technology Advisory Council which should report regularly on our strengths and weaknesses in research and technology; (iii) Providing increased funding to develop research infrastructure and increase the volume of world class science in Wales; and (iv) Creating a new science fund to be accessible by industry and academic researchers working in partnership.

However, the Assembly Government's response to the Committee's report rejected just about all of the recommendations that would require serious action, and accepted only those recommendations that would cost nothing or which they could claim they were already doing. A few weeks later, in November, the Assembly Government published its own strategy, *A Science Policy for Wales*, which was more positive in tone. Yet as Peter Cotgreave, Director of the Campaign for Science and Engineering, comments in his article on page 45, this is still "much less bold than the Assembly Committee's vision".

We hope that if Rhodri Morgan has the opportunity, he will revisit the Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee's report during the Assembly's third term. The key recommendation is for more, and more sustained funding by the Welsh Higher Education Funding Council for scientific research, partly to equip Welsh scientists to make successful bids to the UK funding councils. For, as professor Sir John Cadogan, former Head of the UK Science Research Councils, wrote in the Spring 2006 Agenda and as Peter Cotgreave reiterates in this issue, Wales is seriously underfunded in science compared with Scotland and England. For example, at present Welsh science departments get £60 million a year for research from the Welsh Higher Education Funding Council. At the IWA's science conference in Cardiff in November Sir Roger Williams, the Chairman of the Council, said that figure should be £75 million, declaring: "Whatever else we do in Wales, unless the scientific base is stronger than it has been historically, I can't see what kind of future the country has got."



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The IWA is a non-aligned independent think-tank and research institute, based in Cardiff with branches in north and west Wales, Gwent, Swansea Bay and London. Members (annual subscription £35) receive **agenda** three times a year, can purchase reports at half price, and receive invites to IWA events.

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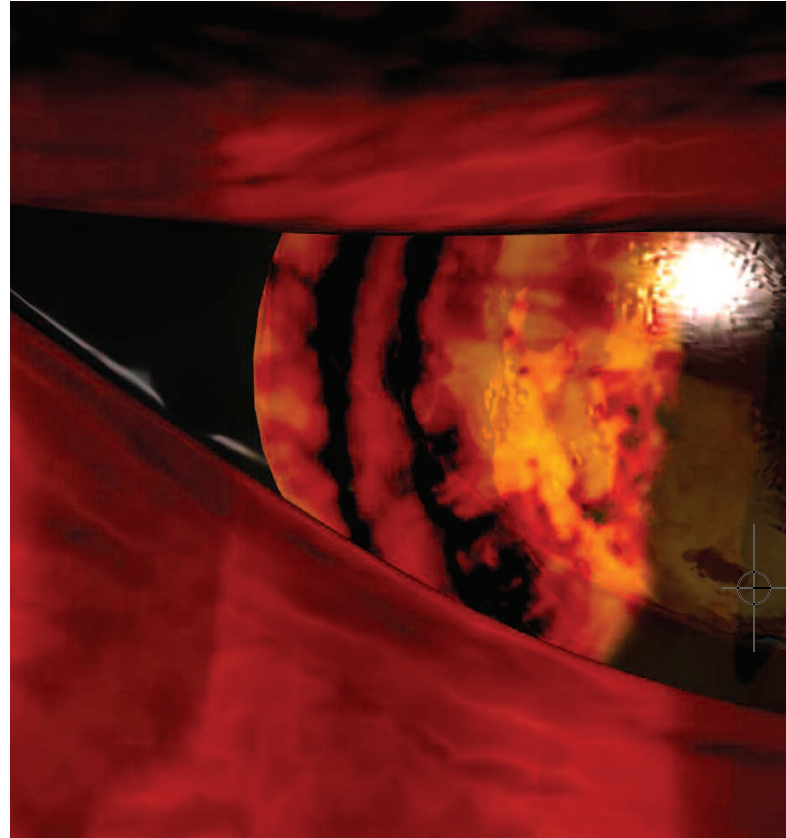
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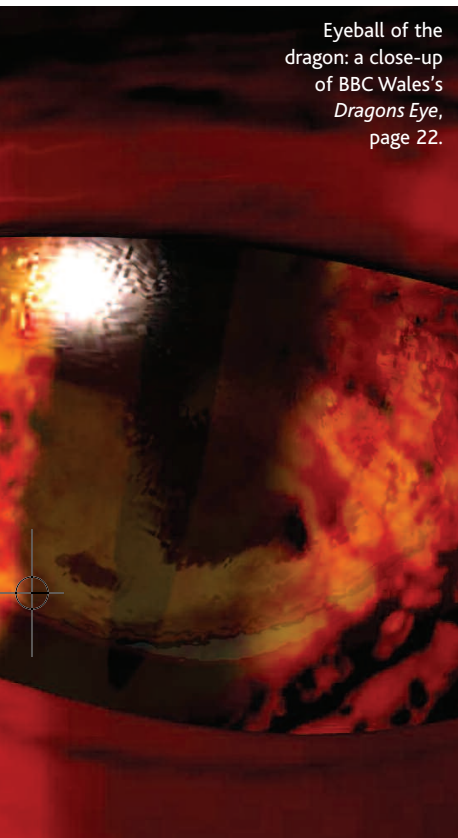
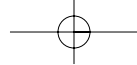
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Cover Picture: The wigeon common duck in flight above Newport Wetlands. See article on page 27 about the impact of Newport's Wetlands on wildlife and regenerating the area. Usually a winter visitor, the wigeon is a bird of the open wetlands where it feeds by dabbling for plant food.
Photo: David Kjaer

newsflash

coming up...

- **Time to Deliver**
West Wales Branch seminar. Tuesday 16 January, 7.00pm Trinity College, Carmarthen. IWA Chair **Geraint Talfan Davies** presents the findings from this project that examined Assembly Government policy options for the next four years. Entry free.
- **Cardiff Lunch: A Lifetime in Opera** with guest speaker **John Fisher**, Director, Welsh National Opera. Thistle Hotel, 12noon Wednesday 24 January. £27.50 IWA members, £30 for non members.
- **National Libraries and Archives of the Future** Friday 26 January 2007 Y Drwm, National Library, Aberystwyth, 6.30pm. Lecture with **Andrew Green**, Librarian, National Library of Wales, in the IWA series on Myths, Memories and Futures. Followed by wine reception. Entry free but contact IWA for ticket. See www.iwa.org.uk for details.
- **Sport and Music: Armed for Life** with guest speaker, **Tony Lewis**. Gwent Branch Dinner 7.00pm University of Wales, Newport, Caerleon. £27.50 (£30 for non members).
- **Celebrating Entrepreneurial Welsh Women**. North Wales Branch seminar and lunch. Thursday 8 March, Deganwy Quay Hotel. With Dr **Olwen Williams**, consultant in sexual health, chaired by **Sian Pari-Huws**. £25 IWA members (£27.50 non members).

just published...

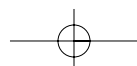
- **Time to Deliver: The Third Term and Beyond** IWA, £30
- **Roaring Dragons: Entrepreneurial Tales from Wales** Edited by Rhys David £15

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more information:

www.iwa.org.uk



opinion

First Minister
Rhodri
Morgan sets
out Welsh
Labour's
stall.

progressive universalism

mark drakeford outlines six
principles of social justice
which underpin the Assembly
Government's policy
approach

Contemporary Welsh attitudes towards social justice remain shaped in powerful ways by our experience of being the world's cradle of the industrial revolution. Wales was the first to experience those processes which have since transformed the global economy. In some respects, certainly as far as some of the traditional heavy industries are concerned, Wales has also been the first to leave them behind them.

The legacy of industrialisation in Wales is pervasive. It has produced a class structure which is very different from either England or Scotland, with, proportionately, a far smaller middle class and a far larger working class. It impacts upon Welsh economic structure, with no comparable sector to either the City of London or the financial and company headquarters of Glasgow and Edinburgh. And it continues to shape our political structure. Wales is the only part of the United Kingdom to have a genuinely long-term commitment to left of centre redistributive politics, stretching for more than 150 years, from 19th century Liberalism through 20th century Labourism and on to the present day.

Those of us who remember the dark days of the mid-1980s, when sophisticated commentators "proved", with sociological and psephological determinism, that the decline of the

traditional working class meant that the Labour Party could never return to power, cannot help but note now that – electorally speaking – the last decade has been the period of Labour's greatest ever success. Even today, therefore, Wales's historical cocktail of class, economics and politics still produces a greater receptivity to a set of policy approaches in which collective effort, social solidarity and the sharing of prosperity command a premium.

If there is a Welsh context to social justice, then there is a Welsh devolution context as well. In comparison with Scotland, Welsh devolution got off to a faltering start. The narrowness of the 1999 referendum result, the more confined nature of the devolution settlement, and the highly unstable political circumstances surrounding the birth of the institution – the loss of a Secretary of State, and three of the four Assembly party leaders within the first year of its inception – combined to dissipate anything like the level of enthusiasm or expectation which appeared, certainly at a distance, to be so characteristic of the Scottish experience.

Looking back, it now seems to me that this difficult birth has been to the Assembly's longer-term advantage. The more modest hopes, and limited confidence in the Assembly's ability to make a difference, have meant two things. Firstly, the absence of more substantial powers has required compensation through a more imaginative use of those levers and instruments which are at the Assembly's disposal. Secondly, as the administration at Cardiff Bay demonstrated a competence in dealing with crisis management (foot and mouth, steel plant closures, fuel protests and so on), as well as planned policy change (for example, abolishing school league tables, creating local health boards, securing a GM crop-free Wales), so the reputation of the institution has been slowly, but steadily, on the rise. This Autumn's report from the Electoral Commission shows public support for devolution continuing to increase, with respondents believing that the Assembly has improved the way Wales is governed out-numbering those of the opposite point of view in a ratio of fully four to one.

Turning now to a more detailed consideration of social justice, there is space here only to sketch some of the features which, it seems to me, are characteristic of the Welsh Assembly Government's policy-making in this area. Given the hundreds and thousands of decisions which make up the every day activity of any administration, there is something fool-hardy, I know, in suggesting that there may be some unifying themes which, standing back from the canvas, can be discerned in this mass of activity. I am quite sure that it is possible to point to many practical examples where actual performance does not measure up to the picture which I am about to outline. Nevertheless, I believe a convincing case can be made for a set of underlying policy principles which are shared across the Assembly Government and which amount to a distinctive approach to social justice. Here, I will confine myself to six core principles.

The first may be summarised as Government as a force for good. Now, to many readers, this may seem like a statement

of the entirely obvious. It is so easy to forget, in such a relatively short time, that politics were so recently dominated by those who believed that Government did best when Government did least; that public services, and public servants, were part of the problem faced by the United Kingdom, rather than part of the solution. Government, in this analysis, was at best a necessary evil, at worst in itself a force for evil.

Scratch the surface of today's 'Cameronised' Conservative Party and such beliefs remain more hidden than in their hey-day, but far from extinguished. That line of argument has never run successfully in Wales. The history of collective effort retains a vitality in people's minds which translates into a belief that, when competently organised and delivered, Governments represent the best vehicle through which social improvement can be achieved – employing teachers, building new hospitals, improving community safety in a way which no individual, family or voluntary organisation, left to their own devices, would be able to accomplish. This basic belief that Governments harness individual effort for the collective good is the first of my six key social justice principles in Wales.

My second principle is an enduring belief in universal rather than means tested services. To use a phrase which has crept into contemporary social policy discourse, the Welsh Assembly Government is a believer in progressive universalism. Thus, when charges are abolished in Wales, in April 2007, prescriptions will be free for everyone. When charges were abolished during school holidays for young people swimming at local authority leisure centres, swimming became free for all young people – not just those marked out as the poor and the needy. Since the Assembly Government announced its policy of free breakfasts in primary schools, those breakfasts have been free for all children, in all parts of Wales, wherever schools have chosen to take part in the scheme.

Universal services are preferred, where possible, in Wales because, as has been so long known, services which are reserved for poor people very quickly become poor services. As First Minister, Rhodri Morgan has said on a number of occasions, universal services help provide the glue which binds together a complex modern society and gives everybody a stake. As well as the less well off and those who find it difficult to make their voices heard, the articulate and the well informed have a voice and vested interest in making those services as good as possible.

The progressive part of universalism comes in providing, on top of the general policy, additional help for those who need it most. To provide just two examples:

- The Assembly has already voted to provide funds for additional annual top-ups to the Child Trust Fund accounts of looked after children and,
- While in England, the Chancellor's 2006 budget provided a sum of money to be distributed amongst all schools, in Wales that additional funding – over and above the sums already provided for universal, free state education – are to be concentrated on those schools where more than 20 per cent of children are in receipt of free school meals.

opinion

Universal services, with a progressive twist, combine the advantages of the classic welfare state with some of the benefits which can be claimed for targeting. What the approach provides, however, is a universal obligation, as well as a set of universal rights. In this model, social justice is everybody's business. It does not become one of those slippery concepts in which some are providers of services while others are simply their recipient. The sense in which the fate of any one of us affects the fate of us all remains close to the heart of the Welsh approach to social justice. Progressive universalism is a key to retaining the widespread support on which the survival of that understanding depends.

My third principle is that, as far as the Assembly Government is concerned, in the design, delivery and improvement of public services, co-operation is better than competition. This position is well rehearsed in the document, *Making the Connections*, in which the First Minister sets out what he calls the "respectable case" for both models, before concluding that co-operation provides a better fit with the needs and circumstances of Wales. Behind this conclusion, of course, lies a very substantial contemporary debate in which the ethic of consumerism has been rejected in favour of an ethic of citizenship.

As ever, the position is more complex than can be summed up in a simple headline. Welsh society is no stranger to competition, from the rugby field to the Eisteddfod platform. However, in themselves these activities rely upon collaborative effort, albeit within a competitive context. The winners of an Eisteddfod prize for a recitation party or a folk dance group have achieved that success through the standards of co-operation and collaboration they have achieved. The ambitions for success which burn so brightly in these cultural and sporting contexts must apply, just as keenly, to Welsh public service-making.

Improving access, quality and responsiveness are just as important in Wales, as in any other part of the United Kingdom. It is simply that, in the Welsh context, this improvement is based upon a co-operative model which goes with the grain, rather than cuts across, the pursuit of social justice.

My fourth major principle is linked to the third, and concerns the ethic of participation which is pursued in the Welsh context. Devolution is, of itself, a major experiment in increasing the leverage which people who live in Wales have over the Government which serves them. It provides a new incentive to responsiveness and, in practice, one of the sustainable claims which can be made for having a Welsh Assembly is that it has opened up the policy-making process to a far wider range of groups and individuals than was ever possible in the old Welsh Office days.

In social justice terms, Assembly Government action in this area is characterised by a unifying preference for improving collective voice rather relying solely on individual choice. Where public service participation is modelled on the mechanisms of the market, then those who already possess

economic and social advantages will inevitably do best, while others get left further behind. The preference for collective voice, as, for example, in the decision to retain and strengthen Community Health Councils in Wales, is grounded in an understanding that this provides the best way of ensuring that participation produces shared and wider benefits, rather than simply individual advancement.

My fifth principle is that, in shaping the relationship between the citizen and the state, policy-making in Wales is predicated on the creation of high trust not low trust relationships, in which users of services, and those who provide them, are regarded as essentially engaged in a joint enterprise.

Quasi-commercial relationships of marketised services are based, inevitably, on low-trust foundations. The Latin tag *caveat emptor* reminds us that a self-interested sense of scepticism has underpinned markets for 2,000 years and more. By contrast, collective and co-operative approaches rely on high-trust relationships between those who combine their efforts in the hope of improved outcomes for all. In doing so, they draw on the fundamental recognition that success in public services depends upon reciprocity. School students learn best, not when they are regarded as empty vessels into which information can be poured, but as part of a joint enterprise in which both teachers and students are givers and takers. Teachers give of their knowledge and expertise and take the enthusiasm and desire for learning which pupils provide. Students take the expertise which teachers have on offer, but contribute themselves, actively and positively in the learning which then takes place.

The abolition of league tables and test results in Wales is an example of the high trust principle in operation. One result was to counteract the corrosive effect of what Onora O'Neill, in her 2002 Reith Lectures referred to as a "massive culture of suspicion", in which over-reliance on the tools of audit, inspection, regulation and publication create, rather than counteract, a culture of low trust relationships.

Nor is this approach confined to education. In tackling the causes of crime, it is community safety partnerships which matter. In health, the language of 'co-production' captures the contribution to health and to recovery from illness which both professionals and patients provide. Trust is the pivot around which co-production turns, generating qualities of reciprocity and respect and cementing the sense of social solidarity on which social justice depends.

My sixth and final principle is, perhaps, the most ambitious but the one which provides the most distinguishing feature of Assembly Government policy making. On a series of occasions the First Minister has endorsed the notion that, as far as Wales is concerned, greater equality of outcome is an ambition which has overtaken the more conventional pursuit of equality of opportunity. Recent figures published by the Chief Medical Officer show that in Wales today, a child born in the least well-off part of the country will live, on average, for five years less than a child born not one hour's travel away.

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We know that more equal societies bring with them a series of vital benefits. Research for the World Bank shows that equality provides an engine for economic, as well as social success, harnessing the talents of all, rather than a self-selecting few. More equal societies produce health gains. Less well off countries such as Greece and Malta have higher life expectancies than the United Kingdom or the United States. They spend less money on health services, but reap the social dividends which less unequal and more cohesive community structures bring. More equal societies enjoy lower levels of crime and, even more importantly, are marked by lower levels of fear of crime. There is a sense of individual validation and social solidarity which greater equality brings. Moreover, the sum of freedom in a more equal society will always be greater than in unequal societies, where freedom is unfairly divided.

A preference for those policies which contribute actively to enhanced equality of outcome, therefore, is one in which all the key principles of social justice are brought together and consolidated. Between them fairness and freedom, citizenship and collaborative effort bring both greater cohesion and social satisfaction. They provide a balance between the individual and the community in which collective action and public services are recognised as the platform for individual advance, not a brake upon it. Together, they make up the distinctive agenda which has informed social justice and public policy-making in a devolved Wales.

Aneurin Bevan, captured an essential point of all politics when he wrote in *In Place of Fear* that "progress is not the elimination of struggle, but rather a change in its terms." In shaping its policy agenda, the next Assembly will inherit the new powers won in the 2006 Government of Wales Act. A more significant set of legislative tools will be available to shape our economic and social future. Any political party hoping to win the support of voters in next May's elections will surely have to identify the policy purposes to which these new legislative powers are to be applied. At the same time, legislation is only one means through which the purposes of government are carried on. The quality of policy ideas and the ideological coherence with which they are pursued in action will remain the bedrock of successful administration.

Against this background, my own speculation is that a post May 2006 Government which maintains the approach of the past eight years will push still further on renewing and redistributing the fruits of the Welsh economy. Economic growth in Wales has outstripped the performance of the UK as a whole, and, within Wales that growth has happened fastest in the Objective One areas. Narrowing the prosperity gap, while improving the economic position of all, sits exactly in the territory of progressive universalism outlined earlier.

At the same time, the collective dividend of economic growth will continue to be invested in public services, publicly provided, but with a renewed emphasis on those groups in the population which rely on such services the most. For the most part more equal outcomes depend on disproportionate investment at the earliest point in the life-cycle, to improve

the life-chances of our most vulnerable children. Equality begins in the home, and the engine of those great public services in housing, education, health and so on, will need to be applied to that purpose with added vigour in the third Assembly term.

Two final predictions. Firstly, the environmental dimension of a more equal Wales will have to move more centre stage over the next four years. While the wider forces of global warming and climate change affect us all, environmental degradation continues to fall more sharply on those whose social circumstances are already most fragile. The impact of noise, traffic, litter and run-down physical fabric is concentrated on least-well off communities and individuals, undermining the sense of cohesion and connectedness which real social justice provides. The Assembly's new legislative powers will need to be applied in this area, to underpin a fresh focus on a new agenda of environmental equity.

Secondly, the new Assembly will see a further push on the front of pluralism and participation, highlighted earlier. A Petitions Committee, along the lines of the Scottish Parliament, seems a very possible, and a very welcome addition to the direct levers which Welsh citizens will have over Assembly debates and discussions.

Outside the Assembly itself there is enormous scope for revitalising public engagement in public services, on the *Making the Connections* model. For example, hospital Trusts remain islands of imperviousness from their local populations. Weak lines of accountability flow between citizens and bodies which act in their name, from Community Health Councils on the one hand, to the Boards of National Parks on the other, and many others in between.

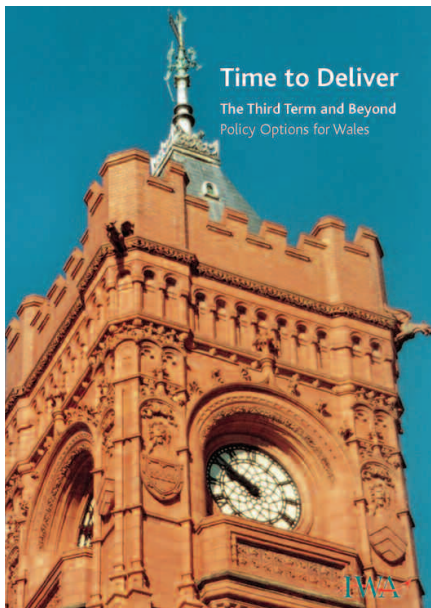
The tremendous work of Broadband Wales in spreading a new communications network throughout the country is yet to be matched by an imagination which captures the evident willingness of the public to participate in decision-making through their telephones, computers and televisions. And there are real lessons to be learned from the engagement strategies – Timebanks and so on – which have been carried out under that boldest of all Assembly Government initiatives, the *Communities First* programme. A new dose of democratic sunlight remains to be shone into parts of the Welsh polity which devolution has yet to touch. There should be no shortage of excitement in the four years ahead.

Mark Drakeford is Cabinet health and social policy adviser with the Welsh Assembly Government and a professor of social policy at Cardiff University. This article is based on a paper given at an Economic and Social Research Council seminar held at the University of Glasgow in March 2006.



news

looking to the third term



Any new Assembly Government elected after next May's elections will face much tougher spending decisions, particularly if room is to be made for new initiatives and improvements in public services. This is a key message in *Time to Deliver*, a 300-page report on policy options for the National Assembly's Third Term published in November 2006 by the Institute of Welsh Affairs.

Treasury forecasts show that year on year increases in the Assembly's block grant during the third term will drop from the current three per cent per annum to less than two per cent, leaving very little room for manoeuvre. The average increase between 2000 and 2005 was 6.6 per cent. "To a great extent, in the first two terms, the Assembly Government was buoyed up and taken forward by an unprecedented period of growth in public expenditure," the report says. "This will no longer apply." To address this reality any Assembly Government, of whatever party or parties, will need to:

- Make greater efficiency savings than are at present envisaged.
- Make greater use of private finance for capital spending.
- Prioritise spending between policy areas more rigorously.
- Manage public expectations.
- Be subjected to greater financial scrutiny by back-bench Assembly members.

The report is critical of the limited use of private capital and says "Wales cannot

afford to ignore this source of finance and could tap its potential without compromising public services."

The report – compiled by more than 100 experts, working in eight policy groups – identifies a finance scrutiny deficit in the Assembly which it describes "as a dangerous state of affairs" and calls for the establishment of an Assembly Finance Committee and a Public Finance Research Unit independent of Government.

In an overview of the project, the report pinpoints education as the top priority for investment.

"It is chilling to think that the growth in education expenditure is now lagging behind England (let alone Scotland) particularly in the higher education sector, and that there are no current signs that this will change significantly.

"Since a devolved administration has no levers with which to effect economic performance in the short term, it must concentrate on the long term, and nothing in that long term is as effective as investment in education.

Time to Deliver is published by the IWA at £30 plus £1.50 p&p (half price to members). A further report is on pages 13-14. Presentations made at the conference to launch the book in November 2006 can be found on the IWA website: www.iwa.org.uk

new IWA Fellows

The IWA has 24 new Fellows since the publication of the Summer 2006 issue of Agenda bringing the total number to 93. Twelve of these have joined as Life Fellows. The new Fellows are:

- Graham Benfield, Cardiff
- Dr John Burke, Cardiff
- W J Capper, Llantrisant
- Rhys David, Cardiff
- R G Drake, Cardiff
- Aled Eirug, Cardiff
- Richard Eley, Reading
- David M Evans, Laguna Beach, California
- Jonathan Evans MEP, Cardiff
- Peter L Griffiths, Penarth
- Teifion Griffiths, Cardiff
- Professor David Halton, Pontypridd
- Professor Ian Hargreaves, London
- Milwyn Jarman QC, Cardiff
- Robert John, London
- Professor E W Jones, Newport
- Ron Jones, Carmarthen
- Dafydd Bowen Lewis, Penarth
- Dr Dai Lloyd AM, Swansea
- Dr Arun Midha, Cardiff
- Christopher Nott, Cardiff
- Alan Peterson, Cardiff
- Alwyn Pritchard, Pwllhelli
- Lord Rowe-Beddoe, Abergavenny

IWA Fellows subscribe a minimum annual payment of £200 to the Fellows Fund. Life fellowship is bestowed for a single payment of £1,000. These donations qualify under gift aid. IWA Fellows are invited to special functions each year. See page 20.

entrepreneurial tales from Wales

We are often told Welsh people are not entrepreneurial, and a variety of explanations is usually offered, ranging from the former dominance of big self-sufficient sectors such as mining or steel to the preference of many parents for their children to find careers in the professions such as teaching, the law or medicine.

But while Government reports and academic research still point to some reluctance on the part of Welsh people to start their own enterprises, the voice of those who are running important Welsh businesses is rarely heard. Nor, perhaps, is sufficient recognition given that throughout the length and breadth of Wales there are businesses, some going back a hundred years or more, and some of much more recent origin, which are as fast-moving, innovative and enterprising as their rivals in other parts of Britain.

Roaring Dragons – Entrepreneurial Tales from Wales – a new publication

from the Institute of Welsh Affairs, profiles successful Welsh-based companies operating in a variety of fields. It describes how they are adopting to survive in an increasingly competitive environment, the difficulties they have faced, the way they have overcome them and the assistance they have been able to call on.

The companies vary considerably in size. The biggest, Newport



A welder at work at Newport's Rowecord Group, one of the eleven Welsh-based companies featured in *Roaring Dragons*. The Group, which employs 1,000 people, designs and creates complex steel structures such as the iconic 140 metre long cable-stayed foot and cycle bridge that has become the centrepiece of the SA1 development in Swansea.

engineering and construction company, Rowecord, employs more than 1,000 and the smallest two, food manufacturer, Patchwork and pharmaceuticals company, Maelor, just a handful. Some are very international in their business orientation, manufacturing on three Continents and selling worldwide in the case of Biotrace, the microbiological test company, or supplying life-saving equipment to the

famine-affected areas of Africa, as does Rowecord, subsidiary Braithwaite.

They are also drawn from a variety of sectors within manufacturing and services, some dealing with a small number of key clients and others dealing with thousands of different customers each day. Their headquarters are to be found across Wales from Bangor in Gwynedd to rural Powys and Cardiff, and they include companies which in one case – North Wales builder, Watkin Jones – go back more than 200 years and nine generations, to another in the same business sector, Cardiff-based, Opco, founded since the turn of the new millennium.

Copies of the book, publication of which has been made possible by generous support from the Jane Hodge Foundation, can be obtained for £7.50 (IWA members) £15 non-members. Please call 029 2066 6606 or e-mail wales@iwa.org.uk

what you think of us

The IWA conducts regular membership research, most recently among its 150 corporate members. And the results, we are pleased to say, confirm that, generally speaking, our services are considered both appropriate and valuable.

Our events and publications are the main reason why

corporate members belong, with around two thirds citing these two services. Other important factors are networking and a wish to provide general support for the institute.

More than 70 per cent of corporate members had attended between one and three events and some even

reported attending on more than six occasions. The quality of events such as IWA lunches was also highly rated with all of our respondents rating them as good or very good. Conferences also achieved similar very high satisfaction levels.

Corporate members nominated health, leadership and

management as themes they would like to see discussed at future IWA events.

We also asked who read IWA publications. The chair, the chief executive and the public affairs director are the main recipients and in most cases copies are passed on to roughly 2-3 other individuals.



politics

will labour win again?

richard wyn jones and
roger scully read the runes for
the forthcoming National
Assembly election

Why did Labour win, and the other parties lose, in 2003? And what is the likelihood of any of those circumstances being repeated in 2007? A first observation to make is that while Labour hegemony has come to be regarded as normal in Welsh politics, such sustained one-party rule has few parallels in the democratic world.

Labour has won at least a plurality of the vote in Wales at every Westminster election since 1922. This has occurred not least because of the historic weakness of the Conservative tradition in Wales, a weakness that pre-dates even Labour's dominance. But lop-sided partisan attachments have been greatly reinforced and exaggerated by the workings of the innately disproportional voting systems used for both Westminster and local government elections. Indeed, parliamentary elections in Wales in the last 60 years have produced some of the most highly (one might reasonably say 'grotesquely') disproportional election outcomes of any country in the world.

That brings us to another point about how 2003 seemed to restore 'normality' in Welsh politics. By winning half of the seats in the Assembly (at least until they lost Blaenau Gwent), Labour was able to resume single-party, more-or-less majority government, after more than two years of coalition. It was 'business as usual' again. But once more, this assumes a 'normality' that, in international comparison, actually looks far from normal. While single-party majority government is the norm at Westminster, coalition government is the norm in many countries around the world. And, as the Norwegian scholar Kåre Strom has shown, there are also a large number of countries that manage to sustain extended periods of minority government.

In Strom's own country (one, as it happens, with fixed term four year parliaments) it has regularly been the case that is not even the largest party that forms that government. Were they to occur, sustained periods of coalition or minority government in Wales would not constitute prima facie evidence either of the failure of devolution or the Welsh party system. In fact, they would actually make us look rather more like a normal country to much of the rest of the world.

In addition to the vagaries of the Welsh electoral system, at least three further important factors contributed to Labour's dominance in the 2003 Assembly election:

- **Iraq.** The timing of the 2003 elections was almost certainly crucial: just 3 weeks after the fall of Baghdad, and before too many questions started surfacing about missing weapons of mass destruction and the Dr David Kelly affair. The result was that the election occurred during the relatively brief window of time when the war was generally approved by the majority of people in Britain. It is thus probably not merely coincidence that in both Scotland and Wales, the mainstream anti-war parties (the nationalist parties and the

We cannot even begin to predict what the wider political and economic context will look like next May. The situation in Iraq, the state of the world energy market, and the Labour leadership along with many other factors, could have an impact on the results of the National Assembly election.

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table 1: party leader ratings, 2003

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

Source: 2003 Welsh Election Survey

Liberal Democrats) under-performed their own and most other people's expectations.

- Rhodri versus ...who? Labour in Wales in 2003 had a trump card which it played very effectively: Rhodri Morgan. He was generally far more popular than the other Welsh party leaders (see Table 1) and retained widespread public sympathy for the way he had been denied the Labour leadership prior to the 1999 election.
- Labour's campaign, which had suffered from some complacency in 1999, was extremely well-focussed, as well as well-resourced. It is not widely appreciated that Labour's share of the vote actually went down in almost half of the constituencies between 1999 and 2003 (in 15 out of 40). However, Labour got out its vote (often in very large numbers) where it had targeted the seats that it needed to win.

We cannot even begin to predict what the wider political and economic context will look like next May. The situation in Iraq, the state of the world energy market, and the Labour leadership along with many other factors, could have an impact on the results of the National Assembly election. Local issues will almost certainly have an impact as well. As such, any examination of the prospects for the parties must necessarily be hedged with all kinds of caveats and qualifications. Bearing this in mind, we shall concentrate our analysis first and foremost on Wales' dominant party, Labour.

A convenient way to think about Labour's prospects for next year is to consider what is the most favourable plausible outcome for Labour: The 'Best-of-All-Possible-Worlds' scenario. This can be summarised as follows:

- Holding all the 29 seats the party currently holds
- Winning back Blaenau Gwent.
- Winning back Wrexham.
- Winning a Mid and West Wales List seat (Labour only just lost out on the fourth seat to the Tories last time).
- Winning other constituency seats, perhaps Ynys Môn, which requires a seven per cent swing.

At the outside, this would give 33 Labour seats. However, there are many reasons to believe that Labour may well fall some way short of this, including:

- Labour will have been in power at Westminster for ten years (the day before election will mark the tenth anniversary of Tony Blair entering Downing Street as Prime Minister), while the party will also have been in power in Wales for eight

years. It is difficult to imagine that the Opposition parties will not seek to make 'time for a change' a dominant theme in their respective campaigns.

- While Rhodri Morgan remains well-liked, the sympathy factor present in 2003 will almost certainly have evaporated.
- There is evidence that Labour's political machine in Wales may be in trouble. Partly this reflects the general problem the party is having across the UK, with falling membership and activism levels. Blaenau Gwent, where two experienced and very well-resourced Labour candidates were decisively beaten by two rather inexperienced and poorly resourced independents, suggests, as did Dunfermline in Scotland, that Labour has some particular troubles in many traditional heartlands. In this regard, we would also point to the 2005 election as pertinent evidence. It was not generally noticed that, while Labour remained the dominant party in Westminster representation in 2005, its vote share in Wales was its second lowest since the mid-1920s, only beating 1983.

Plaid
Honorary
President
Dafydd
Wigley,
whose "mere
presence at
the forefront
of the
campaign
will have a
galvanising
effect on
party
activists
throughout
Wales."



And, of course, the other parties will have their own roles to play. So, for example, there is now overwhelming evidence that the devolved electoral context is more favourable to Plaid Cymru than that provided by Westminster elections. Despite that party's continuing leadership travails, Plaid will be seeking to maximise the benefit it derives from fighting an election on an all-Wales basis. In doing so, its cause will surely be assisted by the return to active political duty of former president Dafydd Wigley. Although Wigley's position on the north Wales regional list may seem to militate against his own election to the next Assembly, it would be unwise to underestimate his appeal right across the north. Moreover, Wigley's mere presence at the forefront of the campaign will have a galvanising effect on party activists throughout Wales. Further galvanising activists is the widespread perception of unfairness and vindictiveness surrounding Labour's ban on so-called dual-candidacy. Given that the return to the Assembly of party-favourite Helen Mary Jones is now solely dependent on overturning Labour's tiny majority in Llanelli, it is no surprise to learn that vigorous campaigning is already underway there.

Conservative leader David Cameron being shown around the National Assembly by Group leader Nick Bourne: "the party's fortunes would seem to depend on its ability to replicate its gains at the Westminster election."

Given that the attempts of Nick Bourne and his Conservative colleagues at presenting a more Welsh image are aimed at overturning well over a century of anti-Conservative sentiment in Wales, it is surely too soon to expect that the party reaps any major dividends from these efforts at the 2007 election. Rather, the party's fortunes would seem to depend on its ability to replicate its gains at the Westminster election – all in electorates situated in what political scientist Denis Balsom once termed 'British Wales'. Clwyd West and Cardiff North are obvious candidates here. Should it manage to do so, however, then this would represent a major dent in Welsh Labour's hopes of forming a majority in the National Assembly.



table 2: labour's 'bad-but-not-dreadful' scenario, 2007

Party	Constituencies	List	Total
Labour	23	2	25
Conservatives	5	8	13
Liberal Democrats	3	4	7
Plaid Cymru	7	6	13
Independents	2	0	2

As for the Liberal Democrats, it would appear that their campaign will focus on the two 'C's' – 'Ceredigion' and 'cultivation'. Following its shock victory in Ceredigion at the last Westminster election, the party will be hoping to maintain its momentum in the constituency and inflict another bloody nose on Plaid. Liberal Democrats will also continue their typically assiduous cultivation of longer-term targets such as Wrexham, Swansea West and Bridgend.

In light of all of this, a more realistic outcome of the 2007 election is the following 'Bad-But-Not-Dreadful' (for Labour) scenario whereby the party fails to gain Ynys Môn while 'losing' the following constituency seats:

- Wrexham and Blaenau Gwent to Independents.
- Aberconwy and Llanelli to Plaid.
- Clwyd West, Preseli, Cardiff North and the Vale of Glamorgan to the Tories.

Then, factoring in also a modest swing against Labour on the List vote, but, note, assuming Labour's retention of such 'meltdown' seats as Carmarthen West, Bridgend and Swansea West, the overall would look something like this:

This is not our prediction for next May. However, this 'Bad-But-Not-Dreadful' scenario is certainly a plausible one, even though it would represent a Labour performance worse even than the Alun Michael-led 'disaster' of 1999. If anything like it were to transpire then this will ensure that 2007 is another fascinating year in Welsh politics. Indeed, fascinating as the campaigns and the vote will surely be, things may only start to become really interesting after 3 May 2007.

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time to deliver

politics

an introduction to the IWA's new publication examining policy options for Wales during the Assembly's third term

What will be the in-tray for the new Assembly Government Ministers following the May 2007 election? What longer-term, horizon, issues should be borne in mind when framing policies for the third term? These key questions have been examined by eight policy groups brought together by the IWA over the past year. Taking their conclusions as a whole and assessing the potential for the third term Assembly Government it is possible to identify four directions of travel that are not necessarily synonymous with any one party.

In the first two terms of the Assembly only one piece of Welsh political communication has ever come near to sticking in the public mind: Rhodri Morgan's "clear red water". There is some uncertainty about whether the First Minister uttered the words himself, or whether it was a media paraphrase, but it was a phrase that encapsulated not only a political hue but a distance from New Labour policy in England.

Interestingly, the public discussion of this slogan centred almost wholly around that point of difference with London. There was little debate about the words as a statement of direction of travel for policy or for a society. That may have been because of a combination of broad unanimity within the Labour party in Wales, the complicity of the Liberal Democrats after a period of coalition, and the absence of a philosophic difference on the approach to public services on the part of Plaid Cymru. For whatever reason, the issue was a dog that did not bark.

Since then the substance of the Labour approach has been set out in more detail in the strategy for public sector reform, Making the Connections, and articulated most cogently by one of the First Minister's advisers, Mark Drakeford, in an article in this issue of Agenda (see page 4). He characterises the Labour approach as one driven by an aspiration for social justice and based on a progressive universalism rather than means testing, cooperation rather than competition, high trust rather than low trust, and equality of outcome rather than equality of opportunity. He argues, as the First Minister has done, that these fit with and are rooted in the very nature and shape of Welsh society and tradition.

There is certainly a large body of tacit support in Wales for these general propositions – what might be called a Scandinavian vision of society – though the question will certainly arise as to whether you can realise a Scandinavian vision on an Anglo-American tax base, especially when taxation will be decided elsewhere, possibly according to different criteria. That issue has to be faced, otherwise Wales

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could find itself sucking on a comfort blanket that might one day disappear. That does not necessarily mean compromising on social objectives, but it may mean reconsidering the means by which they are achieved.

The real challenge when heading in the first of these directions – universal benefits and the eschewing of market mechanisms – is that you need even greater efficiency in order to meet the cost pressure. Yet there is room to believe that the Government's collaborative route implies a softer approach to performance management and improvement that, in the Welsh climate, will deliver at a lesser pace and intensity. Fear of this continuing under-performance was a recurring sub-text in the Beecham Report on public services in Wales, *Beyond Boundaries: Citizen-Centred Local Services for Wales*, published in June 2006.

This suggests a second possible direction – New Labour-lite – which could ease the financial corset by making greater use of private capital, although confining that use to a narrower range of functions than envisaged in England, within very strictly drawn public service objectives. Such a direction might also imply a tougher performance management régime and a small shift in priorities from social to economic objectives. In this case the debate might be around the extent to which the chosen means are incompatible with the social objectives.

A third feasible direction of travel might be a concentration on 'nation-building' as a focus for policy. This would involve policies aimed at developing a sense of civic solidarity within and across Wales in the hope that it would not only consolidate but also deepen a sense of Welsh identity and have a significant motivational effect. It would seek to make a cohesive whole of aspirations, with an emphasis on even greater distinctiveness of Welsh policy, and issues such as a 'fair' geographic distribution of resources across Wales, reducing or halting the emigration of young talent from Wales, and improving north-south

communications. While this would no doubt create a rhetorical cohesion with which more than one party might be comfortable, unless it were also to involve an approach to the public sector and to social justice radically different from Labour it would come up against all the barriers of cost and performance management that we have referred to above.

A more radical, though less comfortable, fourth direction might involve discarding many of the assumptions that are implicit in the current Welsh consensus. This would give total primacy to economic objectives, involving conscious policies to rebalance the public and private sector divide in the Welsh economy and society, a move away from universal provision to targeted benefits, increased use of public-private partnerships, and the moving of some public sector executive functions into the private sector. For example, rather than the absorption of the Wales Tourist Board into the civil service, this approach might have pushed it the other way into being a private company operating a public franchise. Such an approach would undoubtedly flush out whether the assumed Welsh consensus is real and whether Welsh attitudes to individual and community aspirations are as different from those east of the border as we like to believe.

It is not our place to write manifestoes, and we have not masked the fact that some of the recommendations from different groups cut across each other. But if we had to single out one issue for attention it would be an issue of cardinal importance that overlays both economic and social objectives – and that is education. When Tony Blair came into government he said, famously, that he had three priorities – education, education and education. Amongst the things for which he has been criticised has been a failure to stick to that assessment. If his initial judgment was right for the whole of the UK, it must have doubly right for Wales. Welsh educational funding and performance, as measured by GCSE results in our schools, or by the research





Sir Jeremy Beecham who chaired the Assembly Government-appointed group that produced *Beyond Boundaries: Citizen-Centred Local Services for Wales*: "...arguably the most important document produced since the Assembly's inception."

income of our universities, or simply by the general shortage of skills, is lagging far behind the rest of the UK. It bodes ill. If history has proved anything in the last century it is that education is the key determinant of economic progress and prosperity.

With that in mind, it is chilling to think that the growth in education expenditure in Wales is now lagging behind England, particularly in the higher education sector, and that there are no current signs that this will change significantly. Since a devolved administration has no levers with which to effect economic performance in the short term, it must concentrate on the long term, and nothing in that long term is as effective as investment in education. Despite the incontrovertible evidence to this effect, we do not doubt that it will require courage to make this shift of priorities. Moreover, it should be the job of all political parties and politicians at all levels to persuade the Welsh public of the absolute primacy of educational objectives. Success in every other field depends upon it.

Whatever combination of ideas and policies and directions emerge in the wake of the 2007 election, government will be faced with problems arising from the current administrative pattern. Several of our groups came up against the deficiencies of the present health and local government structures. There is virtual unanimity that they do not and will never have the strategic capacities that the situation demands. The combination of too many small authorities, and talent stretched thinly in a climate where performance management has been weak, does not bode well. The only thing holding people back from recommending a wholesale revision has been a sense of weariness at the thought of yet another reorganisation.

The Beecham Report is, arguably, the most important document produced since the Assembly's inception, and the Assembly Government deserves credit for commissioning it. Yet the report cannot have provided much comfort. It is sometimes thought that Beecham endorsed the Assembly Government decision to eschew further reorganisation and to go for a process of exhortation and collaboration. That should be qualified. Beecham was clear that though the chosen 'citizen-centred' model was wholly defensible intellectually and socially, it was also "an extremely challenging model and requires transformation in culture, capacity and processes." You do not have to be an avid reader between the lines to realise that Beecham did not think the odds on success were good.

Those who would argue for a prompt reorganisation are usually faced with the argument that reorganisation would cost and would involve two or three wasted years. That is incontrovertible. But if Beecham's hesitancy proves justified and the current path is less than successful, and reorganisation becomes necessary after a review scheduled for 2011, it is possible that Wales could have wasted a decade. Some may think that the chosen path exemplifies Wales's nervousness in confronting poor performance rather than demonstrating our capacity to tackle weakness vigorously.

Whichever path policy takes over the next four years it will be imperative to involve the citizens of Wales in some form or another. A citizen-centred approach, however defined, should be a sine qua non for all governments. The issue will be how to involve citizens. The challenge is to get responsible engagement. This also requires from any Government a more relaxed openness to external ideas and informed debate than has been evident so far. A public that 'participates in decision making' via the internet on an occasional, uninformed basis is not necessarily a way to better decision making. It could even simply amplify populist pressures leading to gesture politics.

Mechanisms whereby ordinary people immerse themselves in issues and come to considered judgements will be needed. There is little evidence in Wales to date of innovation and experimentation in this area. Consultation has tended to be far too formulaic, sometimes perfunctory and, even if inadvertently, geared more to public sector involvement. Parties, in and out of Government, at national and local level, need to demonstrate a real appetite for engagement. It is one of the many transformations that Wales needs.

In its eight years of existence the National Assembly has come a long way, confounding many of its sceptics and detractors. Paradoxically, it has become a modest source of pride to many Welsh people, even while they feel intense frustration at its weaknesses. There are few critical comments in the visitors book at the new Senedd building. People may agree or disagree with Government policies, but there is a more consistent disappointment at the standards of debate on the floor of the Assembly itself.

New powers will require all Assembly members to raise their game, since the framing of legislation will demand a different level of policy and textual analysis than has been required in the first two terms. While public servants are busily engaged in perfecting their skills in the Public Service Management Initiative, there are, strangely, few signs of training programmes aimed at preparing Assembly Members for their new tasks or even sharpening their ability to deal with existing tasks.

Time To Deliver: The Third Term and Beyond – Policy Options for Wales is available from the IWA at £30 (half-price to IWA members). This article is an extract from the book's overview chapter *Ends and Means*.



politics

Looking upwards inside the world's largest free rotating wind-driven cowl that lights and ventilates the National Assembly chamber. It reduces energy consumption and draws away hot air.



david lambert and marie navarro ask whether the Assembly is ready to take on legislative powers

holding the reins

the Government of Wales Act 2006 transforms the core role of the Assembly from an Executive to that of a quasi-parliament. From next May the Assembly ceases to be a unitary body. The Assembly Government becomes a distinct separate legal entity and the Assembly ceases to have a legal personality. This will have dramatic consequences on the internal organisation and work of the Assembly.

In September 1999 a 'Devolution Walkthrough' was arranged by the then Lord Chancellor's Department. It was a day long study, involving senior judges, Assembly lawyers and officials,

and academics. It considered various case studies including how robust was the Assembly Standing Orders in dealing with the making of subordinate legislation. The fictitious Oxtail regulations were put to the judicial test with an exercise entitled, 'The Vires of delegated legislation made by the National Assembly'. Many may consider that the Oxtail regulations were a fitting reflection of the present powers of the Assembly to make law.

The Richard Commission's assessment was that the Assembly currently spends two per cent of its time considering the law made in its name. While this may be the case in relation to

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interminable regulations on the nutritional value of peanuts or the contents of potatoes imported from Egypt, the law currently made by the Assembly can be much more far reaching and can sometimes replace primary legislation, even under the existing devolution settlement. Such legislation should require more consideration by the Assembly.

As from May 2007, the Assembly will become a legislature. The nature of its legislative work will move from mainly scrutinising subordinate legislation introduced by the Assembly Government to proposing draft Orders in Council under which Assembly Measures, which are equivalent in their contents to Acts of Parliament, can be made. This is a pure law making function, and legislating by Measure should occupy most of the new Assembly's legislative time, with scrutiny of subordinate legislation becoming a secondary role.

From next May, the Assembly Commission will be the new legal body which holds the Assembly's property, appoints and sets out the conditions of service of its officials (who will no longer be civil servants) and controls its budget. In losing its legal personality the Assembly will lose most of its executive powers. Gone are the powers reflected in the Oxtail Regulations. Instead of making subordinate legislation, the Assembly will have the power to approve or annul certain subordinate legislation made by the Assembly Government.

As with the UK and Scottish Parliament, Assembly Government Ministers will continue to be accountable to the Assembly and its Committees for the manner in which their powers are exercised and the Assembly will assume fundamentally new legislation powers.

It is the Assembly's new legislative powers which become important. Within the boundaries of Orders in Council granted to it by Parliament, the Assembly will have power to make laws which can contain provisions similar to those in Acts of Parliament. It can amend, repeal or add to existing or new Acts or make entirely new provisions in their place. The Assembly Government will have to make representations proposing new draft legislation for consideration by the Assembly.

The June 2005 White Paper on the proposed new devolution settlement foresaw that the enabling powers in an Order in Council could be as wide as "the welfare and protection of children in Wales." While not all Orders in Council will be as wide, it nevertheless demonstrates the possibility of extensive powers under which the Assembly can make laws free from Westminster control. This new system therefore requires definite and precise standing orders by which proper scrutiny by the Assembly must be ensured through robust procedures.

The devolution "walkthrough" of September 1999 to consider the Oxtail Regulations, which tested the final arrangements in place for the implementation of the 1998 Wales Act, took place in the context of the current Assembly Standing Orders. They set out the way in which the Assembly proceeds and were the product of two years prior consideration. In 1998 a wide ranging review of the principles which should govern the

...the Richard Commission's assessment was that the Assembly currently spends two per cent of its time considering the law made in its name...

Assembly's procedures was undertaken by the National Assembly Advisory Group. This met in various parts of Wales and received submissions, both orally and in writing, from a wide range of outside bodies. Its comprehensive report was followed by the Standing Orders Commission comprising representatives from many walks of Welsh life and persons with a particular knowledge of Parliamentary procedures.

Similarly, there were two stages in Scotland leading to the drawing up of the Scottish Parliament's Standing Orders. First was a Parliamentary Commission in 1998 to look at the principles which should govern the operation of the Scottish Parliament, including its legislation procedures, and then its Standing Orders were established. More than 30 pages describe its legislative procedures covering a variety of different types of Bills, including Bills presented by outside bodies as well as the procedures for considering certain of the subordinate legislation made by the Executive. The procedures are complex and cover many different stages of consideration of legislation.

Balancing the need for the new Assembly to continue the present work of bringing the Executive to account while at the same time ensuring proper scrutiny of draft Orders in Councils, Measures and important subordinate legislation, is placing a considerable burden on the Standing Orders Committee. Moreover, there will only be 46 backbench AMs available for these tasks.

The Standing Orders Committee was established at Easter with the task of preparing comprehensive draft Standing Orders covering the procedures which will need to be put in place for the new Assembly. This work is being carried out without there having first been the opportunity for a review and report on the new Assembly's work under the 2006 Act in the manner of the National Assembly Advisory Group review or Scottish Commission review in Scotland. It represents a considerable task, evidenced by our own 90-page submission to the Committee reviewing the matters that will need to be considered.

Once they are formulated, the draft Standing Orders will need to be debated and agreed by the Assembly prior to their being presented to the Secretary of State for Wales by March 2007.

It is a matter of speculation how far, if at all, it will be possible to test the workability of the draft Standing Orders before they are sent to the Secretary of State,



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particularly in relation to the new legislative processes. If it was necessary to test the robustness of the Standing Orders relating to the making of the Oxtail regulations in 1999, how much more is it necessary to test the new Standing Orders applying to, for example Oxtail Orders in Council or Measures. Such a test should preferably be carried out before the Standing Orders are made and certainly before proposals for the new Orders in Council start coming to the Assembly after next May.

The Assembly Government has staff and lawyers ready for post May 2007. They will continue to carry out the same work as under the 1998 Act and prepare legislation for consideration by the Assembly. Equally and quite separately to the preparations of the Assembly Government, the Assembly must also make its own preparations for dealing with this proposed legislation coming from the Executive.

However, not all proposals for legislation will come from the executive. The experience of the Scottish Parliament has shown that individual Assembly Members will wish to propose legislation, particularly Measures, as will Assembly Committees. Outside bodies will also wish to participate. All actors have demonstrated the will to initiate legislation.

Meeting place inside the Assembly where the public can peer down at their Members in action.



The Shadow Commission is considering the staffing requirements for the new Assembly. Its work should include, among many other matters, a consideration of the number and experience of staff required for the processing of the new legislation coming before the Assembly. There is apparently no indication, as yet, that a central independent Office, equivalent to that of Parliamentary Counsel as exists in Whitehall Edinburgh, will be established to prepare the Measures. This means that separately from the Assembly Government, the Assembly will need to create its own specialist team of lawyers and associated administrators who can advise about all aspects of the Assembly's legislative work including drafting. The separation of the Assembly from the Assembly Government means that the Assembly must have sources of specialist advice separate to that of the Executive.

Currently, because the legislative procedures have not yet been formulated, it is not possible to decide the numbers and expertise required of such staff. The result is that there do not

appear to be any advertisements for such staff as yet. As with the devolution "Walkthrough" which analysed how the procedures worked for 1998 Government of Wales Act it will also be necessary when such staff are in post to analyse how they will carry out the new work and fully test the processes with which they will have to deal.

The "Devolution Walkthrough" of 1999 considered the legality of Oxtail Regulations. These pale into insignificance when Rhodri Morgan foresees up to five or six different pieces of major legislation before the Assembly at any one time.

Time is now very short to compile the Standing Orders which will need to set out the detailed procedures for these very important legislative functions. The functions are new and untried. It is many centuries since Wales last made legislation equivalent to UK Acts of Parliament.

There is an equal shortage of time as regards the appointment and training of staff to carry out these procedures and to advise on the many and varied aspects of these new legislative powers, particularly since Assembly Measures will need to be drafted bilingually.

This places a considerable burden on the Standing Orders Committee and the Shadow Commission. When the Standing Orders are completed and the legislative staff are in post, their procedures will need to be tested by means of "Devolution Walkthroughs" to explore the various hypothetical issues with the collaboration of the main actors who will operate the new system. These will include members of the Judiciary, academics, Assembly lawyers and officials and private practice solicitors and barristers together with court officials

The present Assembly will no doubt cease its work early in April in order to prepare for the May elections. In the meantime the parties will be publishing their manifestoes setting out their legislative bids, which for the first time they will be able to say have far more chance of becoming law under the 2006 Wales Act than hitherto when new Welsh legislation has depended entirely on finding a place within the busy UK legislative timetable.

Let us hope that it will be possible to test an Oxtail Order in Council or even a Food Content Order in Council and a matching Measure made under it before the new Assembly passes its first statutory Measure. Such a test will help to ensure high quality legislation worthy of an Assembly whose aim should be to produce clear laws appropriate to the needs of Wales with better scrutiny than is presently achieved by the United Kingdom Parliament.

David Lambert is a Research Fellow and Marie Navarro a Research Associate with Cardiff Law School.

spending squeeze

eurfyl ap gwilym forecasts
how UK budget decisions will
impact on the Welsh block

As the political parties ponder their manifestos for the 2007 Assembly elections they will need to come to terms with sharply reducing spending growth by the time the incoming Assembly Government faces the task of formulating its first budget for 2008-09. During the first two terms Wales was in the enviable position of presiding over an unprecedented growth in public spending. However, all good things come to an end.

For the purposes of the estimates that follow it is assumed that any incoming Welsh government in May 2007 will be committed to the existing budget for the fiscal year 2007-08. The new government will be able to establish its own budgets for the following three years provided total expenditure is within the envelope of the block grant. It is also assumed that the annual increase in the block grant will continue to be determined by the Barnett Formula. As recently as 1 September 2006, on a visit to Scotland, Tony Blair affirmed his own support for Barnett. Gordon Brown also supports the formula.

table 1: year on year changes to the block grant 1999-2008

	Welsh Block Grant £m	% Nominal Increase (inclusive of inflation)
1999-00	7,350	-
2000-01	7,774	5.77
2001-02	8,603	10.67
2002-03	9,594	11.51
2003-04	10,549	9.95
2004-05	11,262	6.76
2005-06	12,031	6.83
2006-07	12,906	7.28
2007-08	13,713	6.25

Table 1 shows the nominal increase in the Welsh block grant, inclusive of inflation. The figures include the above Barnett increases for EU Objective 1 funding. Although these come to an end with the completion of the Objective 1 programme they will be replaced by above Barnett EU Convergence programme money.

Source: Wales Office Annual Report: Cm 6545

It has already been indicated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that public expenditure growth will slow down following the high increases over the last eight years. For the UK as a whole total public expenditure has risen from 37.5 per cent of GDP in 1999 to just over 43 per cent in 2006-07. Such increases are not sustainable in the medium term. The heavier burden of taxation and the increasing budget deficit are now the principal constraints on future growth in public spending and real growth will, at most, track growth in GDP which is expected to be in the range 2.25 to 2.75 per cent.





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The detailed public expenditure plans of the UK Government were set out in the July 2004 Comprehensive Spending Review. Those projections are to 2007-08. If the Treasury had followed its normal timetable, another Comprehensive Spending Review would have been published in July 2006. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the bleak outlook for future years, the Chancellor of the Exchequer decided to postpone the review for a year which will therefore be after elections to the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly and after the election of the next leader of the Labour Party.

However, in its 2005 Pre Budget Report and 2006 Budget Red Book, the Treasury has set out broad projections for the real increases in total public expenditure in the UK for the years 2008-09 to 2010-11. These forecasts show that real increases in total public expenditure in the UK as a whole will fall from 3 per cent in the two years 2005-06 and 2006-07, and to 1.9 per cent in the years 2008-09 to 2010-11. This is an attempt by the Chancellor to rein in growth of public spending as a proportion of GDP. On present Treasury projections expenditure will fall from 43.1 per cent of GDP in 2007-08, to 42.5 per cent in 2010-11.

How do these projected changes impact the block grant? The key drivers of changes in the Welsh block grant are the forecast changes in spending on services in England which in the case of Wales are devolved. (In the jargon of the Treasury the changes accruing to Wales from the Barnett Formula are accurately labelled consequentials).

The two devolved services that dominate the Barnett calculation are health and education. Treasury forecasts indicate that in England post 2008, health expenditure will grow by 4.4 per cent per year in real terms and education by 2.25 per cent. These two sectors will absorb the bulk of real increases in expenditure. The comparatively large increases in these two sectors mean that increases in other areas of public expenditure will have to be squeezed if the overall increase is to be kept to 1.9 per cent. A simple calculation (see Box 1) shows that the increase in all other public expenditure will have to be less than 1.25 per cent per year. For the purpose of this exercise it is assumed that this is the average, weighted increase in all elements of expenditure for England which in the case of Wales are devolved with the exception of health and education.

Thus the projected impact on the block grant to Wales will be dominated by the increases in public expenditure in England on health and education. The English growth rates of these two sectors, together with the calculated 1.25 per cent rate for the remaining sectors, were applied to the respective expenditure forecast for 2007-08. The Barnett 'consequentials' for Wales were calculated and the growth in the block grant derived. In real terms the projected annual growth in the block grant to Wales, for the period 2008-09 to 2010-11 is 2.7 per cent. The corresponding nominal increase is 5.2 per cent (taking the Treasury's assumed annual inflation of 2.5 per cent).

On present plans nominal growth in devolved spending in Wales will thus slow down from a peak of 11.5 per cent in

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table 2: comparison of capital spending per head between Wales and England 1999–2005 (£)

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Education						
England	31.29	40.48	53.97	63.05	75.53	84.14
Wales	30.60	36.74	42.52	42.18	47.47	57.33
Health						
England	18.70	25.49	35.15	42.12	52.39	57.25
Wales	31.16	25.23	44.03	41.11	42.84	49.38

Source: HM Treasury Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses for 2006 and 2005. National Assembly for Wales: Written Answers, 6 April 2006.

2002-03 (Table 1) to 5.2 per cent in 2008-09 and beyond. In real terms the slowdown is more stark: real growth will slow down from 9 per cent in 2002-03 to under 3 per cent in 2008-09.

In looking back over the first two terms of the National Assembly it is remarkable that despite large, real increases in public spending across the UK, in the case of Wales spending per head on health compared with the UK as a whole has declined from 109 per cent in 1999-00 to 100 per cent, and in the case of education relative spending also fell, from 105 per cent in 1999-00 to 100 per cent in 2005-06 (Treasury: Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2006).

Furthermore, as shown in the Summer 2006 issue of *Agenda*, in Wales capital investment per capita in health and education has been much lower than for the UK as a whole (see table 2). Given the tightening budgets that the Welsh government faces in the third term, it is going to be difficult to reverse these trends.

Growth in public spending as a whole across the UK is facing a sharp slowdown. In the case of Wales the slowdown will be acute for two other reasons: the Barnett squeeze (see the Spring 2006 issue of *Agenda*) and the need to find match funding for the EU Convergence Fund programme that is due to succeed Objective 1.

It is assumed that the cost of match funding will continue to be of the order of £60 million per year. To estimate the impact of the Barnett squeeze the base line year was taken as 2007-08. It was assumed that nominal growth in the block grant was 5.2 per cent (the expected case). It was also assumed that

calculating the growth in public spending other than health and education

- For 2007-08 Total Managed Expenditure in the UK is expected to be £583bn, of which £95bn is spent on health, and £78bn on education leaving a balance of £410bn. The forecast growth rates for England of: 4.4 per cent for health; 2.25 per cent for education and 1.9 per cent overall means that the balance can only grow by 1.25 per cent (HM Treasury: Budget Red Book 2006, HC968).

devolved expenditure per capita in Wales was 108.5 per cent of the corresponding expenditure in the UK as a whole (this ratio is the average over the past five years although it is declining). The reason why overall devolved spending per head is higher in Wales despite that for health and education having converged to the UK level is that spending on other devolved programmes such as economic development and culture is markedly higher.

Taking 2007-08 as the baseline year the result of this simulation is shown in table 3.

table 3: projected barnett squeeze 2008-09 to 2010-11

Annual nominal growth of block grant	5.2 per cent
Squeeze in 2010-11	£183m
Cumulative squeeze	£366m

Thus, using 2007-08 as the baseline year and assuming devolved expenditure grows by 5.2 per cent in nominal terms between 2008-09 and 2010-11 (2.7 per cent in real terms), the cumulative Barnett squeeze over three years is £360 million and the squeeze is £180 million in 2010-11. This accumulating squeeze will make it increasingly difficult for Welsh spending on health and education per head to match that in England.

Given the high increases in public expenditure in Wales over the last seven years the outcomes have been disappointing:

- Waiting lists in the NHS have not seen the improvements experienced in England.
- School performance as measured by examination results has slipped relative to England.
- Despite record sums being spent on economic development, Wales remains at the bottom of the UK table for GVA per capita.

This record combined with the expected sharp slowdown in growth in public spending shows what a challenge it will be for whichever party is in power after May 2007. Hitherto the Welsh Assembly Government has focussed on inputs to the public sector. It will now need to concentrate on improving efficiency and measuring outputs.

Eurfyl ap Gwilym sits on the boards of a number of public companies and is a member of Plaid Cymru's Economic Policy Commission.

politics

roller coaster

david williams reflects on his highs and lows in following the National Assembly's first six years

Eyeball of the dragon: a close-up of BBC Wales's *Dragons Eye*, presented by David Williams over the past six years.

As you read this I will be several thousand miles away trekking in South America heading for Tierra del Fuego at the southernmost tip of Chile. By now I should have reached the Los Glaciares National Park to witness one of the natural wonders of the world: the Moreno Glacier.

This immense jagged sheet of ice, anything up to 80m high, descends into the lake along a two kilometre front, cutting the waters in two. We will be taking the walkways right up close to the ice face, listening to the endless creaking and groaning and watching as huge chunks of ice fall into the lake to float away as icebergs.

Not unlike the experience of the last six and a half years covering politics in Wales. It has often felt as though I have been close up to a cold face, listening to the endless creaking and groaning of the politicians and watching as huge chunks of ego fall off into Cardiff Bay to float off, melt and disappear.

I can say that now because I'm free from the constraints of reporting for the BBC, or am I? Before I left I was reminded, in an official letter, that any "information gained during the course of your employment remains confidential." Strictly speaking I shouldn't have told you that, but being that I'm at the other end of the earth and no longer an employee of the BBC I feel like throwing caution to the winds which whip up here from Antarctica.

And while I'm enjoying the cleansing effect of being a free spirit I thought I would take the opportunity of looking back at the last few years of my life as a political journalist and reflect

and wonder at what has passed before me in the stormy waters around Wales.

I couldn't have wished for a more interesting time to enter those waters, coming as it did with the advent of devolution. It was an exciting moment to be appointed Political Editor of BBC Wales and to be given the responsibility of mapping the development of the new constitutional arrangement – an arrangement which I can now say I fully supported. When I look back it is personalities and the clash of personalities which stand out for me as the marker posts for the first years of devolution.

What I hadn't bargained for was events – events which, at times, blurred my view of Wales' emerging democracy and left me confused, frustrated and bewildered. These events are well documented and I will not go through them all here, but a few are worth noting if only to remind myself of the drama and kaleidoscope of prime colours which have passed before my eyes.

There was the dastardly plot to remove Alun Michael and that resignation letter which the Presiding Officer refused to read. Clever move that Lord Elis Thomas! Now I see that the Lord is described as something relatively unusual in contemporary Welsh politics: intelligent, well read, tactical, experienced, personable, self assured, charismatic and, most important of all, a political risk taker.

But I knew that all along. He intimated as much, and often enough, at our very enjoyable get togethers. I shall miss those

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and I shall watch carefully from the sidelines to see what trajectory he next programmes for himself.

At the time of writing I read that Lord Elis Thomas has fallen out with his deputy, John Marek, and his chief of staff, Paul Silk. Pity that, but then again Dafydd is always falling out with someone! If he reads this he will no doubt have found his next candidate for exclusion from his inner circle of trust. If he is not careful there will be no-one left in it.

Love him or loathe him he is one of the big players in Welsh politics.

Then of course there's Rhodri Morgan. Once, on his way to be interviewed by me in the Dragon's Eye studio, he was wrongly directed into the Doctor Who make up room and almost turned into a tree. Come to think of it the First Minister is very much like a tree; a very big tree in whose shade stands all his colleagues.

The problem is that his shadow is stunting the growth of those who might be expected to flourish in his place. Those who stand beneath the Morgan canopy look rather pale by comparison with the Big Man. Only Carwyn Jones looks physically and politically able to succeed Rhodri. A bad result next May though and the big tree may be toppled sooner than we think.

Rhodri Morgan and I never really got on. I found his rambling monologues, masquerading as answers, irritating. He found my constant interruptions, masquerading as questions, unacceptable. Often the interviews would degenerate into bad tempered affairs and my reputation as an irreverent trouble maker was sealed in the Labour Party.

He once accused me of playing 'the three card trick' with my questioning on the likelihood of a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. Whenever I got close to pinning down the First Minister he resorted to his usual trick of throwing chaff in my face. I never did find out what magician skills he was attributing to me. They disappeared without trace!

Having said all that, I do recognise Rhodri's qualities which are many and varied. He did not repeat his predecessor's mistake of trying to run a minority government. He went instead for that coalition with the Liberal Democrats and stood by his new political ally, Mike German, through thick and thin.

Mike German appeared several times on Dragon's Eye to defend himself against allegations relating to his time in the European office of the Wales exams board, the WJEC. He cleared his name and the coalition got back on track. Mike German never once showed any personal animosity towards me though I'm sure the whole affair caused him great pain and anguish.

As, I am sure, did my interview with Ron Davies after he had been ambushed in some woods by a tabloid newspaper in

pursuit of something to titillate its readers. I still find it difficult to believe that such a talented man as Ron Davies risked – again – his political career in such a way.

His explanation, in an interview with me, that he had gone into the woods to look for badgers effectively finished his high profile political career. I was so taken aback by his reply that I failed to ask the obvious follow up question...."but Mr. Davies, badgers are nocturnal animals and you were looking for them at ten in the morning!"

On reflection it would have been a cheap shot and, in truth, I wish I had not been the interviewer on that occasion. I have the utmost respect for Ron Davies and I believe that Wales and devolution would have been very different if he had been the First Minister.

It was not to be but there were other interesting moments along the way: I chartered from the beginning the remarkable story of Peter Law and the challenge he posed to his own party in Blaenau Gwent. Few believed that he would take on Labour, but he did. And then the story seemed to be over before it began when he pulled out of the parliamentary race because of a brain tumour.

I shall never forget his tearful phone call informing me of his decision. Nor will I forget the phone call I received only a couple of weeks later after a major operation to remove that malignant tumour. He informed me that he was back in the race and I bet a colleague a fiver that he would win. I received my reward live on the election night programme I was presenting with Huw Edwards.

It was a sweet moment, but it wasn't long before that dreadful disease called cancer began to silently destroy him. I met him many times in the months before his death and, in one conversation, he told me that he had been offered a peerage not to stand against his old party in the general election.

He never told me who it was who had offered him a seat in the Lords and neither did his wife, Trish, when I interviewed her just days after her husband's death. She was the one who wanted to do the interview for *Dragon's Eye* and it was her honesty and courage which made it a remarkably moving affair. And, of course, there was that public confirmation of the offer of a peerage to her husband.

A day later the claim reverberated in the London newspapers and there was a small explosion in Whitehall. Following Trish Law's disclosure I received a telephone call from the office of the Secretary of State for Wales, Peter Hain. I was told by an aide that Mr. Hain was furious at any suggestion that he had made any such offer. I pointed out that

David Williams:
"Rhodri Morgan and I never really got on."



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such a suggestion had not been made by me or Trish Law in the television interview.

Nor did Trish Law tell me in private who had made the offer. It was others who did that following the interview. When I next spoke to Peter Hain himself he was much calmer, but still insistent that he had never made such an offer to Peter Law. The row rumbled on and the supportive reaction she got to the interview prompted Trish Law to follow her husband into politics.

Once again the mighty Labour stronghold of Blaenau Gwent crumbled before the new-found appeal of, not one, but two independents. Trish Law won her husband's seat in the Assembly and Dai Davies, Peter Law's former election agent, won the Westminster seat.

It was another remarkable night in Blaenau Gwent and I believe the result may have wider repercussions for Labour hegemony in Wales. For me it stirred mixed emotions. Standing for Labour in the parliamentary contest was my friend Owen Smith, the first and very able producer of *Dragon's Eye*. There he was trying to follow in the footsteps of Nye Bevan and Michael Foot and, in ordinary circumstances, he would have succeeded.

But the circumstances in Blaenau Gwent were not ordinary and Owen Smith had not bargained on the hostility which had built up against Labour in an area where the party once took the votes for granted. That fermenting hostility would defeat him and his Assembly running mate.

It was a difficult moment for me too. Was I his friend or was I BBC Wales' political editor? In truth, of course, I was both, but I also had warm feelings for Trish Law and her family. Theirs were happy faces in the early hours of that morning of the count in Ebbw Vale and they deserved to be. Only a few weeks before that they had been tearful in the face of the loss of a husband and father.

Now they were celebrating. And by now I was beginning to find it difficult to separate out my responsibilities and my emotions. Who would have thought that friendship and professionalism would have collided in such a dramatic way?

What an extraordinary story and what a wonderful one on which to take my leave. And, as I do so, I wonder what awaits Trish Law in the Assembly. And, indeed, what awaits the Assembly as it prepares to take on new powers.

On that score, Peter Hain and Dafydd Elis Thomas can take great credit for a remarkable invisible double act in achieving a pragmatic way forward for the Assembly in the face of political opposition and much public antipathy. The Assembly is still a much unloved institution, but now at least it's on the road to being a parliamentary body and it has an iconic new building to reflect the new politics of Wales.

The quality – and I hesitate to use that word – of some of the debates in the Assembly chamber have been abysmal, sometimes down right embarrassing.

The calibre of some of the Assembly Members who grace our national political institution is lower than that found in the average council chamber. Time and again in the chamber I found myself lowering my head in disbelief at what I was hearing.

The standard of debate is not helped by the unfortunate practise of recycling the same subjects over and over again. Worse, at the end of this tortuous and useless process no decision is made. The feeling you are left with is one of political impotency and the problem is compounded by the failure of the committee structure to properly scrutinise Ministers. Often the chairs protect the Ministers who are supposed to be answerable to the committee and, by extension, the electorate.

If you think this to be the rantings of a disillusioned journalist, you should try a six month stint in Cardiff Bay. You may find that the more able and discerning Assembly Members are themselves tearing their hair out at the inadequacies of their family friendly place of work.

To be brutal they need to work harder and more efficiently and they need to begin now before the big changes which are coming following the May 2007 election. Those who espire to articulate the new constitutional arrangements had better learn to sharpen up their act. Sitting listening to some of the debates over the years has heightened the appeal of watching paint dry. At the height of the row over the new building its architect, Lord Rogers, told me: "I don't know what all the fuss is about. It's just a small house."

And so it is, but it is a beautiful little thing. Let's hope that something big and meaningful emerges from it over the next few years. Will another large tree, in the shape of Dafydd Wigley, re-appear after next year's Assembly election? Cardiff Bay could do with people of such stature. There have been too many disappointments in the first few years, but I have to remind myself that devolution is still in its infancy and the sapling must be given time to mature.

In the meantime I'm done with politics for the time being and I am nearing the end of something else – the end of a continent at the tip of Chile in the beautiful Tierra del Fuego national park. From here the view of the world I have occupied for the last six and a half years is melting away, just like that glacier.

David Williams was Political Editor with BBC Wales from 2000 until November 2006.

gender budgeting

jackie jones describes a new initiative in policy making

gender budget analysis can provide value for money and improve the effectiveness and transparency of government policy. By strengthening the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data it can enhance the value of resources targeted towards women and men. For the National Assembly, gender budgeting also provides an opportunity for fulfilling its equality commitments enshrined in Section 120 of the Wales Act.

The gendered nature of transport provides an example of what can be achieved. In the 2005 Equal Opportunities Commission Working Paper *Promoting Gender Equality in Transport* Assembly Government statistics were examined for possible gender issues. It concluded that a much higher proportion of the journeys made by men than women were made as car or van drivers in 2002-03. Conversely, a much higher proportion of women's journeys were made as a car passenger.

Unfortunately, it is not possible from the published data to state the proportions of journeys that were carried out on public transport. Indeed, this is one area where the lack of a gender perspective hinders policy makers from fulfilling their gender duty.

table 1: trips (%) made by mode of transport, Wales, 2002-03

	Women	Men
Car/van driver	35	54
Car passenger	31	19
On foot	24	19
Other mode	10	8
All trips (N)	929	970

Source: Data are from the National Travel Survey, Tables 6.3 and 6.5, Assembly Government, 2005. Short walks are believed to have been under-recorded in 2002 and 2003 compared with earlier years.

Table 1 shows that men are more likely than women to travel to work by car in Wales. Amongst those using the car as the main method of travelling to work, a slightly higher proportion of men than women are usually drivers and a slightly lower proportion are usually passengers. In addition, a higher proportion of adult males than adult females (aged 17 and over) in Wales are full car driving licence holders. In 2002-03, 82 per cent of adult males had a driving licence, compared with only 58 per cent of females.

Table 2 shows that in Wales a higher proportion of men's than women's journeys are for commuting and business, while a higher proportion of women's journeys are for shopping. Thus in 1999-2001, commuting and business accounted for 23 per cent of men's trips, compared with only 13 per cent of women's. In addition, it is evident that men travel much larger distances for commuting and business reasons than do



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women. In 2002-03, more than one third of the distance that men travelled in Wales (an average of 2,749 miles) was for this reason, compared with less than a fifth of the distance travelled by women (an average of only 1,054 miles). Moreover, for all purposes except shopping and education/escort education, men travelled longer distances than women on average. It is clear, therefore, that transport needs differ for men and women. This is also reflected in the fact that men are largely in the paid economy while women stretch their time between the two. Women do more caring work than men. Caring responsibilities largely arise out of membership in households and many women share their

households with persons more likely to be in the paid economy, working long hours.



Transport is an area which intersects many different concerns: much can be done to invigorate the Welsh economy, getting (in particular) women (from different ethnic backgrounds and able-ness) back into the paid economy while at the same time recognising the different needs of women and men. Seen in this way, a gendered approach to transport issues can get us moving in the right direction.

Value for money is one of the reasons gender budgeting is used by over 60 countries in the world. You do not have to travel far to see it in action. The Scottish Executive has actively promoted and used the process of equality proofing its budget since 2000 and currently has a policy group advising on equality proofing its budgets. This includes representatives from equality organisations and Scottish Executive officials and develops tools for gender analysis of the budget. It has undertaken two pilots – starting with the issues of smoking cessation and prevention and sport with specific reference to young people in Scotland. The work has focused on whether there are gender differences in response to initiatives in both these areas and on making connections that underline the cross-cutting nature of inequality. In addition, the pilot work will track the process of policy formulation and resource allocation with respect to these two initiatives.

table 2: main mode of transport to work, Wales, 2004 (%)

	Women	Men
Car, van, minibus, works van	77	86
On foot	16	7
Bus, coach, private bus or taxi	6	2
Railway	1	2
Bicycle	0	1
All	100	100

Source: Data from Labour Force Survey, Table 6.9, Assembly Government, 2005.

At a UK level, the Treasury and the UK Women's Budget Group which brings together researchers, representatives from the Trade Union movement, and different non-governmental organisations are discussing ways of using gender budgeting. The Treasury has made a commitment to the use of the gender budgeting approach mainly in relation to taxation and benefits. The role of the Women's Budget group in this process is it to reveal how apparently gender neutral models and policy-making tools may have an implicit gender bias. For example, a gender budget analysis of new Deal programmes in the UK revealed that only 8 per cent of funding for these programmes is allocated to lone parents, of whom 95 per cent are female. Yet 57 per cent of funds go to young people, of whom only 27 per cent are female.

In Wales a pilot project has been carried out, commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Commission, looking at equality and gender-related issues of sports participation and budgeting of local authority leisure centres in Wales. Currently, the Wales Gender Budget Group provides technical assistance and has provided a series of briefings to policy makers in the Welsh Assembly. The objective is to mainstream gender budgeting in the expenditure allocations of the Welsh Assembly government.

Jackie Jones is Development Officer with the Wales Gender Budget Group, made up of representatives from the Wales Women's National Coalition, the Equal Opportunities Commission, Oxfam, NUS Cymru, the Minority Ethnic Women's Network (Mewn Cymru), and the University of Wales, Swansea.

newport wetlands



tim stowe underlines the economic impact of one of Wales's newest nature reserves

the Newport Wetlands nature reserve did not have an auspicious start. Initially opposed by local residents and Newport County Council at a Public Inquiry, it was eventually completed in 2000. Its creation was the direct result of the construction of the barrage in Cardiff Bay. To some, it was almost as if Newport were being made to pay for Cardiff's unsustainable development.

Today, however, the Newport Wetlands reserve promises to be part of a major economic regeneration of this corner of south-eastern Wales, generating tourism and much-needed jobs as well as improving the habitat and attracting new species of birds. Already the reserve has become popular. Last year more than 18,000 visits were recorded, even though there has been minimal publicity and the site has few facilities other than a car park and some footpaths.

The reserve was created as part of the compensation required by the European Commission for the destruction of the Taff/Ely Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest, lost to flooding caused by the Cardiff Bay barrage. After a search that covered several sites along the estuary, the area chosen stretched from the Uskmouth Power Stations lagoons to the village of Goldcliff. The reserve now comprises reedbeds, open water, grassland, saline lagoons and salt march, covering over 400 hectares

These habitats were chosen to complement existing natural areas within the Severn Estuary floodplain. The majority of the land at Uskmouth (which is now reed bed and open water) had

Newport Wetlands nature reserve looking south across the Bristol Channel towards Avonmouth.

A flock of Starlings at the Newport Wetland nature reserve. Photo: David Kjaer.



been used for the deposition of pulverised fuel ash from the Uskmouth power stations. At the time of acquisition, the remainder of the reserve was in agricultural use, both pasture and arable.

As part of the EU requirement, the reserve has to be managed so that it qualifies for Special Protection Area status alongside the Severn Estuary within five years. It has an obligation to sustain at least two species of wintering waterfowl in nationally important numbers. The species most likely to reach these levels are ducks, wigeon and shoveller. In the long-term, the target is to attract internationally important numbers of several bird species.

The nature reserve was created for important conservation reasons, and public use was not considered in its early development. However, nature reserves have great potential to make a substantial difference to the local economy through direct employment, expenditure on goods and services, and through spending by visitors. In a 2002 study the RSPB estimated their nature reserves on Anglesey were supporting directly and indirectly over 22 full-time-equivalent jobs. Visitor spending accounted for around half of these jobs.

Experience of showing people wildlife has revealed that a bird spectacle will attract more visitors. Observation of once rare red kites is now easy, and very popular, at two sites in mid Wales. More recently, ospreys have nested in Wales, and the only viewable pair near Porthmadog attracted 75,000 visits in 2005, worth some £750,000 of visitor spend in the local economy.

The vision for Newport Wetlands is to create a wildlife spectacle that is lacking in the south east corner of Wales, one that will attract visitors from a hinterland that extends into

...already the reserve has become popular. Last year more than 18,000 visits were recorded, even though there has been minimal publicity and the site has few facilities other than a car park and some footpaths...



England as well. Work is well underway. As the reserve has matured, a wide range of species is being recorded in addition to the habituated ducks and swans on the open water and the flocks of wildfowl and waders on the lagoons. The first avocets to breed in Wales were recorded in 2003, bearded tits are now breeding in the reed beds and bitterns observed in the winter may soon stay to breed. The reserve has the potential to become one of the premier places in Wales for watching birds and other wildlife.

The partners at the reserve, the Countryside Council for Wales (the landowner), Newport City Council and the RSPB, have devised an ambitious project to build an environmental education and visitor centre, planned to open in Autumn 2007. This will provide information about the reserve, offer modest



Dunlin in flight at dawn along the Bristol Channel near the Newport Wetlands nature reserve. One of the best-known waders, similar in size to Starlings, they breed in the Arctic and fly south to Africa. Photo: David Kjaer.

environment

of running such centres elsewhere, will operate the centre, and provide the environmental education and community facilities. The partners expect the initiative to be self-financing within a few years.

This project is expected to deliver directly four full time and 15 part time posts. As would be expected, the centre will include examples of best environmental practice through incorporating renewable energy and environmental objectives into the building. Power supplies include a ground source heat pump and solar photovoltaics. The project will endeavour to source all materials locally and use organic/fair trade products where possible in the cafeteria.

A further objective will be improving links with the inner city areas of Newport, and encouraging the support of local communities such as Pillgwenlly, Liswerry and Llanwern. The intention is to use community-learning programmes to provide opportunities for those not usually involved with such sites to participate and learn about the environment around them, and to develop new skills in the process. By increasing the awareness of the environment and man's impact on it, we hope to engender civic pride and respect for our surroundings.

Key to making this financially viable will be the numbers of visitors. With an environmentally sympathetic visitor centre, modest catering and retail facilities, and staff to assist, interpret and advise, the partners are predicting visitor numbers will exceed 40,000 after four years. If we can develop the bird spectacles as well, that number could be greater, with the consequent economic benefits of spending in the local community. Wildlife, we believe, has a significant contribution to make to the development of the local economy in this part of Wales.

Tim Stowe is the RSPB's Director Wales and a Board member of Cynnal Cymru: the Sustainable Development Forum for Wales.

catering and retail facilities, and contain offices for staff and volunteers, as well as providing a community room/classroom. The area surrounding the centre will be landscaped to provide access, a small wetland area to attract birds and other wildlife close to the building, and a secure field teaching and play space for environmental education activities.

The cost of the project is around £3.3million. A European Objective 2 grant from the Assembly Government has been secured via the Newport European Partnership. Funding has also come from Newport City Council's allocation of the Assembly Government's Local Regeneration Fund, Newport City Council's Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and Visit Wales (formerly the Wales Tourist Board), as well as the Countryside Council for Wales and the RSPB. The RSPB, with its experience



The wigeon common duck in flight above Newport Wetlands nature reserve. See cover. Photo: David Kjaer.



environment special 1



Former US Vice-President Al Gore, seen in a clip from his film *Inconvenient Truth* "which graphically illustrates the impact and speed of climate change."

green delivery

peter davies outlines the Sustainable Development Commission's recommendations to the Assembly Government

the forthcoming Assembly elections and the prospect of a new Assembly Government offer a tremendous opportunity to deliver practical action on sustainable development. But this will only happen if the political parties make a step change and ensure that sustainable development principles are put at the heart of their decision making.

In the face of ever increasing scientific evidence of the serious damage that our unsustainable living is doing to the planet, the climate and our own well being, the time for well intentioned, words has passed. The time for leadership and action is now.

It is very easy to push all the blame for lack of progress on a complex cross-cutting issues like sustainable development on to Government. However, governments across the UK, including Wales, are nowhere near

the level of action and leadership that they need to achieve if we are to successfully reduce our unsustainable demands on the earth's resources.

Politicians claim they do not have the political leverage with the electorate to make the changes that they know need to be made. The ghost of the fuel protests and fear of becoming a nanny state haunt many politicians who really want to change some of our deep rooted behaviours. And yet the Sustainable Development Commission/National Consumer Council's joint report *I will if you will* clearly showed that citizens with no prior interest in 'green' issues wanted the Government to take a firm lead. The evidence convinced them that action was necessary. However, they felt their individual contributions would be insignificant without a co-ordinated push from Government.

The Sustainable Development Commission's report *Pioneer to Delivery*, published

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earlier this year, sets out clear recommendations for the Assembly Government (see Box). It is based on an analysis of Assembly Government policies plus interviews with senior decision makers, undertaken by Professor Terry Marsden and Dr Andrew Flynn of the School of City and Regional Planning at Cardiff University.

The report congratulates the Assembly Government for taking a high profile and a pioneering role in promoting awareness of Sustainable Development. However, sustainable development is now bringing significant challenges as civil servants and politicians wrestle with many of the difficulties and barriers of putting it into practice.

Staff and politicians at the Assembly are proud of their duty for promoting sustainable development, written into the 1998 Wales Act, but they need to move rapidly from awareness raising to practical delivery across all portfolios. There is the clear danger that an early pioneering leadership role can easily become stale and translated into meaningless sustainable development statements which are bolted on to mainstream areas of policy

Pioneer to Delivery is about developing effective delivery mechanisms to enable the Assembly Government to make progress with sustainable development. A key issue identified in the report is the drift away from corporate policy development across departments. The consequence has been limited and ad hoc commitments, which do not reflect the scale of ambition needed.

Instead delivery has been based on unilateral approaches by individual departments. The Assembly Government's Sustainable Development Action Plan was bold and ambitious in setting out a vision for a low carbon sustainable economy. However, the report highlights the mismatch between this corporate ambition and the strategy set out by the new Department of Enterprise, Innovation and Networks within its policy document *Wales A Vibrant Economy*. To move sustainable development from a bolted on commitment to being integrated at the heart of policy will require more ambition, stronger leadership at all levels in government, business and the community,

and a willingness to think beyond the time frames of just one administration.

To date much of the work of the Assembly Government has necessarily been focused on the awareness raising stage of change management. But now there is urgency in moving from this 'recognition zone' to tackling the crunch issues, and in particular the impact and speed of climate change, so graphically shown in Al Gore's compelling film *Inconvenient Truth*.

There is a challenge here for all of us. As individuals we need to change our own behaviour. At community level organisations such as PLANED in Pembrokeshire are leading the way in supporting the development of community led solutions. At the all-Wales level Cynnal Cymru: the Sustainable Development Forum for Wales is a network and support system that can support change. Green Dragon provides the structure and recognition for companies that want to make the change. The Assembly Government needs to provide the leadership and prioritisation of resources that can focus such initiatives

Wales led the world in the first industrial revolution based on the exploitation of fossil fuel – indeed we are still suffering from the environmental and social legacy of this unsustainable form of economic growth. We now have the opportunity to lead the way into a low carbon economy, based on technologies that produce the sustainable products and services of the future. The changing marketplace with higher energy prices and more demanding consumer attitudes also provide opportunities to build on the agricultural strengths of Wales

The next 'delivery' phase needs these opportunities to be linked to a strong Welsh brand based on sustainable principles, recognised globally for its 'green' credentials. This must be a key role for the third term of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Peter Davies is Vice Chair (Wales) of the UK Sustainable Development Commission, www.sd-commission.org.uk, an IWA Trustee and chair of its West Wales branch.

environment special 1

key recommendations in *Pioneer to Delivery*

- Wales has played a key role in developing the UK wide set of principles and priorities for sustainable development and now needs to champion them unequivocally.
- Sustainable development principles need to be embedded both 'horizontally' throughout Assembly Government departments and also 'vertically' throughout the public sector.
- Now the pioneering phase is over, it is essential that effective machinery is put in place to hold departments to account for delivery of sustainable development through the Assembly Government's mainstream programmes and policies.
- Sustainable development action plans must be outcome driven, with more challenging targets and more coherent links between priorities, principles, targets, actions and indicators.
- Amongst officials and politicians, the level of understanding of sustainable development and their capacity to use it as a central organising principle for smarter policy making and delivery will be crucial factors in making further progress.
- The Assembly Government should strengthen its voice in UK-wide sustainable development debates, helping to develop devolution compliant mechanisms to facilitate more rapid shared learning between policy makers in all administrations, and to monitor collective progress across the UK.
- Assembly Government strategies and action plans need to be more explicit in distinguishing between those areas where the Assembly has powers, and those that are reserved to the UK or EU, where it will need to nurture an influencing role.

environment special 2

Miami where every spare inch of land is being built upon.

magic city

haf roberts visits one of the most unsustainable places on the planet

miami really has to be seen to be believed. Nicknamed 'The Magic City', every spare inch of land is being built upon, and the endless construction continues mile upon mile on low-lying land along the coastal strip. The breathtaking sprawl of the city defies and encroaches on the countryside adjacent to it, a diverse and precious temperate and tropical habitat of sawgrass prairies, mangrove and cypress swamps, known as the 'river of grass'.

This fragile landscape includes the Everglades National Park, the largest subtropical wilderness in the United

States with many rare and endangered species, such as the American crocodile, Florida panther, and West Indian manatee. It has been designated an International Biosphere Reserve, a World Heritage Site, and a Wetland of International Importance. Earlier this year it was declared at-risk by the UNESCO World Heritage Organisation, due to the relentless onslaught of urban growth, pollution from fertilisers and a drop in water levels as a result of flood protection measures.

Florida is visited by 1.5 million people a year and is at constant risk from increased hurricane activity which threatens to devastate the economic base of the southern coastal cities. In 2005 many facilities in Everglades National Park were damaged by hurricanes Katrina and Wilma. With the existing pressures already squeezing the natural capacity of the land to restore itself, a Katrina-like event hitting Miami would bring unthinkable and irreversible damage to man's activities here.

The history of the area illustrates just how recently man has been able to adapt to the once-hostile environment. Little more than a century ago the area was an inhospitable swamp and impossible to live in. Improvements in transport and food distribution, access to water and the advent of mosquito control and air conditioning made it a more habitable place.

The area began to grow and proved a popular destination. In the 1800s five million people lived in Florida. Now 15m live in the sunshine state with six million living within 50 miles of the Everglades National Park. South Florida is the fastest growing housing market in the world with people coming in droves to the area to live and on vacation. More than 900 people move to Florida daily creating a new demand for 200,000 more gallons of freshwater every day. Water management is the critical issue for the Everglades, as the plants and animals are adapted to alternating wet and dry seasons. Water cycle disruptions ruin crucial feeding and nesting conditions.

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statistics behind the USA's unsustainable record

- 5.8 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide are produced by the US each year.
- 25% of global CO2 emissions are produced by the US.
- 32% of US households have three or more cars.
- 80% increase in US road travel over the past two decades.
- 53 days after Bush took office, he reneged on his campaign promise to regulate CO2 emissions.
- Only one of the 63-person energy advisory team of 2001 had no ties with corporate energy interests.
- Only 13% of Americans own a passport.

South Florida depends on the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades watershed for life and livelihood. The South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, set up in 1993, coordinates the many interrelated federal programmes to develop policies, strategies, programmes and activities for the restoration, preservation and protection of the South Florida Ecosystem.

But all this is at great cost. The total restoration project is estimated to be around \$14 billion – and isn't guaranteed to succeed. I believe that it is most likely that it will fail. The solutions being sought are dealing with symptoms and not addressing the root causes of the pollution and water problems.

Agricultural practices are driving more and more nitrates and phosphates into an already polluted water system and the urban sprawl will only increase the demand for freshwater. Engineering water wells and diverting water are exacerbating damage to the natural ecosystem, which needs gradual restoration over time, not an over-engineered solution.

Changing agricultural production over to organic was considered too expensive and risky to the industry, which provides fruit and other products for export. A patchwork of citrus farms, vegetable fields and cattle ranches cover the area. Agriculture not only makes demands on

water supplies but also threatens them, as draining increases the concentrations of pollutants in the run-off water.

Planning interventions are not desirable where development land is at a premium and real estate so lucrative. Buildings and their infrastructure prevent rainwater penetration into aquifers so that the ground water supplies are diminished in certain areas. Residents of Florida's west coast resort to drinking desalinated water as freshwater supplies are insufficient.

The challenge facing the Everglades and what is described as the biggest restoration project on the planet that seeks to save it is, it seems to me, a microcosm of what is happening in the rest of the United States. Land, water and natural resources are not unlimited and cannot accommodate the unending expansion of the cities. There is a battle and strong lobby to protect the natural habitats, but preservation will not be enough to guard against the damage happening outside of their borders. Previously, it was thought, islands of land could be preserved forever by simply drawing national park boundaries. Today, this attitude is clearly outmoded. National Parks are not islands, but are greatly affected by what happens outside their boundaries.

The historic Everglades, 80 per cent of which lies outside the park, feels this population pressure.

For many in the United States sustainable development is acceptable only if it enables economic profitability and growth. The reluctance of Bush's administration to see it as anything other than business as usual reflects the degree of caution and suspicion with which they view any change. But many in this vast country are beginning to respond differently. Al Gore's 'Inconvenient Truth' conveys the urgency of the response required, and may trigger a wider acceptance of the reality of climate change. As California signs its historic climate law setting rigorous emission targets, many other city and state governors can bring pressure to bear and defy the federal government's stance on climate change. We in the rest of the world can only live in hope; we cannot succeed without action to curb emissions in the United States.

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wicked issue

paul williams
examines the
problems of
embedding
sustainable
development into
the policy
process

Wicked issues do not respect fixed and conventional boundaries. On the contrary they bridge, permeate, weave, infect and infuse functional, sectoral, organisational, professional, governance and jurisdictional boundaries. In the case of sustainable development, they also cross generational boundaries and have local and global connections.

There is a sense that wicked issues are not amenable to optimal solutions because they cannot be 'tamed'. The implications are that they are never fully resolved and remain intractable, and that real progress is dependent on some kind of systemic change as opposed to constant tinkering and 'quick fixes'. Some of the major concerns that come under the 'sustainable development umbrella' such as climate change, world poverty and health inequalities, certainly fall into this category.

The timescales required to achieve discernible shifts in these policy areas can only be measured in decades and generations. Unfortunately, the political imperatives of electoral cycles and the immediacy of pressing societal problems conspire to promote short termism at the expense of longer term thinking.

Sustainable development is associated with complex and contested causal explanations over climate change or world poverty. Politically, sustainable development also raises difficulties because it does not offer simple solutions, a plausible candidate to take blame or a single locus of control. For instance, sustainable development has been interpreted as being variously:

- A green policy area concerned with issues such as waste management, energy efficiency, climate change, biodiversity and natural resources.
- A concept that means long lasting, referred to as 'sustainability'.
- A notion that served to integrate policy by balancing social, economic and environmental concerns.

- A set of principles to guide the design and management of public policy, including inter-generational equity, the precautionary principle and making local to global connections.

Because sustainable development embraces such a broad range of policy arenas there is great difficulty in finding common ground. Only too easily this can result in paralysis rather than joint action. Moreover, a large range of organisations is involved with different perspectives and different interests. Policy-makers typically have varying views on how to engage with sustainable development, views that often reflect the power their organisations are able to wield.

Nonetheless, viewing sustainable development as a wicked issue can have important implications for policy and practice. To begin with it demands collaborative action. The management of sustainable development does not lend itself to single agencies acting autonomously as it is beyond the capacity of any one agency or jurisdiction.

No single actor has the knowledge, legitimacy or resource capability to tackle the problems unilaterally. Rather, action on sustainable development issues needs collaboration and inter-organisational relationship formation to enhance the capacity of government to work with all sections of civic society. These relationships need to reflect the interdependencies between organisations, the shifting and opaque boundaries between public, private and voluntary sectors, and an enhanced role for trust as the medium of communication between people, organisations and government. There are at least four ways in which individual and organisational collaborative capacity can be built into the system:

- One route is through coercion by making compliance a statutory duty. A typical complaint in Wales is that,

although a duty to engage with sustainable development is placed on the National Assembly, no equivalent duty is placed on local government or other public bodies. However, it is debatable whether the imposition of statutory duties on reluctant bodies is the most effective way of achieving an effective commitment to sustainable development practice. Arguably, it is just as likely to induce tokenism. Alternative methods based on learning and persuasion may be more fruitful in the longer term.

- Another method involves the use of policy tools or management frameworks to assist policy makers in designing, delivering and evaluating sustainable development approaches. Examples of these include the policy integration tool promoted by Welsh Assembly Government and increasingly in use by local authorities, and the development of shared outcome measures in local authority performance management frameworks.
- Structural innovation can enhance co-ordination and co-operation between individuals, sectors and organisations. The establishment of Cynnal Cymru: the Sustainable Development Forum for Wales (www.cynnalcymru.org) falls within this third mechanism. However, its full potential impact as a catalytic and facilitative force for systemic change across Welsh civil society is yet to be realised.
- A profitable way of pursuing sustainable development principles involves bridging or alignment strategies. These entail the use of existing mainstream strategies such as Community Strategies, Wales Programme of Improvement or Health, Social Care and Well Being strategies, as the media for promoting sustainable development solutions. Such strategies act as hosts or carriers without being badged directly under the banner of sustainable development, thereby helping to mainstream the concept.

What is undoubtedly required is a broader agreement across different organisations about what sustainable development should mean in practice. Only when there is a wider consensus on

what sustainable development should entail can we expect collective and co-ordinated action to take place. The appointment of sustainable development co-ordinators within organisations can have a pivotal role to play in promoting this. However, their credibility and legitimacy to act in widely different professional and policy arenas and their generally weak voice can conspire to work against their effectiveness. One answer is for them to work through others better placed in the mainstream policy areas.

are problems with putting policy into practice because of:

- Differences in how sustainable development is understood.
- Varying accountability and performance management frameworks.
- Underdeveloped and inappropriate leadership.
- Poorly formed collaborative cultures and fragile partnerships.

The profile of sustainable development in Wales has increased since devolution



Website of the Sustainable Development Forum for Wales which promotes collaboration across the sector.

If sustainable development is to gain a meaningful impact we need more effective leadership within and between organisations. As things stand we have a deficit in visible top-level public sector commitment to sustainable development, especially within local government. Here, the Public Services Management Wales programme could be used as a helpful addition to learning and development.

The governance of sustainable development in Wales is multi-level, involving a variety of actors and organisations with constantly shifting and dynamic relationships and interfaces replete with tension and ambiguity. Collaborative action in these circumstances is challenging because there is a lack of strategic management capability in linking policy design with policy implementation. In addition there

and it is frequently referred to in the strategies of local and national government and other agencies. However, moving from policy intention to real and significant actions on the ground with this 'wicked issue' remains highly problematic.

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economy

The construction cost of the first Severn Bridge provides "merely the latest illustration of the small amount of risk that is often actually transferred to the private sector." Photo: Tony Howell

welsh investment vehicle

madoc batcup
outlines an innovative
scheme for funding
long term infrastructure
development in Wales

the use of private money in the public sector, for example through private finance initiative (PFI) structures or public private partnerships has long been controversial. There have been a number of criticisms levelled at this method of investing in the public sector, including:

- Higher costs of finance compared with straightforward government borrowing.
- Contract inflexibility between the private companies and the public sector.
- The small amount of risk that is actually transferred from the tax payers under such contracts.

The first Severn Bridge, which is now privately owned, appears to require substantial remedial work to its cables, and under the relevant contract this seems to be an expense that has to be borne by the taxpayers. This is merely the latest illustration of the small amount of risk that is often actually transferred to the private sector.

The implications of PFI and public private partnerships have been a particular concern in Wales, and in comparison with England and Scotland such contracts are relatively rare. In the list of signed PFI projects published by the Treasury on its website (updated to March 2006), Wales had an accumulated

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total of just over £555 million PFI projects out of a total for the UK of over £48.4 billion. England had some £43.5 billion. Compared with England the proportion of PFI spend in Wales is some 1.27 per cent. Of course, the English total also includes some significant non-devolved PFI spending such as defence.

Indeed, Welsh spending on PFI seems to be diminishing even from this low level. The 2006 Budget figures show that Wales has a total of £22 million of PFI capital spending signed up for 2005-06, with nothing for the succeeding two years to 2007-08. This compares with a UK total of £9.9 billion for those three years, with Wales accounting for only some 0.22 per cent of the total.

Under the Barnett formula the increase in the block grant which the Assembly Government receives from Westminster is calculated in accordance with the increase of expenditure in the budget of the relevant department in England, the so-called Departmental Expenditure Limits. The amount of the increase for Wales is a population based proportion (currently 5.89 per cent) of the amount of the increase for England, multiplied by the degree to which Whitehall calculates the relevant responsibilities are devolved. In the case of health this is 99.5 per cent, with 93.5 per cent for education, and 63.8 per cent for transport.

Since the Assembly Government receives its block grant based on the expenditure of English departments of state, it is therefore the case that a proportion of the amount of money that is paid out by the Whitehall departments in respect of PFI projects in England comes to Wales under the Barnett formula. This was confirmed by John Healey, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, in answer to a Parliamentary Question in March 2006, when he said: "All central Government unitary charge payments made under the private finance initiative are included in Departmental Expenditure Limits."

This is clearly appropriate since where the payment obligations relate to contracts in devolved areas of competence - for example, health and education - a comparable amount of money should be made available to the devolved institutions. Whether they wish to use it for their own private finance or public private partnership contracts is a matter for them.

In Wales this money is not needed to service PFI expenditure to a great degree since, as shown above, not many comparable transactions have been undertaken.

The proportion of PFI expenditure in respect of devolved matters is quite variable, and can be somewhat lumpy, particularly when the effect of defence expenditure under PFI is taken into account. However, the Treasury estimates that health, education and transport will account for nearly 75 per cent of the English total of the new PFI signed deals and projects at preferred bidder stage in 2005-06, and some 58 per cent in 2006-07, with the fall due to more than £4.5 billion of defence projects.

If we look at just education, health and transport in 2005-06 and 2006-07, and use the Barnett multipliers based on the actual amounts estimated to be payable, this results in Wales being due some 3.6 per cent of the total PFI spend in England in 2005-06 and some 3.2 per cent in 2006-07.

It must be emphasised that the above figures are based on the capital value of new PFI projects signed in those years. However they act as a reasonable indicator of the relative levels of PFI spending in the different English departments of state, and the proportion of PFI payments which relate to devolved spending areas.

In the 2006 Budget the Treasury provides an estimate of future UK PFI expenditure it will have to meet from 2005-06 to 2030-31. Up to 2017-18 this averages about £7 billion a year, after that it drops away. However, projects already in the pipeline will doubtless boost the totals still further.

The English proportion of PFI payments to date is some 90 per cent of the UK total. It is perhaps not unreasonable to use this as an approximate indication of the English proportion of these £7 billion per year PFI contractual obligations. In turn this would indicate that some three per cent of these English PFI payments, or about £210 million a year, would be payable to Wales in respect of health, education and transport alone under the Barnett formula.

Although this PFI related cash flow currently comes to the Assembly Government, it is not clear how it gets allocated. In all likelihood it just gets eaten up as part of general expenditure, probably in the economic development budget.

It is a matter for the Assembly Government to decide how it uses the block grant it receives from the Treasury. However, these PFI related payments are unique in that they are paid to Wales in respect of a budget item that scarcely exists in Wales. In practice they therefore provide the Assembly Government with a degree of policy choice not necessarily available in respect of other funding.

This gives rise to a unique opportunity. One of the most efficient ways of using this income stream would be to ring-fence it, and then allocate it to an entity dedicated to long-term capital projects in the public sector, for example in the fields of health, education, transport and housing. Such an entity would be able to use this largely predictable PFI related income stream to service borrowings in the capital markets through the issue of a series of bonds. The borrowing costs could be further optimised by their being guaranteed by the Assembly Government.

Issuing bonds by such a vehicle backed by ring fenced income from the Welsh Assembly Government would have a number of important advantages. It would mean that capital expenditure could be accelerated in a number of areas which would not be possible if the Assembly Government merely relied on using the income stream as it received it. This would be particularly important for:



economy

The provision of match funding for European convergence grants, which will probably only be available until 2013. To provide match funding to release money from Europe under Objective 1 and the convergence programme there is pressure to use resources from other areas of expenditure, such as health or education. By borrowing in the capital markets such an infrastructure investment vehicle would be able to provide match funding for transport projects in West Wales and the Valleys, for example, without raiding other expenditure.

Raising money to make capital investments in health and education, which could also release money indirectly to provide match funding.

Such a vehicle would thus be making public sector investments, backed by PFI related income. This should provide better value for money since the PFI payments reflect the cost of borrowing of the PFI companies under complex contracts, plus their own equity return requirements. A long term investment vehicle backed by Assembly Government payments should be able to borrow at more competitive rates and would have no equity to service.

Once some of the capital investments came to fruition the investment vehicle would receive a rental income stream from the users of the assets, and this would enable it to undertake further borrowings in the capital markets for additional capital expenditure.

Obviously, the Assembly Government would wish to retain some of the PFI related payments from the Treasury to service those PFI projects that have been undertaken in Wales. However, there should be adequate capacity for such a vehicle to raise significant amounts of long term debt in the first four or five years, perhaps starting with a fairly small bond issue of £100 million at inception.

Since PFI payments constitute not only capital and interest payments, but maintenance and service obligations, the proportion of PFI related payments to be used for purely capital expenditure would need to be carefully reviewed. The Assembly Government would need to ensure that it had the resources to enable the proper operation of the facilities constructed. Nevertheless, the fact that facilities owned by the capital investment vehicle would remain in the public sector would allow for more flexible operating arrangements than is possible under PFI contracts.

The creation of a specialised long term infrastructure investment institution in Wales will require a substantial amount of legal research into the way in which it could be most efficiently created, once the new powers of the Assembly come on stream following next May's election. However, it is clear that health, education and transport fall into the devolved areas of competence specified in Schedule 1, Part 5 of the Government of Wales Act 2006. It is for the Assembly to decide on the means by which it can deliver such services most effectively.

There is no doubt that the creation of a specialised capital investment vehicle in the public sector in Wales would be able to undertake a comprehensive long term capital investment programmes in the public sector. It would fund itself in the capital markets, backed by Assembly Government payment obligations, based on PFI related payments from the Treasury.

It would be an institution specifically dedicated to this purpose, whose only goal would be to improve the quality of publicly owned assets in Wales, with no need to consider the conflicting interest of maximising returns to shareholders, which is necessarily a part of PFI. It would also enable a degree of separation to take place between capital expenditure and current expenditure, and thus reduce the ever present temptation to raid capital expenditure plans to meet operating deficits.

Intriguingly, such a vehicle would be right in line with current Treasury thinking. Gordon Brown has recently announced the issue of 'vaccination' bonds. These are based on the ring-fencing of aid obligations of the donor countries to an 'international financing facility', which will use these commitments as collateral for borrowing on the capital markets, for the purposes of accelerating vaccination programmes in Africa. The Chancellor hailed the scheme as combining 'financial strength with moral purpose'. In the case of Wales, the availability of European funding provides an additional advantage to the use of such a structure, and the improvement of schools and hospitals in Wales constitutes a moral purpose which the Chancellor would also presumably approve.

In summary, the Assembly Government needs to consider carefully how it might create such a vehicle to maximise the use of its share of the PFI expenditure undertaken by government departments in England, to meet the requirements of match funding and capital investment in the public sector in Wales.

There is no doubt that the creation of a specialised capital investment vehicle in the public sector in Wales would be able to undertake a comprehensive long term capital investment programmes in the public sector.

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sporting spin out



rhys david assesses the impact of the Ryder Cup and the Olympics on Wales

Hearts swelled with pride when Wales won the right to stage the Ryder Cup at the Celtic Manor in Newport in 2012, and rightly so. Following on from its success in winning the Rugby World Cup in 1999, the continuing Welsh involvement in the World Rally Championship, through Wales Rally GB, and the prospect of an Ashes Test in Cardiff in 2009, our nation can certainly be seen to be punching above its weight in attracting big sporting events. And a further opportunity for direct participation in major sporting events will arise in 2012 when the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff will be the venue for some of the Olympic Games football matches.

On the green at the Celtic Manor.

Yet, hosting events also costs large sums of money, which may or may not have been spent differently and more wisely. Certainly, there is a tendency among those with an interest in bringing in big events to paint the outcomes very optimistically. The Ryder Cup announcement, for example, was greeted by the Welsh Development Agency as providing an opportunity to increase awareness of Wales as a dynamic business and leisure location. It would position Wales as a supporter of world class events. In the process it would change outdated perceptions, enhance international relationships, facilitate inward investment and exports, help access new markets, and develop relationships with new and existing clients thereby growing revenue and employment.

All of this, plus the forecast total spending effect of £67million, the big increase in golf visitors, the increase in jobs in Newport, in the ten year run-up from announcement to event, and the



economy

penetration of 350 million television-watching homes around the world may happen or even be exceeded. But, as Dr. Calvin Jones, of the Welsh Economy Research Unit at Cardiff University, one of the speakers at an IWA conference on Sport and Economic Regeneration in October pointed out, very little has been done historically to measure the impact of events after they have happened and to check that all the forecast benefits did accrue.

The case for using public money to acquire big events like the Olympics is that it brings forward worthwhile investment projects – in the case of the 2004 Athens Olympics new housing, motorway connections and airport facilities. A derelict quarter of Manchester has been substantially redeveloped as a result of the city's hosting of the 2002 Commonwealth Games, and Manchester City Football Club has been able to move from its previous outmoded stadium to a brand new facility created for the Games.

A similar effect will be produced by the London Olympics, Dr Huw Jones, chief executive of the Sports Council for Wales, told the conference, which was itself held in an icon of sports regeneration, the Millennium Stadium. Large tracts of disused or derelict land in East London will be brought back into use for housing, retail, commercial, leisure and other uses and the area's transport infrastructure will be completely upgraded. Wales and other parts of the UK will derive spin-off benefits it is argued, including increased tourism.

The sceptics are more doubtful. They point out that large amounts of public subsidy are usually required to support the construction of new facilities. Moreover, the opportunity costs – how the money might otherwise have been spent – are rarely taken into account. Nor, as Calvin Jones said, is there usually a very good alignment between what are deemed to be the major impacts of events – increased visitors and spending, business investment, media coverage, new physical infrastructure and associated retail and services activity – with what conventional wisdom says is important in economic development. This is usually seen to be innovation, the knowledge economy, high value employment virtual infrastructure, skills, partnerships and learning.

The tourism benefits, including the notion that these will last for many years after the event as people return for further visits, are coming under particular scrutiny. Some visitors who, for example, might have gone to Germany for this year's World Cup could have been deterred by the thought of crowd trouble and chosen to go elsewhere instead. Conferences will certainly have had to find other venues. Likewise, retail business in shopping centres such as Cardiff may be driven away on big match days.

Once the euphoria from holding a successful event has died away the legacy benefits may not materialise because no mechanism has been set in place to ensure responsibility for organising them. Social housing promised for Barcelona was never built. Some cities – notably Athens – have been left with expensive sports facilities that the local community is unlikely ever to be able to use to their full.

To this cautionary list could also be added the financial risk and damage to reputations sometimes inflicted on the builders of

big stadia and their clients. Laing, the builders, had hoped the Millennium Stadium would enable it to bid for similar contracts around the world. However, despite delivering an outstanding building, the losses it incurred forced it to withdraw from major construction projects, becoming an altogether different type of company. The Welsh Rugby Union's finances – and image – were severely damaged, too, by the costs associated with the new stadium and it remains in debt.

But while these doubts are a useful antidote to the perhaps excessive expectations generated for sports investment, other evidence does suggest the lessons from previous projects have been painfully absorbed and while some big events in the past may not have brought the benefits hoped for, all those involved from organisers to funders are now striking more realistic deals and buttoning down the longer term benefits.

The Millennium Stadium may not have made much from its hosting of the FA Cup, though a tougher line as been taken in recent negotiations with the Football Association. Indeed, as Paul Sergeant, the stadium's chief executive pointed out in his presentation at the IWA conference, the stadium rethought its whole approach to hosting events as it struggled to overcome its debts.

The emphasis on being a rugby stadium that held other events has changed. Now it is projected simply as a spectacularly good venue. This has enabled it to establish good relations with concert promoters, who have placed it firmly on their itineraries for major stars such as the Rolling Stones and Madonna. The stadium is also delivering value to the city as well. The Heineken Cup final between Toulouse and Munster last May is reckoned to have been the most successful event ever held at the stadium injecting a record sum into the local economy from the two sets of visiting supporters, many of whom stayed over in the city's hotels and patronised its restaurants and bars.

At a more local level the new Liberty Stadium in Swansea has brought benefits to the city, even if they are hard to measure in economic terms. As Steve Osborne, of Swansea council told the conference, the stadium, which replaced the two outdated grounds – St. Helens and the Vetch Field – has developed a significant trade outside sport as a venue for local business meetings, seminars, conferences and other events. Because the facilities are so much better than those in the old grounds, attendances for both the Neath-Swansea Ospreys rugby and the Swansea City football matches have grown, generating extra revenue for both clubs. This is then able to work through to better performance on the pitch.

The Millennium Stadium, has given Cardiff and Wales, an iconic building – a new postcard image of the city to replace the City Hall and Castle. Although the effect cannot easily be measured, it cannot be without significance that Cardiff entered the list of Top Ten favourite cities in a recent Guardian/Observer poll. The assumption must be that many people who have not previously visited the city have now done so to attend sporting events or because they have heard about the stadium, the Senedd or the Wales Millennium Centre, and have clearly liked it.



There are, in addition, what have been called the 'psychic' benefits that the local population gains from such investment. The impact is on the morale of local populations, in ways that economists admittedly are struggling to measure. It may be fanciful but it has been suggested that after years of weak economic growth the Japanese economy turned the corner and began to grow again after Japan hosted the 2002 Football World Cup jointly with South Korea.

So what impact will the Ryder Cup in Newport have on Wales? The roads in 2010 will certainly be congested for the run-up and duration of the event and hotel rooms and possibly restaurant reservations in south east Wales will be hard to obtain. There will be a stimulus to employment – much of it doubtless temporary – and opportunities for a wide range of Welsh businesses to provide services from catering to transport and security.

Money will undoubtedly be spent in the local economy, though some will leak out to neighbouring regions in England. In Ireland this year, as John Jermine, chairman of Ryder Cup Wales pointed out in his talk to the IWA conference, spectator attendances over the six days were in excess of 250,000, while 2,000 media representatives covered the event. The direct economic impact in terms of spending has been put at £130 million.

With the Ryder Cup becoming a bigger event each time it is held, Wales can expect to match these sums. The organisers also point to other longer term gains as a result of the commitment in the bid to ensure legacy benefits are delivered. These already include a series of golf events every year designed to draw much greater numbers of people, including women, into the sport, and a £2 million legacy fund which is intended to help local authorities create new facilities for playing the sport.

The London Olympics will have less direct impact on Wales. If visitors who might otherwise have come to Wales choose to go to London instead or even to visit other European countries, Wales could even suffer. The football matches in Cardiff will bring some visitors but the income Wales could derive from being used as a training base for overseas teams is probably likely to be small. After all, Wales will be in competition for such teams not just from English regions closer to London but from warm weather facilities in Spain and other southern European countries.

The real opportunities once again could arise from the business opportunities that will be created. As Arthur Emyr, director Wales for the 2012 Olympics pointed out in his talk at the conference, contracts will be advertised by the Olympic Delivery Authority – the body responsible for delivering the facilities – for a range of products. It will be up to Welsh companies to make sure they have geared up to put in competitive tenders.

While the economist may still argue about how benefits accrue from sporting events and investment, there is no doubt very considerable sums of money will be spent on the Ryder Cup and the Olympics. With the experience it has gained from hosting events in the past and in creating sporting facilities, Wales should be able to ensure it gets at least its fair share. However, such benefits do accrue automatically and will have to be worked for by Welsh organisations and businesses.

The new national swimming pool at the University of Wales, Swansea. Opened in 2005, it is the only Olympic-size pool in the country, and a potential training centre for Olympic athletes in 2102.

Rhys David is Associate Director of the IWA.



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- Persuading the Welsh Assembly Government to pilot a Welsh Baccalaureate amongst 16-19 year olds.
- Supporting the contribution of Higher Education to the economic and social regeneration of Wales.
- Establishing the case for a performing arts centre in Cardiff – leading to the building of the Millennium Centre.
- Encouraging the creation by the Assembly Government of a Design Commission for Wales.

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son of objective 1

roisin willmott examines the new European Convergence Programme being taken forward for west Wales and the valleys

What lessons can be learnt from the first round of Objective 1 funding for the new 2007 to 2013 European Convergence programme for West Wales and the Valleys? Under the European Council budget agreement, West Wales and the Valleys will receive around £1.3 billion over 7 years to support a new Convergence Programme. East Wales will qualify for a new Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme.

So far as the experience of the first phase of Objective 1 between 2000 – 2006, there has been much criticism that the expectations were raised too high, principally through the publicity it was given.

In considering such issues we should first remember that the Assembly Government was in its early days when the Objective 1 Programme was being developed. There were manifesto commitments, but few comprehensive policies in place. In short, there was no strategic 'Welsh' policy framework to guide the Programme's strategy.

This is a vacuum which, by now, has been amply filled with a full range of strategic documents such as *Better Wales*, the *Wales Spatial Plan* and the *Sustainable Development Scheme*, together with policy-specific documents including *Wales A Vibrant Economy*, the economic development strategy, and *Learning Wales*. The Assembly Government is also making efforts to coordinate this output, so that the various documents can support one another.

There is a lot to be said for dovetailing domestic Assembly Government policy with the new Convergence Programme. It will help to concentrate effort and also provide an all-important source of match funding, which many have found to have been elusive.

Partnership has for a long time been seen as a positive side of the programmes in Wales. Arguably, past Structural Fund Programmes have been the catalyst for engendering partnership working at many levels. The Objective One Programme had extensive, some may say burdensome and ineffective, partnership arrangements. The local, regional, and strategic partnerships each had their own strategy and technical advice groups, arrangements that were reviewed no less than twice during four years.

While many of the local partnerships were able to provide a valuable resource within their constituencies, many in the

wider Structural Fund community still felt unconnected and unaware of developments. In many respects, therefore, the Partnerships failed to provide the connections required and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

Moreover, there has been an ongoing debate as to when the various partnerships should be consulted on projects: should it be at the embryonic stage, when there is a greater chance of input, or later on when more information is available? More often than not delays meant that projects were too far advanced to change.

Overall the process was extremely difficult to manage. Given the huge volume of project consultations taking place, communication between partnerships was not easy and attempts to reduce duplication of effort not always effective. All too often the success of an application depended on who brought forward projects, which partnership was involved, and how well application forms were completed, rather than a more strategic approach of filling gaps and avoiding duplication.

For many the application process was long and sometimes wearisome, taking up valuable resources. As a paper presented to the Post 2006 External Stakeholders Group in September 2006 put it, "evaluations have suggested that overall impact can be improved by ensuring more 'joined-up' approaches to project activity" (www.wefo.wales.gov.uk/resource/ESG-Strategic-Frameworks2920.pdf).

This time round the Assembly Government has sought to involve fewer people and organisations in developing the programme, compared with its previous attempts to be all-inclusive. This is a sign that the process is being managed more tightly and strategically.

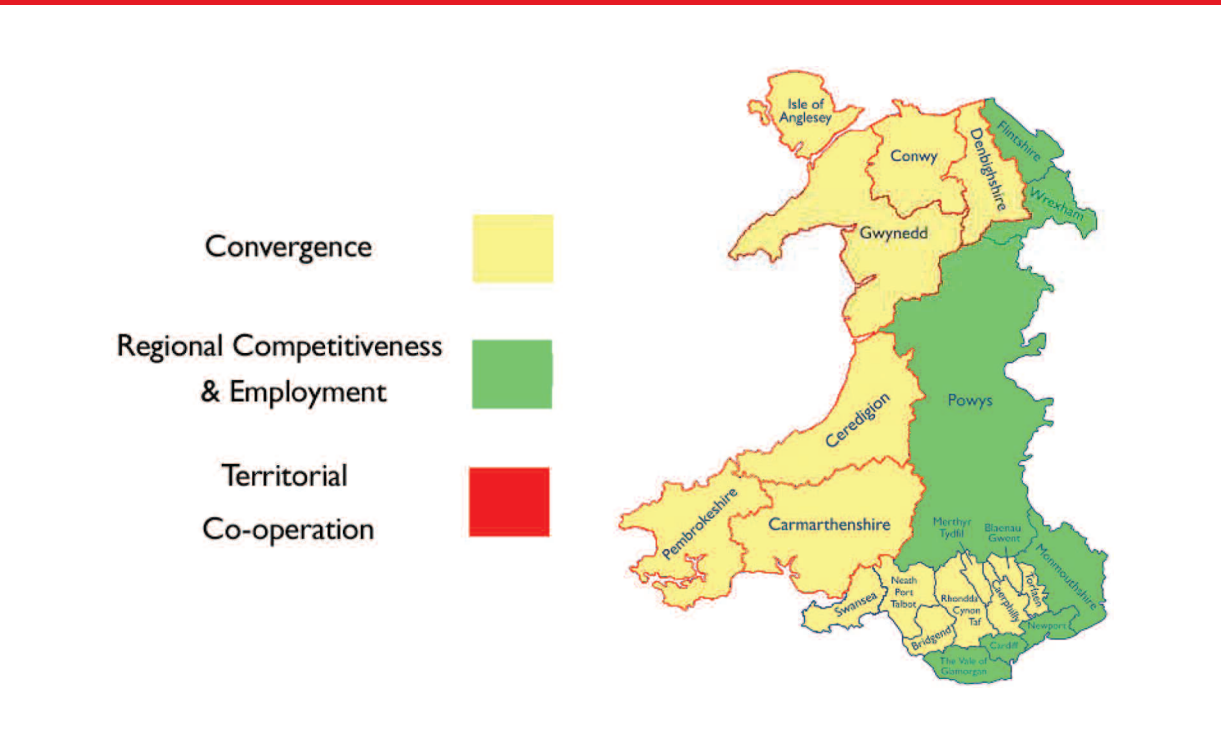
So, will the proposals to use 'Strategic Frameworks' for the Convergence Programme be more effective? At first glance, these appear to be just what is needed, providing strategic direction for particular themes of the programme within which individual projects will need to fit. In all 16 have been proposed by the Assembly Government, including sustainable transport, climate change, and business finance. In most cases an Assembly Department has been nominated as a 'co-ordinating organisation'. These will develop strategic frameworks together with, preferably existing, relevant partnerships.

The use of existing partnerships will be important because they are already established with a tailored remit for their



economy

European Structural Fund Programme areas in Wales 2007-13



theme, providing a further angle to co-ordinating policy. It will also reduce the number of individuals attending more than one meeting for the same purpose or groups with overlapping remits making conflicting decisions.

In theory, the frameworks will be able to ensure coordination with Assembly Government policy, particularly as Departments will coordinate action. However, there are many similarities here with the local, regional and strategy partnerships, when in reality applying their strategies to an individual project was either very easy for most projects because they were all-encompassing, or simply ignored.

Most importantly, the strategic frameworks will need to be 'tight' to genuinely guide the allocation of funding to the projects which will make a difference to West Wales and the Valleys. The individuals involved will also need to be of the calibre that can apply the frameworks effectively.

Proper evaluation was lacking in many, Objective 1 projects. This should involve more than the required monitoring, examining how projects have worked in practice in terms of their achievements, implementation and management. This is something encouraged by the Assembly Government's Wales European Funding Office. However, in many cases during the Objective 1 round it was not thought of or sufficiently prioritised at a project's development stage, and as a result costs were not included in the application. Evaluation is planned to be more of a feature for the Convergence Programme, which must be seen as a positive development.

The current negative experiences of some have probably been exacerbated by a lack of capacity to effectively implement the

Objective 1 Programme. This has also included the way in which the Wales European Funding Office was organised, with separate teams for assessing applications to those which process payments. There have been cases which have experienced differences in the interpretation of the Regulations, sometimes post-event, which is a problem for project sponsors.

With the Convergence Programme, the Wales European Funding Office is retaining responsibility for approving applications, payments and monitoring. However, it is changing the way it operates, with single points of contact for projects from project development through to project closure. Assuming staff will be appropriately trained and briefed, and all operate to the same rules, this will surely be a significant factor in contributing to the Programme's success.

Sceptics may see much of the Objective 1 arrangements still evident and will take some convincing that anything has changed. Successfully using the strategic frameworks is a key challenge for the Assembly Government. It needs to prove that it has the strategic direction and tools to make a difference using the Convergence Programme through 'engaged leadership' and has learned the lessons from the Objective One Programme.

Roisin Willmott is a Senior Consultant with ECOTEC Research and Consulting Limited, based in Cardiff.

science

get serious about science

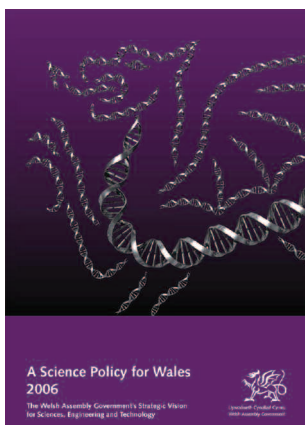
**peter cotgreave says the
Assembly Government
should plug the Welsh science
funding gap**

Every document ever written about science in Wales mentions the sixteenth century Pembrokeshire scientist Robert Recorde, who invented the 'equals sign' [=]. The reason is obvious: this was a pervasive Welsh achievement, and every schoolchild around the world now routinely learns to use his invention. Recorde's enduring legacy was based on a brilliantly simple piece of reasoning. He could think of no two things more equal than two parallel lines.

What few commentators ever mention is that while Recorde may have come from Tenby, he spent most of his life in England – educated and employed at Oxford, Cambridge and Bristol. Any profits that derived from his invention went to his London publisher, John Kingston. This pattern of great Welsh people doing excellent science and creating economic opportunities, but doing it outside Wales, has been repeated many times in history. Examples include David Edward Hughes, the first person to transmit radio waves, the Nobel Prize winning physicist Brian Josephson, the pioneer of paediatric medicine Martha Hughes Cannon and Eddie Bowen, one of the developers of radar.

So when the First Minister reviewed science in Wales over the past year, he aimed to identify ways in which this age-old problem could be addressed. How can we make Wales a magnet for the best scientists and how can we ensure that the Welsh people get their fair share of the economic benefits of science?

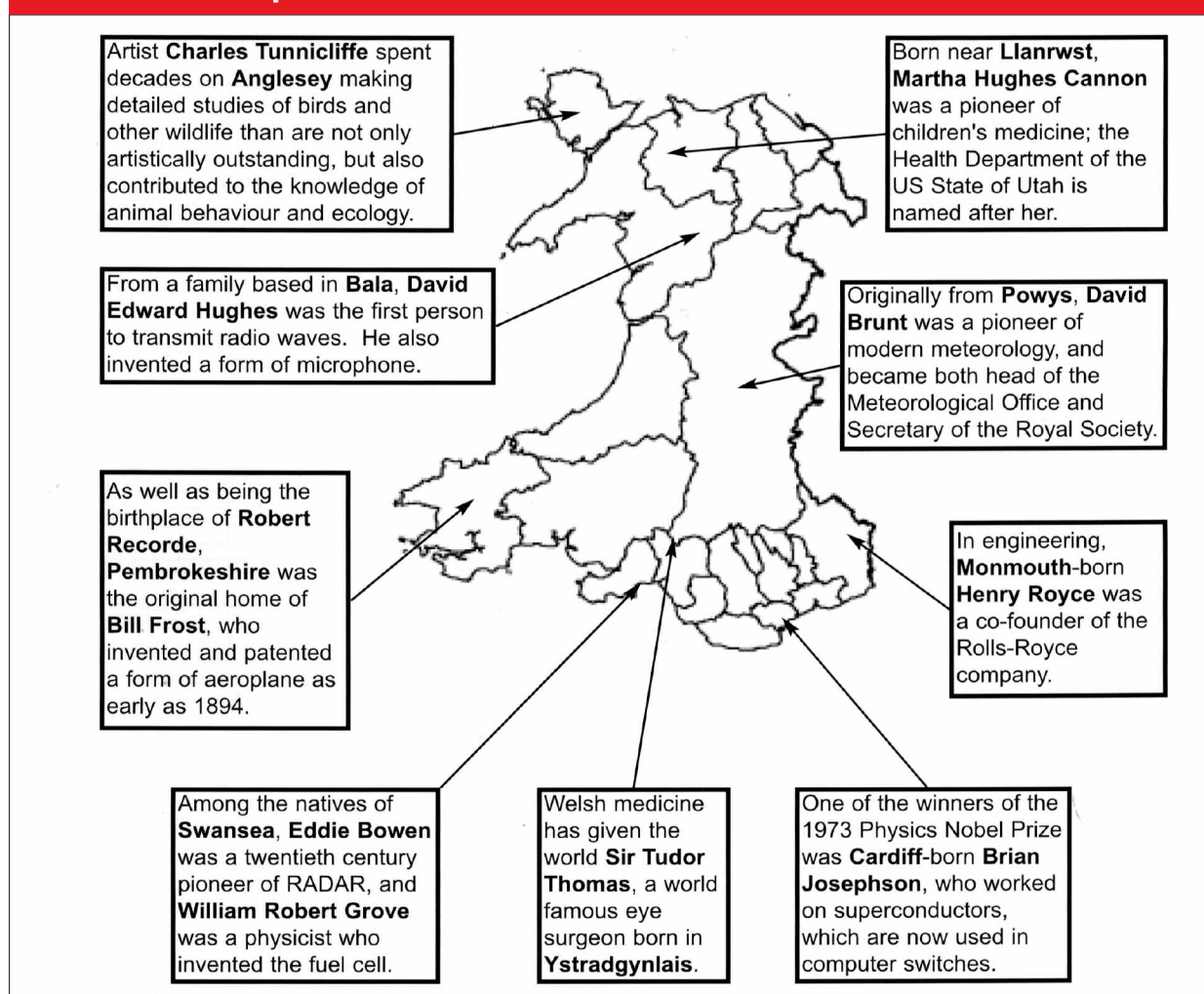
The reason for examining this now, after hundreds of years of exporting Welsh talent, is fairly obvious: the global economy is getting ever fiercer, and to compete with the rest of world, Wales can no longer afford to be a net exporter of good ideas.



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science

Wales's scientific past



Although Wales is a small country, with a tiny fraction of the world's population, its traditional commitment to education means that its contributions to creativity in the sciences have been far greater than might be expected.

The Government may have been prompted into its review by the Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee, chaired by Christine Gwyther AM, which produced its own review of science policy in the summer of 2005 and published its report in September 2006. Having taken evidence from researchers, business people, councils, trades unions, charities and many others, the elected politicians produced 18 recommendations for action. These ranged from the appointment of a Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales to a greater participation in overseas missions aimed at attracting multinational corporations to work with Welsh scientists.

The First Minister, Rhodri Morgan AM, and his ministerial colleagues have now published their science policy, billed as a "strategic vision for sciences, engineering and technology". It is much less bold than the Assembly Committee's version, and has failed to adopt many of the good suggestions put forward by the Assembly Members.

Among the most disappointing aspects of the Government's policy is the failure to create a post of Chief Scientific Adviser to the Welsh Government, analogous to a similar job in Scotland held by Anne Glover, the distinguished Professor of Microbiology from Aberdeen University. I know from

speaking to many of them that Welsh scientists and engineers are extremely unhappy that ministers do not seem to want a champion for science in the heart of Government.

The main reason the First Minister has given for not appointing a Chief Scientist is that it would be a structural convenience rather than an actual science policy. Having someone in charge of making things happen is not the same as knowing what it is that you want to achieve.

In one sense, this is a fair point, and nobody would want the creation of a highly-paid tax-funded job to be a substitute for genuine action to maximise the excellence of Welsh science. As the Assembly Government points out, creating the post of Chief Scientific Adviser would not on its own make Welsh science any more competitive or bring greater technological benefits, even if a truly outstanding individual were appointed to the post. Other things would need to be in place, including adequate funding, confident engagement with technological businesses, and a clear sense of longer-term stability for universities and other public sector institutions.

And the First Minister rightly notes that his Government is already attempting to do some of these things. "There are many sources of expert advice on science already available," he says, "including the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Scientific Adviser for Health, a Chief Environmental Scientific Adviser and a Chief Social Research Officer."

These comments reflect the Government's view that a science policy is primarily about particular areas of public life where scientific information happens to be important for implementing policies. A science policy focused on innovation should concentrate on three areas, ministers believe, namely health; a low carbon economy; and enabling sustained social and economic renewal.

This hits at the heart of what is wrong with the Assembly Government's current thinking about science. Health and environment policies are important political priorities, and it is entirely possible that the voters of Wales would put them at the top of their wish list for Government action. The relevant advisers in each department are looking at health policy or environment policy, and if they are doing their jobs properly, they are no doubt considering how science might help deliver the Government's desired outcomes.

That, however, is a completely different thing from having a science policy which would coordinate a wide range of activities, including some which are not of immediate relevance to short-term policy concerns.

For example, scientists in the UK as a whole perform just five per cent of the world's science. Wales is responsible for less than half of one per cent of global research. So whenever the Government needs access to a novel piece of information, it is overwhelmingly likely that it will want to tap into the science base of a foreign country.

Moreover, since many of the most exciting discoveries come at the boundaries of different disciplines, there is no point in merely having a window on the world's biology or physics. If you cannot enter the world of pharmacology or atmospheric chemistry, you will be implementing health and environmental policies with one hand tied behind your backs. Maintaining a breath of expertise is crucial to a good science policy, but of little concern to a departmental adviser who needs specific answers to well-defined and immediate questions.

Furthermore, despite what politicians – and even some researchers – believe, it is completely impossible to predict which areas of research will turn out to be useful in the future. Imagine that the UK's science policy had been left in the hands of health advisers in the 1940s and 1950s, when antibiotics were the new magic drugs but nobody had the slightest idea how important genetics might become in medical treatments.

Watson and Crick would certainly not have been supported, because discovering the structure of DNA would have been

seen as a pointless piece of self-indulgent navel gazing. That is indeed how it was seen by some at the time, and the researchers were told to stop what they were doing and work on something more interesting. For some of the time, James Watson was not even supposed to be in Cambridge – he was employed in Denmark. Luckily, the two men were able to ignore everyone (including their boss) and went on to have a fundamental breakthrough that has subsequently revolutionised our understanding of many diseases and the ways in which they might be treated.



The Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research at Aberystwyth (IGER, pictured above), is one of only two public sector research establishments in Wales. The other is the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at the University of Wales, Bangor.

This happened, in part, because the UK had a science policy that was deliberately laissez faire. That does not mean it had no policy. Rather, there was an explicit recognition that the biggest breakthroughs come from giving free and unfettered rein to fine minds and allowing them to work outside the paradigms set down by committees of the great and good.

Sadly, Welsh science is under funded relative to the rest of the UK. The First Minister's new policy document rightly reiterates the need for Wales's institutions to take full advantage of UK-wide funding opportunities; for example, he stated at the IWA's Science Policy conference in Cardiff in October that he wants scientists in Welsh universities to have greater success in winning grants from the UK-based Research Councils. These distribute more than £3 billion a year, of which less than £100 million comes to Wales. There is no doubt that it would be good for Wales to receive more of the cash, especially since the money does not have to come from the Assembly's budget but is paid for by the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer.



science

However, Rhodri Morgan conveniently forgets that in the rest of Britain, where they receive proportionally more of the money, the English and Scottish Funding Councils provide much higher levels of support for the basic university infrastructure. This gives a vastly stronger base from which to make bids to the Research Councils. There is a direct correlation between the two streams of funding. Scotland invests most in basic infrastructure and wins the biggest proportional share of Research Council grants. England occupies the middle rank in both, while Wales and Northern Ireland languish at the bottom of both tables. If Rhodri Morgan and his colleagues are serious about wanting Welsh science to excel, they must be serious about closing the funding gap.

The new science policy stresses the belief that Welsh Higher Education Institutes should do more on the Government's three aims of improving health, reducing carbon emissions and sustaining economic renewal. But these are not the only priorities of the Research Councils, so it is unrealistic to expect that UK-wide funding will pay for these areas of endeavour. The First Minister talks vaguely of supporting the development of new institutes, and about gaining access to European funds, but he gives little in the way of hard commitment to investing in the hypothetical new institutes. If all that happens is for existing funds to be diverted, Wales stands to lose its expertise in the areas that end up being cut, with the very real possibility that the country will not be able to respond to a big breakthrough that happens to come from an unexpected field. For a small country like Wales, or even the UK as a whole, maintaining a broad science base – not overspecialising – is the only way to be relatively certain of having the expertise needed to develop and apply new technologies invented elsewhere.

Wales has always placed a special value on education and knowledge, exemplified by the tradition of Sunday Schools and Miners' Institutes. It also takes a particular interest in

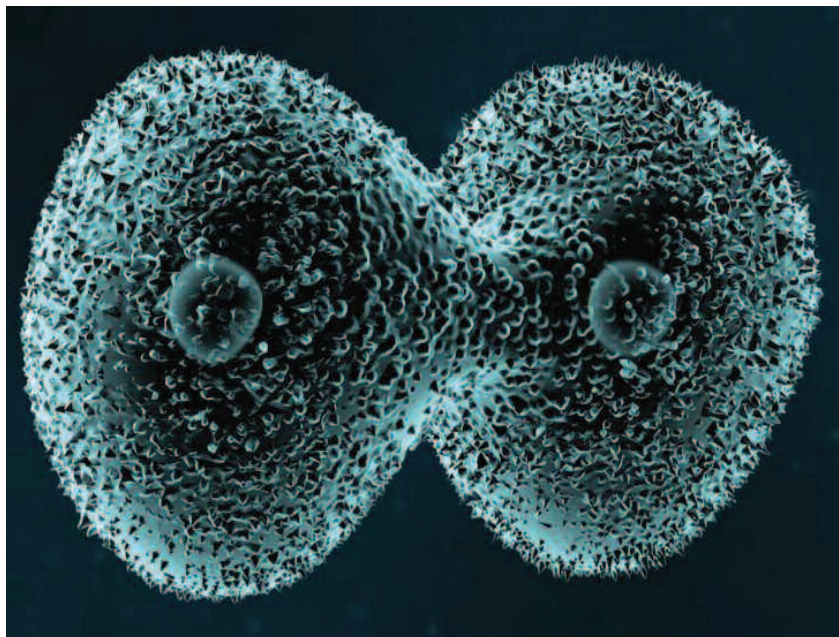
creativity, although the unique format of the Eisteddfod stresses inventiveness and skill in literature and music, rather than science and technology. This combination of respect for learning and innate fascination with creativity is an essential prerequisite for excellent science. So there is every reason why Wales could punch above its weight in the field. But to achieve its full potential it needs real commitment from political leaders.

The report from the Assembly's Enterprise Innovation and Networks Committee was a good first start. The Government's new science policy is disappointing to say the least, but it is plain that it is more of a first step than the final word. We know that Rhodri Morgan personally believes in the importance of science. Indeed, he has appointed himself as Minister for Science, recognising not just the importance of the subject but the pan-Governmental nature of science policies.

If he and his colleagues want to ensure that Welsh science is as good as the best in the world and if they want to bring high-technology, high-value jobs to the country, I believe they can succeed. This is not a pie-in-the-sky vision built on unrealistic assumptions or romantic dreams. It can happen, but only if Rhodri Morgan's Government rapidly builds on his initial good intentions and develops a more comprehensive, positive and meaningful science policy, with high ambitions and real political leadership and commitment.

The Assembly Government's Science Policy for Wales highlights a problem that we have too few people studying the so-call STEM subjects at school – science, technology, engineering and maths.

Peter Cotgreave is Director of the Campaign for Science and Engineering.





An 1888 tapestry sampler by Eliza Lloyd, grandmother of E.J. Lloyd, "the greatest Welsh physicist of the 20th Century." The sampler is engraved with the homily *Gwell dysg na golud* (Learning is better than wealth).

weave of innovation

neville greaves describes interdisciplinary research collaboration under way between Bangor and Aberystwyth

When Eliza Lloyd finished her sampler tapestry in 1888, amongst exotic birds and landscapes and under the tail of a glorious peacock she added the words "Gwell dysg na golud". The maxim that 'learning is better than wealth' was a fine ideal when Wales led the world in the age of coal and steel. Indeed, the same spirit infects the Urdd and Eisteddfod, celebrating the arts and sciences year on year with young and old.

However, in the context of the knowledge-led economy wealth grows out of innovation, application and opportunity, with research or 'learning' the key prerequisite. Wealth and learning are in fact interdependent.

Eliza Lloyd happened to be the grandmother of E.J. Williams, arguably the greatest Welsh physicist of the 20th century. In 1940 he made a pivotal discovery in high energy physics, identifying the pi-meson. This is a heavy fundamental particle with charge and considerable mass, intermediate between the tiny electron and the heavy proton. In today's particle arithmetic the meson comprises a quark-antiquark pair, but its discovery came from deciphering the tiny tracks made by cosmic rays on an old fashioned photographic plate.

E.J. William's observation in the early years of the Second World War was painstakingly achieved after waiting for what transpired to be a serendipitous cocktail of fundamental particles from the active sun. The discovery was made unceremoniously in Aberystwyth, close to the promenade in Old College, where 70 years earlier Welsh Higher Education had been born – in fact just around the time that Eliza Lloyd



science

would have begun her tapestry. There are no mesons in her creative needlework but the culture that created the space for her grandson's research is evident in every stitch.

These reminders from the past are valuable, not least if Wales is to extract the very best from contemporary circumstances. Where previously Wales prospered in a low salary economy, that advantage is now inverted and the only tenable direction is towards high technology with high added value. Now, far more than at the zenith of the industrial revolution, science and research have a crucial role to play in creating the language, innovation and opportunity for technological advantage.



E J Williams, grandson of Eliza Lloyd, identified the pi-meson in Aberystwyth in 1940: "Arguably he was the greatest Welsh physicist of the 20th Century."

Advanced materials are key ingredients for wealth creation, together with their fabrication into novel devices. The modern foundry is required to deliver the sophisticated products the market desires so much that eventually it cannot do without them, with need replacing want.

There are recent good Welsh examples of science driven technology. One is International Quantum Epitaxy, a spin-out company utilising world-leading university research in compound semiconductors conducted at Aberystwyth. Today it is a global leader in wafer outsourcing, fabricating the epitaxial architecture for mobile phones, global positioning systems, displays, infrared cameras and satellite broadcasting. Starting in 1988, when Wales was heavily involved with inward investment of high volume conventional high tech manufacturing, International Quantum Epitaxy was engineering the physics and chemistry of innovative 'three-five' semiconductors and exporting world-wide primary components for the emergent optical, wireless and electronic sectors.

This approach to scientific research and wealth creation is very much the vision of the new Centre for Advanced Functional Materials and Devices being developed by the Universities at Bangor and Aberystwyth. With start-up funds from the Assembly Government, it will enable a lasting collaboration between Mathematical and Physical Sciences at Aberystwyth and Electronic Engineering and Chemistry at Bangor. With current strengths in advanced characterisation techniques, optoelectronics, glasses, solar system physics, materials synthesis, semiconductor surfaces, polymer processing and computer modelling, the new collaboration will create additional opportunities in the following areas:

- Visual computing methods for real-time analysis of complex systems.
- Planetary exploration.
- Materials and devices in extreme conditions.
- Biotechnology
- Organic electronics.
- Materials for sustainable energy.
- Multidimensional detectors and sensors.
- State-of-the-art characterisation facilities.

Despite the diversity, there are important linkages between each of these themes. For instance, visual computing is a growth area across science and engineering world-wide. Both Aberystwyth and Bangor universities have already made sizable investments in the field, as have Cardiff and Swansea. Popular applications lie in medical imaging and prototyping.

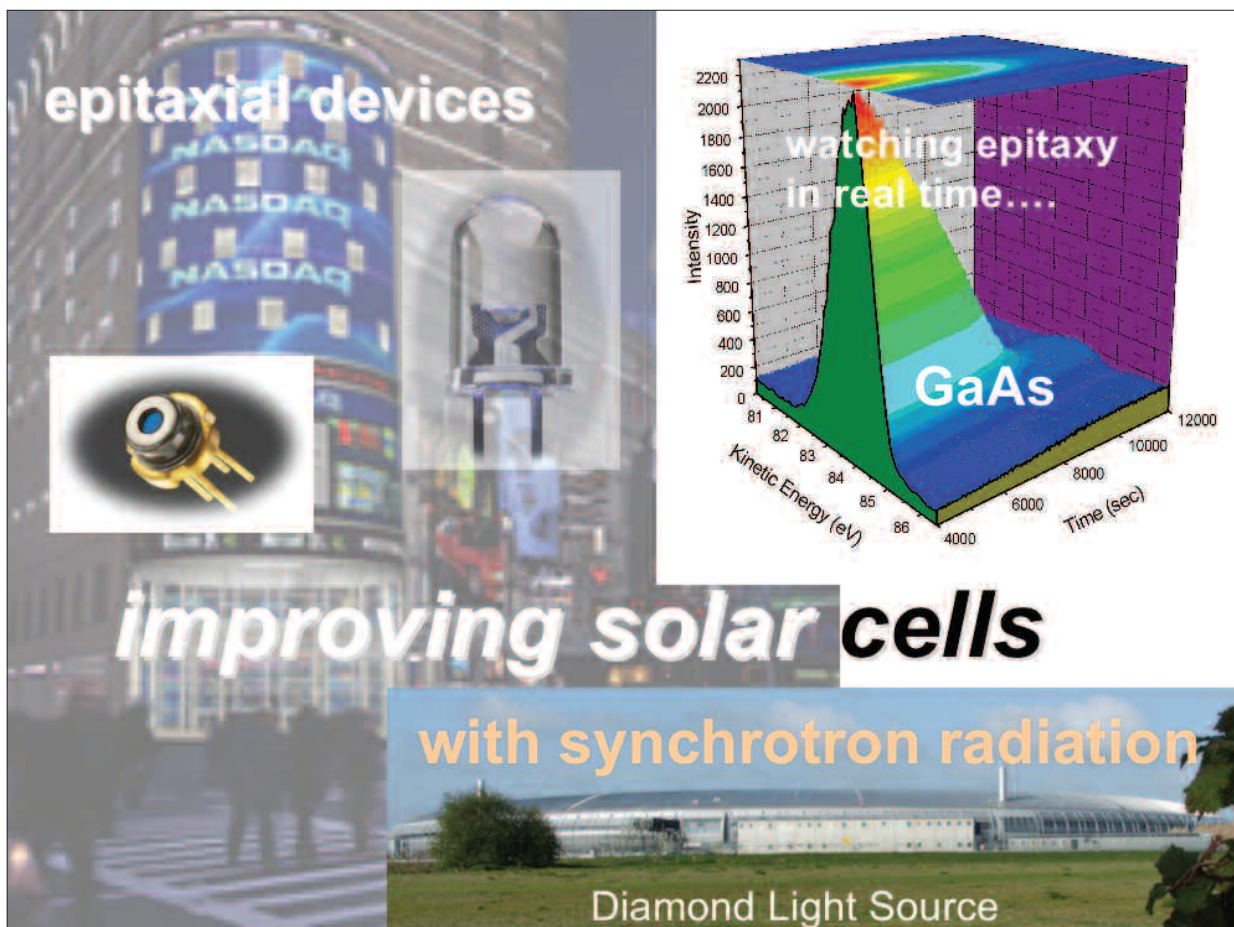
Looking ahead, collaboration between Aberystwyth and Bangor holds out the prospect for extending virtual reality to computational modelling of complex systems. Examples include modelling the activity on the surface of the sun that develops into the solar wind which spreads through the solar system. Incidentally this stream of particles contains some of the variety of cosmic rays that E.J. Williams would have used over 60 years ago to isolate mesons.

Today the solar wind is recognised as triggering space weather. This occasional but cosmic phenomenon can devastate telecommunication systems. Consequently, understanding the source and scale of the solar wind and the limited protection provided by the earth's atmosphere is a key endeavour.

On a totally different scale and with quite different objectives, visualising the movement of ions in glass is giving insight into new battery materials. Disorder creates spaces at the atomic level for groups of ions to move, promoting diffusion pathways, none of which is 'tangible' without virtual reality.

There are similar advantages in picturing the rheology of foams. Visualising cooperative movements on different length scales is also expected to find application more generally wherever routing is chaotic, for example on an urban scale in improving inefficient pumping networks for water supply, or even in modelling the evacuation of cities for disaster planning.

Another quite different utilisation of virtual reality is in programming robots for operation on space missions in a collaboration supported by the Aurora programme of the European



Three-five semiconductors promise to be the "preferred solar energy collector material" of the future, with synchrotron radiation "a real powerhouse for characterising materials and biology".

Space Agency. Robot autonomous movement is essential if rovers are to operate in planetary environments like those on Mars. These developments in space robotics should also be adaptable to robotic operations in hostile environments on earth, in mine field clearance or handling nuclear waste, for example, or in developing uninhabited aerial vehicles – so-called UAV's.

This raises the issue of understanding and developing materials that can operate under extreme conditions, for instance at ultra high temperatures and pressures, or under harsh chemical environments. By combining laser heating with aerodynamic levitation, refractory materials like alumina and zirconia, used for furnace linings, can be melted at thousands of degrees to form floating beads whose exotic structures can be examined with intense X-ray and neutron beams.

Moreover, by using miniature cells compressed by diamond anvils, pressures of millions of atmospheres can be applied to materials – conditions where most minerals transform even at low temperatures. In some circumstances this can induce flow which is enabling novel glasses to be formed that cannot be obtained by conventional melting techniques at atmospheric pressure. Combining high temperatures with high pressures is opening a window for the first time on the elusive phenomenon of melting – one of the outstanding challenges in condensed matter science and also one that determines the limits at which rigid structures fail.

In biotechnology charge transfer is generally the agent of change. Transferring electrons within materials promotes changes in state at

the atomic level and conformational transformations in biological molecules. This is the phenomenon of electrochemistry which, when it operates in reverse mode, enables chemical reactions to be detected from the electrical signals induced in external electrodes – a process that is being exploited at Bangor in developing electrochemical sensors. Sensitivities of parts per trillion can be achieved in detecting trace elements of pollutants but also of drugs and explosives.

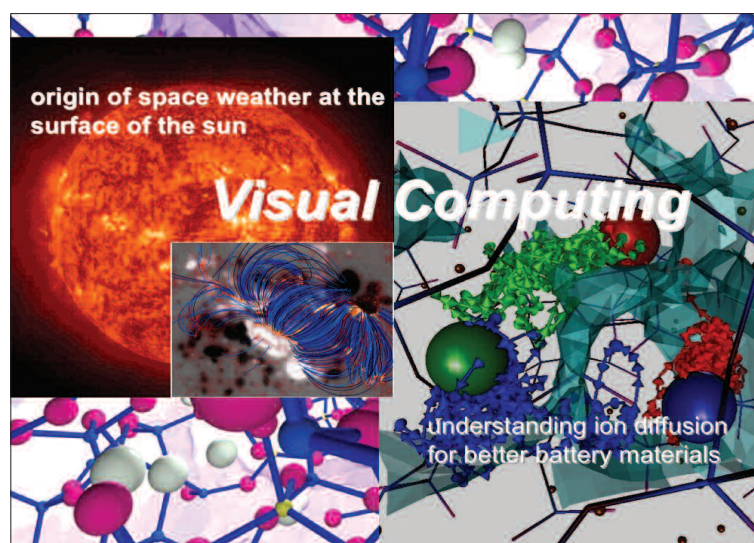
Biotechnological developments rely heavily on the efficient synthesis of materials optimised for particular functions, combined with robust instrumentation to make reliable devices. The engineering involved is often drawn from the micro-fabrication techniques used in constructing electronic devices and detectors. One such example is the lab-on-a-chip, where alternating electrical fields, generated with microelectrode structures, can detect, manipulate, sort and separate biological systems at the cellular level. These developments, pioneered at Bangor, promise applications in health science, from drug discovery to tissue engineering.

In the hinterland between biotechnology and silicon electronics is the burgeoning area of organic devices or plastic electronics where knowledge of polymer processing is vital. Semiconductor principles are the same but the parameters of contact barriers, doping, bulk transport and optical excitation are quite different. The product goals are flexible electronics, displays and solar cells – the opposite of everything that is annoying about the susceptibility of lap tops and plasma screens to mechanical damage. Aberystwyth and Bangor already have major research activities in the areas of plastic electronics.



science

The age of silicon, as we know it from the IT products of today, is technologically almost through, but for reasons other than mechanical fragility. Amongst these is electronic speed. With the advent of device-grade inorganic three-five semiconductors like gallium arsenide, however, huge increases in charge mobility are available, added to which there is almost infinite flexibility to be gained in tailoring optical properties across the visible spectrum.



Visual Computing, combining computer modelling with virtual reality to solve problems in complexity, from solar activity to the mobility of ions in batteries.

These materials are not only efficient light emitters but their forbidden quantum energy gaps can be fine-tuned, with applications in new sensors or as nanopowders in creams for health therapy, for instance. They can also be optimised to the solar spectrum to make the most efficient photovoltaic devices, two to three times better than silicon, the current standard. If the total energy equation is favourable then gallium arsenide, for example, could become the preferred solar energy collector material in the drive towards renewable energy.

As semiconductor processes and devices become more complex, the need to characterise surfaces and buried atomic layers in developing the next generation of semiconductor materials increases. State-of-the-art characterisation facilities are a central theme in the new collaboration between Aberystwyth and Bangor. Advanced spectroscopies like photoelectron emission and X-ray absorption, which are critical for materials characterisation, are photon hungry and with traditional instrumentation this generally results in static measurements with obvious limitations where research into materials processing is concerned.

Indeed, it is the time dimension that is needed in order to reveal the rich physics and chemistry of epitaxy whose understanding is fundamental in optimising semiconductor fabrication. Part of the way forward lies in designing highly efficient detectors for these critical spectroscopies in the effort to properly characterise organic, inorganic and biological materials.

Interestingly, indeed predictably, the latest detector developments for real-time spectroscopy are silicon-based, with efficiency achieved through multidimensional architectures, completing the virtuous circle of technology servicing science aimed at delivering new technology. The other element in achieving time resolved spectroscopy is the intensity of light sources which is where

synchrotron radiation comes into play. Wales and the new Aberystwyth-Bangor Centre have much to offer here, in detector development and expertise, for operating X-ray spectroscopies at the limit. In 2007 when the Diamond Light Source, the UK's new synchrotron facility, becomes operational it will be a real power house for characterising materials and biology across the Welsh HE sector and well-matched to the agenda at Bangor and Aberystwyth for developing advanced functional materials and devices.

The mission of the new collaboration between these two universities is to undertake world-class science and engineering and support international industrial and commercial activity in Wales. Interdisciplinarity is key as is critical mass. Advances in high technology areas often occur at the interfaces between disciplines and sectors. Advanced materials are a case in point where the challenge is to handle complexity by engaging multiple techniques, like synchrotron radiation, computer modelling and state-of-the-art visual computing in developing organic semiconductors, resilient inorganic materials, photonics, and biotechnology.

Merging the traditionally separate operations of analysis and synthesis brings the promise of rationalising many causes from many effects. The scale of scientific teams to address these demanding problems has to be sufficient to be effective. This will occur, partly through the alliance of the hard sciences at both universities and partly through new research positions at both campuses, providing additional collaborative expertise.

In one sense Wales is following Scotland, where inter-university collaborations have already been established between physics departments and also between groups of chemistry departments. At the same time, the partnership between Aberystwyth and Bangor is different, partly because it is *interdisciplinary* but partly because it also includes *enterprise*. Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Engineering and Chemistry are already associated with the Techniums in mid and north Wales which will offer the new Centre opportunities for spin-out, in addition to what the universities can themselves provide.

Underlying all of these research areas in the physical sciences and engineering is the development of new materials, new detectors and new devices, some of which will certainly find commercial application. Alongside the potential benefits coming from this new collaborative venture is the training of students in the hard sciences and the delivery of these important skills into the Welsh workforce.

Learning may have been considered better than wealth for Eliza William's generation, but in the 21st Century wealth is increasingly dependent on learning channelled into enterprise by highly trained and motivated people. At the heart of this endeavour is the thread of scientific research, without which the weave of innovation cannot bind.

Neville Greaves is Director of the Institute of Mathematical and Physical Sciences at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

science

case for chemistry



david knight argues that investment in sciences should be an economic development priority

Wherever you are reading this, if you look around you there will be nothing you can see in which chemistry is not intimately involved. All that plastic (totally chemical); the metal supports (chemistry in purification); paint and all the other preservatives (chemistry only); the garden outside (fertilisers, weed control, insecticides); if you are looking through glass (a processed chemical); an understanding of how the plants grow (chemistry leading to biochemistry); the air we breathe (understanding atmospheric chemistry is chemistry); that nice cooking smell or the odour of roast coffee (chemistry to understand, enhance and to produce synthetic alternatives); water (chemistry to purify and monitor); and so on and on.

When I first graduated with a degree in chemistry, I well remember many people at home asking me if I was going to come back and open a chemist's shop. Mind you, these were people who probably also thought that their GP made the drugs he prescribed in his garage. Such misconceptions are trivial relative to more serious ones such as prospects for job creation, wealth creation, health improvement and the environment.

Worse still is the fact that such misconceptions are as much if not more the fault of the very chemical profession as of those who promulgate them. Chemistry is a unique science, in the sense that it can and continually does create compounds which have never existed previously in the entire history of the universe. While this sounds very grand, it should be realised that, during an average PhD in synthetic organic chemistry (the study

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science

of carbon-based substances), the synthesis of some 50 to 60 novel compounds is regarded as routine.

Further, and of course somewhat less certain, is the calculation that so far, in just over 100 years of synthetic activity (chemistry is, relatively, one of the youngest sciences) only around 5 to 10 per cent of all possible carbon-based compounds have been synthesised. This provides perhaps the most persuasive illustration of the potential of chemistry in terms of exploitation, wealth creation and commercialisation, as well as for making huge contributions to the general health and well being of any society that is sympathetic and supportive of this area of research.

Of course, these assertions assume some appreciation of the contribution chemistry can make to modern life. However, it is an assumption that we cannot take for granted, despite the apparently 'broader' education now received by our young people. Certainly, chemists and chemistry suffer from one very significant piece of negative propaganda: the unnerving ability of many people to equate the word 'chemical' with 'toxin.'

This is then further extrapolated to that other great misconception, that anything 'natural' is 'good' and 'beneficial', while anything 'synthetic' is bad, a potent pollutant and probably detrimental to babies. The last time I looked, cocaine was certainly a natural product, as was heroin (albeit slightly modified). And, despite all our best efforts to synthesise more active compounds, tetrodotoxin, which occurs in the Japanese puffer fish, is still one of the most toxic compounds known. In fact, it kills hundreds of unwary diners in Japan every year.



Conversely, everyone must recognise the benefits of completely synthetic chemicals. These are involved in a huge range of products, from life-saving and life-enhancing pharmaceuticals, to plastics, preservatives, flavourings, fragrances, pure water, and amazing electronics. This problem of perception is well illustrated by a recent Western Mail article in which it was claimed that a certain environmentally friendly washing up liquid was, and I quote, kidding you not, 'chemical free'. This nonsense serves to detract from an otherwise worthwhile product, worthwhile in the sense that it is more biodegradable.

The message for Wales is perfectly clear in my view. Chemistry and the other sciences must become an absolutely top priority for future investment. These huge areas are most unlikely to become less important in the future and offer enormous benefits in terms of jobs and wealth creation.

However, this does not come cheaply and is not without risks. As an illustration, during the past six years the School of Chemistry in Cardiff University has become one of the leading departments in the UK. But this has only been possible as a result of investments totalling more than £23 million. Similarly, the amount of funding required to attract a truly internationally significant level of chemical industry to Wales would be very considerable. Yet it would repay the investment many times over.

Exactly the same can be argued in the cases of electronics manufacture, the burgeoning area of the biosciences and many other more specialised production areas, all of which will rely on a sound, scientifically trained workforce. It should be viewed as a major part of Wales's offer in attracting inward investment, alongside available brown field sites for factory construction, relatively cheap housing, and good communications.

At the same time there are threats on the horizon, with the most significant being the much lower cost of chemical manufacture in India and China where the standards of their top universities now rival those in the West. Yet, without the technological base in science, our economy will be at the mercy of predatory nations, something which surely cannot be allowed to happen. It must make sense to secure a much higher level of science investment in Wales.

David Knight is head of the School of Chemistry, Cardiff University.

incredible years

judy hutchings explains how north Wales has led the UK in ensuring the effectiveness of the Sure Start children's programme

aggressive and antisocial behaviour in children and young people is a large and growing problem in all western societies. In July 2006 the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence reported that conduct disorder rates among children in the UK ranged from three to eight per cent depending on age and sex. Furthermore, 60 per cent of three-year-olds with conduct disorder still exhibit problems at the age of eight years and, if left untreated, problems will persist into adolescence and adulthood.

There has been over 30 years of research in this area and a large number of studies available to inform policy and practice decisions. Longitudinal studies such as those of south London boys, followed up by David Farrington for over 30 years, and others in New Zealand and America, have demonstrated that antisocial behaviour in teenagers can be linked to their oppositional and defiant behaviour attitudes when young children.

There have also been many studies of the effectiveness of interventions for children with challenging behaviour. The most cost-effective are those that provide structured group-based support to parents based on social learning theory. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence cites two, the American Incredible Years programme and the Australian TripleP initiative, as having the components necessary to achieve effective outcomes.

Sure Start is part of the Westminster Government's attempts to develop support for high-risk families in areas of social exclusion across England. In its first three years between 2000 and 2003 the programme spent over £3 billion on services to support parents of pre-school children. The rationale was that a higher proportion of children from poor areas are at risk of developing conduct disorder, and its associated problems of antisocial behaviour, substance misuse and criminality and that early preventive support to these children and families can reduce these risks.

Unfortunately, however, Government failed to give a lead in requiring the use of evidence-based programmes. The result



In Wales the Sure Start programme has taken advantage of training for parents and as a result has proved more effective.

was that, although almost all Sure Start services delivered parenting support, it was not clear whether they were evidence-based programmes or delivered in ways that would make them effective, with properly trained and supervised staff given both sufficient time to prepare sessions, and appropriate materials.

Consequently, the early findings from the £20 million evaluation of Sure Start in 2005 failed to find any meaningful benefits for high-risk families. The results showed only weak effects, despite a sample of 15,500 children in Sure Start areas compared with 2,500 children in areas waiting for Sure Start funding. Even more worrying, however, was that the evaluation found that, although the less disadvantaged families did marginally better in Sure Start funded areas, the children of the most disadvantaged families actually did worse than those in areas waiting to receive Sure Start funding.

In Wales Sure Start funding came a year later and, unlike in England, services in north and mid Wales took advantage of the availability of training in the 'Incredible Years' parent programme that was already in use in child mental health services across north Wales. The American experience with its 'Incredible Years' programmes were developed at the University of Washington and had been researched in a Headstart project piloted in Seattle and found to be very

social policy

effective in early prevention of conduct disorder. This programme was disseminated by the Incredible Years Centre at the University of Wales, Bangor, which worked closely with Sure Start service managers across north and mid Wales.

The Incredible Years initiative is probably the best evidence-based programme involving parents, teachers and children. They are collaborative in approach, helping parents identify for themselves strategies that will be effective. Research over the last 25 years has shown that every systematic review they prevent or reduce violence. It is one of only eleven programmes identified as a 'blueprint' for violence prevention by the University of Colorado, in a review of 600 studies funded by the US government. It certainly worked well with the multi-ethnic population in Seattle and has also been selected by the Norwegian government for delivery across Norway for children up to the age of eight with behavioural problems.

In north and mid Wales Sure Start services in eleven different communities began delivering the programme. Meanwhile, the Incredible Years Centre at the University of Wales, Bangor was awarded £300,000 by the Health Foundation to undertake a randomised controlled study of the programme's effectiveness. Sure Start services agreed to a targeted intervention for identified high-risk families and to their staff committing to doing everything required to ensure that the programme was delivered with fidelity, that is in the same way that it had been developed and researched in Seattle.

The result was a demonstration of significant benefits. Children within the study achieved 46 per cent reductions in conduct problems compared with a seven per cent reduction in the control children. There was also a reduction in violent incidents, increased positive parenting, reduced parental criticism and significantly improved parental mental health. Improvements were also found for siblings of the target child. So we had taken a programme developed in Seattle, trained Sure Start staff to deliver it well and achieved results that were comparable with those achieved in the research study undertaken in Seattle.

When these preliminary findings became available, the Assembly Government opted to include the programme in their Parenting Action Plan. From April 2006 funding was provided to train staff across Wales and supply them with appropriate programme materials. To access the training places local authorities agreed to their staff delivering the programme and being given appropriate supervision time.

The longer-term aim is to develop a staff member in each local authority as a local mentor,

to train, supervise and support local staff. This will ensure the continued delivery of the programme in an evidence-based way. During the first year 160 staff from 154 of the 22 Welsh local authorities are receiving training and consultation. Continuation of the funding programme into 2007 is under discussion.

In a more recent development the Assembly Government has now specified that only evidence-based programmes will be funded in their new Flying Start proposals providing even earlier intervention for children and families in very high risk communities, that is where more than 45 per cent of children are eligible for free school meals. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Incredible Years parent programme has been nominated as suitable for inclusion in bids for Flying Start funding.

Why has the Incredible Years programme been so successful in north Wales? First, the programme was championed by a team based at Bangor University. As a result of my pilot work with the programme, in the North West Wales NHS Trust, we were able to establish the Incredible Years Centre. In turn this provided the evidence to persuade practitioners that the programme would provide the effective early intervention for parents that is crucial in preventing and reducing conduct problems. We were then able to train staff, and supervise the delivery of the programme, addressing all the issues about parent access and material. Finally, we won funding for a good quality randomised controlled trial of programme effectiveness. Involvement of the Assembly Government in the study provided them with the crucial evidence of its effectiveness in a Welsh setting that led to the inclusion of the programme in their Parenting Action Plan.

Involvement of the Assembly Government in the study provided them with the crucial evidence of its effectiveness in a Welsh setting that led to the inclusion of the programme in their Parenting Action Plan.

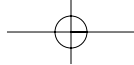
The requirement that services use evidence-based programmes is now also being taken up by the Westminster Government. A large-scale study is being undertaken in England to evaluate the effectiveness of three evidence-based programmes, one of which is the Incredible Years programme which will be delivered and evaluated in six authorities.

Wales has led the way in demonstrating that evidence-based programmes can be delivered effectively in Sure Start services, by regular staff as long as they are suitably trained and resourced. Sure Start is an expensive provision and our money must be well spent if we are to have an effective national strategy to solve the problem of preventing and reducing violence.

Judy Hutchings: made 'Welsh Woman as Educator of the Year' in 2004 in recognition of her work with the Incredible Years programme.



Judy Hutchings is Director of Incredible Years Wales Programme at the University of Wales, Bangor, and Consultant Clinical Psychologist with the North West Wales NHS Trust.



social policy

Peter Johnson
pictured
with
Dr Barry
Morgan,
Archbishop
of Wales,
chairman of
the Shelter
Cymru
Homeless
Commission.

making homes affordable

**peter johnson looks at the
task facing the Homelessness
Commission currently taking
evidence at hearings around
Wales**

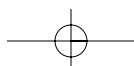
the health of the nation and how to deliver it has never been far from the front line of politics since the appointment of Aneurin Bevan as Health Minister in 1945. It is often forgotten, however, that Bevan was Minister for Housing as well as Health. Housing was in urgent need of attention with millions of homes lost or damaged by wartime bombing. The link between poor housing and bad health was well known to him. While he wrestled with the doctors he also had to tackle the Treasury over money and materials for rebuilding.

By the late 1940s a vigorous house-building programme was underway, but his resources never matched his ambitions. Sixty years later, as a member of the Shelter Cymru's 25th anniversary Commission of Inquiry into Homelessness and Poor Housing in Wales, I've been hearing distinct echoes of Bevan's dilemma.

Housing appears to have slipped down the ladder of political priorities. It no longer gets a Cabinet Minister by title at Westminster, Holyrood or in Cardiff Bay. It is usually part of the Communities portfolio and its budget can't compare with health or education .

The days of the local authority as landlord and builder are long past their peak. Right to Buy legislation reduced the stock of public housing and the ability of councils to pay for replacements. Other social landlords sprang up to provide housing for the poor and the homeless. Against this background, housing has been an Assembly Government

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social policy

responsibility since 1999, with the local authorities having a continuing statutory duty towards homeless people. Among the Commissioners' tasks is to consider how seriously central and local government is taking that responsibility.

The size of the problem facing local authorities varies around Wales. The figures for the number of people accepted as homeless have generally started to go down. But the statistics are not straightforward. Between 1999 and 2004, Assembly Government statistics show that the annual number of households accepted as officially homeless went up from 3,695 to 10,071. That's a rise of 173 per cent. In 2005 that figure dropped substantially to 8,376.

The Shelter
Cymru
Homeless
Commission
in session in
Rhyl.



The most up-to-date statistics, for the first quarter of 2006, reveal that 1,838 people were made homeless in that period, which is 24 per cent down on the number for the first quarter in 2005. This suggests that the total accepted as homeless for 2006 will probably be below the 2005 figure. In July 2006 the Assembly Government commented on this trend as follows:

"In general homelessness applications and households accepted as homeless have fallen since the end of 2004-5. However, following the slight increase of both during the January to March 2006 quarter, the proportion of households accepted as homeless has also risen slightly."

Welsh Housing Statistics –
Homelessness,
January to March 2006

There are positive signs here. Ministers can point to the fact that the figures have generally gone down since the introduction of a National Homelessness Strategy and a National Housing Strategy for Wales. Under the Homelessness Strategy, the Assembly Government has used secondary legislation to widen local authority duties to the homeless and restrict the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families.

It appears to be making an impact. In March 2006, the number of households in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation was down by 22 per cent. But there were still almost 600 and one third of those were families with children.

Led by the Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan, the Commission is examining current evidence of the impact poor and temporary housing has on families, their children and their educational prospects. Having seen something of how the Assembly Government strategy works in practice in different areas of Wales, the Commissioners will have to consider whether housing services receive the priority they should.

In Rhyl, for example, the Commission heard from representatives of assorted local authorities in an area of the north where homelessness is up and available property is down. One of them said: "The number of people we are never going to help is increasing." The impression commissioners took away was of a distinct lack of imagination and even defeatism. Are all local authorities content to manage, rather than attack the problem?

In their defence, the local authorities might point to the amount available to spend in relation to the size and importance of the problem. Housing and homelessness gets between five and six per cent of the Assembly Government budget. Is that appropriate for an area of policy that cuts across the work of so many government departments? Because of that cross-cutting, the Commission will want to assess how well policy is joined up.

Merthyr Tydfil provided a good example for those with concerns in this area. The Commission was heartened by the innovative work of the Youth Offending Team in finding accommodation for homeless young offenders – often perceived as a 'difficult' group to house. It was also dismayed by the clear implication that many of their clients should not have needed their help at all.

But housing was not a statutory duty of the Youth Offending Team which appeared to be doing the local Housing Department's job for it. Offenders' housing needs were very unlikely to be met before they were released. And on release those who could not go home would find no supported lodgings available in the town. Without the Youth Offending Team's initiative, some young people would undoubtedly have been on the streets and probably re-offending.

In Rhyl, the Commission saw something of how the well-intended Assembly Government strategy on homelessness may be working to conceal the true extent of the problem. This is a practice known by the professionals as an 'options prevention' approach, that is to say finding alternatives to the usual path towards statutory homelessness.

Denbighshire Council has real problems finding accommodation. There are 2,400 people on its waiting list. It owns just 3,500 properties and one third of those are sheltered accommodation for the elderly. House prices are rising, so people are reluctant or unable to move on to purchase. As a result, turnaround of council owned properties is just nine per cent a year.

In response, Denbighshire is using 36 private sector lets as a homelessness prevention resource. It is thinking of asking the Assembly Government for funding to expand this to 80. These prevention services are not monitored so it is difficult to know if they provide suitable and sustainable accommodation. As the people offered this accommodation are not statutorily homeless, they won't appear in the official figures. Consequently, the true nature of the problem in Denbighshire and elsewhere may be concealed.

The immediate triggers for homelessness are well observed. They include such things as illness, unemployment, family rows and break-ups, and debt problems leading to arrears and loss of tenancies.

Many of the people who find themselves in need of somewhere to live are not well placed to find it. Poverty is a major factor in Wales. Incomes remain stubbornly low while the supply of public sector rented accommodation declines. The private rented sector offers limited security and house price rises exclude many from becoming owner occupiers.

The Commission's hearing in Aberystwyth produced some evidence of how difficult local housing markets can be. Members were shown estate agents' particulars for two-bedroom 'starter homes' priced between £190,000 and £210,000 pounds. It was claimed that housing costs including council tax would take 60 to 70 per cent of joint income.

Two elected politicians from Ceredigion, Mark Williams MP and Elin Jones AM, both volunteered that housing and homelessness had replaced unemployment as the biggest problem they face in their constituency surgeries. With average annual salaries around £17,000, in some communities house prices were averaging £180,000. Even those on £20,000 a year could often find nothing at five times salary. At the same time, they had no chance of qualifying for social housing in a rented home. Elin Jones said, "There is a huge disjuncture between what people want and what's available."

The numbers may be small, but high house prices and lack of renting options mean homelessness is an increasing problem in much of rural Wales. Some areas have special factors to consider. The need to house almost ten thousand students in Aberystwyth, in a town with a permanent population of about the same numbers, has had an effect on rents. Landlords can expect £70 a week from students. Living on benefits, you won't be able to get into the private rented sector.

Where private rented accommodation is available, security of tenure is not guaranteed. Assembly Government figures show that in 2005, more than 1,800 people lost their places in private sector tenancies. It was the biggest single reason for people moving out of a previous settled home.

members of the Shelter Cymru commission of inquiry

- Chair, Dr Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales
- Vice chair, Meri Huws, Pro Vice Chancellor, Bangor University and chair, Welsh Language Board
- Tracy Morshead, Managing Director, Principality Building Society
- Dr Heledd Hayes, NUT Cymru
- Dr Dyfed Wyn Huws, GP and Independent Consultant in Public Health
- Robert Maskrey, Furnishing Retailer
- Jonathan Adams, Architect, Capita Percy Thomas
- Peter Johnson, Freelance broadcaster and journalist

This catalogue of difficult statistics may create an impression of an intractable problem. But the Commission has seen evidence of ingenuity and innovation in schemes targeted at defined client areas. In Aberystwyth, for example, independent and supported living schemes for the long term mentally ill have made good use of central and local government and Local Health Board funds, offering real savings over the cost of out-of-county care.

At the end of each evidence day the Commissioners meet in private to mull over what they have heard. And while the final report is not due to be published until April 2007, a few areas for attention have been strongly suggesting themselves:

- More investment in housing stock seems central to making a real impact. Can the Assembly Government find new ways to increase the historically low levels of housing investment?
- Could we make more efficient use of the many and various funding streams involved in financing housing and homelessness provision? And should we bring more private finance into play in social housing? The Commissioners noted with interest that most student housing in Wales is now built as a commercial venture. As student housing is essentially social housing is there a lead to follow? The Commissioners are exploring ways in which major lenders could be tempted into the market in Wales.
- How can we make the housing stock fit the community? The stock itself doesn't match the needs of the 21st century. Too many homes are empty, too many are 'unfit'. More people are living alone, more people are moving around Wales and more are migrating into Wales from England. These and other changes mean that the housing we have is often of the wrong kind in the wrong place. Can it be reshaped?
- Could communities be helped to provide housing they need rather than that offered by developers? Commissioners are examining a variety of suggestions, including the formation of community land trusts, where development land is taken out of the market to stop it appreciating and make development affordable.
- The Government of Wales Act 2006 may offer real opportunities. Housing regulations could be changed to address many of the problems brought to the attention of the Commission. It is possible that a Welsh test of homelessness and priority need could be adopted. Could Right to Buy be suspended in areas of public housing shortage?

In Bevan's day the task was to build, build and build again. The key task is no longer providing enough homes (though that remains a problem) but providing enough affordable homes. Can the mismatch between resources and ambitions be resolved? The Shelter Commission hopes to make a contribution to that end.

Peter Johnson is a freelance journalist and broadcaster.



culture and communications

soap makers

liz hobbs and steve croke
give an account of their
travels in search of the elixir
of cleanliness

at the beginning of this year we found ourselves sitting on vividly coloured rugs on an earth floor, right hand only into a steaming tagine of vegetables, olives and lemons, having a well earned rest from a morning's work. We were in Riadi a small Berber village in the High Atlas showing the villagers how to make cold-processed soap with their top quality, organic Olive and Argan oil freshly pressed in the village.

There are few opportunities for self sufficiency here. Many of the families do not have land to cultivate or even a precious mule for transport. Their only means of finance being a relative working in a city like Agadir and sending some money home. Transporting soap-making know how to this area made an immediate socio-economic impact. Using an ancient skill and local natural ingredients produced what is now a flourishing cottage industry, with very little outlay and minimum equipment.

Recent reports from Morocco confirm that soap-making is going well. Direct sales to tourists are flourishing. In fact, they are having difficulty keeping up with demand. It reminds us of the first year in which we became an energetic soap-making business in rural Pembrokeshire.

Looking north-east to the Atlas Mountains in Morocco from the fortress town of Taradount. Located in the desert two hours drive east of the coastal town of Agadir, the berber village of Riadi in the High Atlas is an hour-and-a-half's drive from Taradount .



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culture and communications

Six years ago we gave notice to well paid careers in the south of Wales, sold our house in Neath and moved west to Solva in Pembrokeshire. We gave ourselves a year to find a sustainable way of living. It actually took 18 months. The first winter in Solva was dark, cold and miserable. Horizontal rain came in from the Atlantic and there never seemed to be enough fuel on the fire. The village was deserted and isolated compared to the summer months.

We spent that first year sowing seeds of ideas, most of which fell on stony ground. In hindsight it appears that we were willing to entertain anything. Ideas that we would never have considered in our previous life were energetically discussed with an air of desperation. After the dismal winter, Spring arrived and with it came soap. Researching the whole project was followed in quick succession by a name, a logo, hours of work on creating a suitable product, together with design and marketing.

The Soap Shed was launched at Haverfordwest Farmers' Market in September 2001. We learnt a great deal and at speed from that opportunity. At our first market, we made only one soap, Pembrokeshire Honey. It was a fancy dress occasion to celebrate harvest time and we sold our produce, and derived our first income, dressed as a pair of honey bees.

We had some help along the way. Pembrokeshire Business Initiative and Opportunity Wales played a part but the main impetus from production to selling came from the funding for local Farmers' Markets. It proved to be a quick and efficient method of trading and ensured that the customer was buying a top quality product and direct from the producers. Those first years of business were brisk. We were quickly at maximum production for the two of us and the business was in danger of getting out of control. After the second year we sat back and out of necessity found ways in which we could tame this business into something manageable. One of them was a move away from the coast to a slightly larger property in Rosebush.

In the years that followed we found that our main customer base was always to be found at farmers' markets, food festivals and wholefood shops. It seemed that people who wanted good quality, locally grown or locally produced food were equally keen to buy good quality soap products.

Throughout its history, the necessity for some form of soap as a method of cleansing has been interwoven into the culture. We have learnt that soap has a varied and chequered career. It has been used, and still is, as an 'indicator of civilization'. Throughout the world a bar of soap will make a huge impact on public health. In the simple matter of hygiene and hand washing it is believed that it is not enough to use just water if infectious contamination is to be avoided.



Liz Hobbs looks on at soap-making in progress in Riad.

In areas of Africa, soap, sugar, cooking oil and salt are looked on as necessities and vital to the community. Records of soap making from boiling fat with ashes date back to Babylonian times as early as 2,800BC. The derivation of the word soap is thought to have been from the Roman word 'sapo' taken from a form of clay used for washing. An alternative suggestion is that the Romans learned the art of soap-making from the Celts who called their mixture of animal fats and plant ash 'saipo'. In this country, Charles I thought that there was enough money being made from the sale of soap that he taxed soap-makers £4 per ton.

More recently in the western world, soap has fallen into the hands of the chemical and pharmaceutical industries and vast profits are accrued from producing very low cost, poor quality products from baby soap to shaving foam. The fashion for chemically based liquid soaps and shampoos have been the target of multi-million pound advertising campaigns from the multi-nationals. Unilever, which was originally based in Port Sunlight and remains a major manufacturer, has stopped producing hard soap in Liverpool and has exported its machinery to China. The decline in the quality of commercial soap making has mirrored that of the food industry. Vast profits are made on poor quality products containing large amounts of dubious ingredients, including preservatives and colourings. This is thought to be a major contribution to the large increase in allergic reactions.

This recent history has played a part in the success of our business. We came on the scene at a time when people were starting to be aware about the products they bought and

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consumed. By producing olive oil based soaps, shampoos and shaving soaps and being accessible to the customer, we were able to develop the business to satisfy this need.

We quickly learnt that just because we were in a tourist area it was unwise to rely just on the tourist industry. Although slowly increasing, the tourist season is still very short in Pembrokeshire. Some businesses have just three months in which to make their living for the entire year. We have seen small rural concerns survive for no longer than a few years. They rely on a mass influx of visitors, many of whom arrive with their laden Tesco or Waitrose carrier bags, and are subject to all kinds of tourist trends or agricultural hazards such as a foot and mouth outbreak. It is questionable as to who in the local community really benefits from tourism.

We have learnt that small business grants are difficult to access. Opportunity Wales made it effortless to apply and receive a grant toward e-commerce. We see Objective 1 funding used where any sizeable funding is used, by the people employed to administer it. Grass roots funding is small but we have seen some benefit from Farmers Market funding. However, a producer remains at the mercy of the county councils and organisers.

We learnt that to develop we needed to rely on selling in several ways. We have a mail order business which is steadily expanding. We supply local wholefood shops who do not rely on tourists. And just like west Wales commerce over hundreds of years, we take our produce eastwards, albeit only as far as Cardiff's Riverside Produce Market and the Brecon Farmers Market.

The Green Dragon Environmental Standard scheme recognises our minimal environmental impact. Last year, their assessor thought that their annual visit would be more environmentally damaging than it would be to make our soap. Our assessment was completed by e-mail.

For us, the most rewarding and beneficial outcome of all these experiences has been the creation of a small socio-economic cottage industry that needs very little investment, minimal space, was in production six weeks from the start, has minimal impact and provides economic independence in a rural economy. As we discovered in Morocco, it is a model that can be transported to all parts of the world, to similar rural communities and with potentially major beneficial outcomes.

Steve Croke and Liz Hobbs with Moroccan friends pose for a photograph of the finished product.



Selling soap at the Riverside Farmers Market in Cardiff.

Liz Hobbs and Steve Croke are contactable via their website: www.thesoapshed.co.uk



addressing identity

iwana bala explores the symbolic language of public art in Wales

At some point early in 2007 a new public art body for Wales is scheduled to begin operations. As yet unnamed, it will involve the merger of Cywaith Cymru / Artworks Wales (the national organisation for public art in Wales) and CBAT: The Arts and Regeneration Agency. Wiard Sterk, Director of CBAT has been appointed to head the new body.

As is always the case with mergers of this kind, differing institutional 'cultures' need to be negotiated, and a defining strategy and philosophy developed. At such a time, the debate about public art becomes a priority, particularly for a nation in the process of re-defining itself. What should be the responsibilities of such a publicly funded body?

At the National Eisteddfod in Swansea this year, Cywaith Cymru commissioned the artist Rawley Clay to design and build a sculptural structure that would also provide a stage for performances. This 'brief' was designed to be representative of the Eisteddfod itself, by reflecting the 'encampment' nature of its itinerant existence; its various stages for competition and events, and its 'constructed' nature.

'Cawell' (cage or basket), as it was titled, was the fourth consecutive commission of this kind and a continuation of over fifteen years of Cywaith Cymru activity at the Eisteddfod. Sited directly outside the Lle Celf (Visual Art pavilion) they are unavoidable presences on the field. 'Cawell' was a particularly elegant and iconic piece, often filmed and photographed during the week.

Artist Rawley Clay's sculptural Cawell (cage) erected at the 2006 Eisteddfod to provide a stage for performances.



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It became the site of large gatherings of onlookers who came to witness the performances of the artist with the poet and language activist, Catrin Dafydd. Together they developed a dramatic and poetic performance that examined the issue of language and culture in relation to Rawley's position within his 'birdcage' structure, and his attempts to learn the language from the inside. Rawley is a non-Welsh speaker, a native of the Vale of Glamorgan and initiator of Coedhills Rural Artspace, where the emphasis is on environmental issues. However, he found common ground and shared commitments with Catrin Dafydd, an instance of two cultures in Wales developing a creative convergence.

For these artStructure projects, Cywaith Cymru worked in partnership with Academi and with support from Robyn Tomos, Visual Arts officer for the National Eisteddfod. In 2005, writer and singer Gwyneth Glyn worked alongside artists' Helen Jones and Sean Curly on 'Noddfa' (Refuge), a shack and ramp structure that juxtaposed a disintegrating (post tsunami?) environment, with memories of childhood stability.

Actor Sharon Morgan staged performances in Carwyn Evans' stacked up shipping containers in 2004, where the narratives of female members of her family complemented a stage made of suitcases and the evidence of flight, migration, and diasporas. Poets also used it for performing.

Writer and singer Gwynedd Glyn stands in the Noddfa (Refuge) structure erected at the Caernarfon Y Faenol Eisteddfod as an image to recall the tsunami of that year. She worked alongside the artists responsible, Helen Jones and Sean Curly.

In 'the Gathering' of 2003, duos of poets were forced to improvise performances within a sweltering tent structure built by sculptor David Hastie. 'The Gathering' became a theatre, seminar room, prison cell and student bedroom as, daily, different poets endured an hour within its confines. It acted as a metaphor for the bigger 'gathering' outside, of the exhilaration of conversation on the 'Maes' but also its insularity. Like 'Noddfa' it referenced the wider world, as the poets were aware, chalking 'Guantanamo beirdd' on its wooden rafters. When empty of poets, the Gathering remained a poetic space.

An Artist-in-Residence project also runs for several months leading up to the Eisteddfod, where work resulting from it is exhibited. These two initiatives are non-permanent and 'site-specific'. Whilst the residency by its nature involves a large degree of integration with the local community, the artStructure commissions allow artists to develop their own work in an interpretation of 'specifics of place' and 'cultural relevance' with singularity of vision. In *Groundbreaking: the Artist in the Changing Landscape* (Seren, 2005), the American minimalist artist Richard Nonas is quoted as saying:

"... whenever the word art is qualified by an adjective (such as 'Public', 'Community', 'Folk', 'Outsider' or whatever) it is not in fact art that is indicated but something diminished by the usage, which suggests a lesser activity than art. He thinks there is either art or 'not art'."



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Whilst as an artist I am sympathetic to Nonas's sentiment, as a public art project manager (with Cywaith Cymru), I use 'Public Art' as the accepted term for art commissioned outside the Gallery for different purposes and functions. There is art that is simply placed in the public realm, on buildings, in public squares, in parks, and there is art that is public by its very nature, it involves direct interaction with the public, often a set 'community'. This later is a fairly recent development, known in the US as 'new genre public art' or by art theorist Suzi Gablik as 'connective aesthetics'. Yet still, this question vexes us. How precisely should we define 'public' art and the artist's responsibility in the public realm?

More pertinent, as the new public art body takes shape, what should be the particular role of a public art organisation for Wales? Where should its priorities lie? Are they different to those of a public art organisation in, say, Birmingham or Finland? The Arts Council of Wales is keen that the organisation "should act as a catalyst and innovator to promote and develop the role of artists in the public realm and to improve the quality of the built and natural environment." But little mention is made of particularities.

The artStructure series, which will hopefully continue and also take place beyond the Eisteddfod environment, exemplifies the artist-led, site-specific (or site-responsive) project, embedded in the culture, history or geography and architecture of a place or situation. As many of the assumptions of modernist sculpture have been questioned by artists and critics, there has been a movement away from the self-contained object, and an interest in establishing the central role of the viewer in the form and content of public sculpture.

In some cases the 'art object' is dispensed with entirely, in favour of 'processes', conceptual work and interaction between disciplines. As Wiard Sterk writes in an introduction to the 'Another New Babylon' Urban Legacies 2 conference, held in Cardiff in October 2006:

"Art and the skills artists can bring to the built environment are also no longer valued just for their aesthetics."

That is not to say that, if there is a diluting of aesthetic merit, the specificity of a work to its location is enough to guarantee effectiveness (even non-objects are imbued with aesthetic qualities) or that too many compromises that come from working in the 'public realm' are introduced.

There are still instances where key landmark 'objects' are desirable. It might well be better (though contentious) to



Poets performing in Carwyn Evans's stacked up shipping containers at the Newport Eisteddfod in 2004.

purchase 'ready-made' sculptures and place them, rather than engage with a long, frustrating and debilitating process of 'art by committee'. Signature sculptural works by the likes of Antony Gormley, Eduardo Chillida, or Richard Serra have their uses, in particular when they are also site-specific. Witness Chillida's iconic *Peine del Viento* (Combs of the Wind) in San Sebastián in his native Basque country, where it seems to operate as a symbol of Basque character, strength, tenacity and balance. Whilst it would be pointless merely to emulate the Basques, or indeed the astonishingly popular *The Angel of the North*, it is nevertheless quite amazing that there is no large work by David Nash permanently placed anywhere in Wales, his adopted country. In a sense, this could be seen as the function of a 'national collection', viewable outside the Museum.



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It's easy to forget in the rarefied atmosphere of art's 'chattering classes', that public art has a role in providing monuments and statuary of celebration and remembrance and, as is often the case in small countries, of reclaiming and emphasising identity. Public art symbolises shared history, as in the monuments to the fallen of the world wars, or of nation building, as the many monuments in Dublin or in Bilbao do for their respective states.

Are there any inspiring monuments to Owain Glyndwr in Wales, or do we shrink from such gestures? Perhaps this has something to do with a non-conformist aversion to iconography. Or is it due to a lack of confidence? We have, as a safe option perhaps, appropriated Iolo Morganwg's re-invention of the stone circle for Aneurin Bevan's memorial above Tredegar and for Llywelyn at Cilmeri. Sculptor and landscape artist Richard Harris has invested some verve into this motif recently, with notable success in St David's and in front of the Senedd in Cardiff Bay.

A national public art body has to advance preconceptions, and not necessarily by encouraging the adoption of models from elsewhere. It also has a responsibility to ensure that the 'needs' of the public are met. Dare I suggest a custodial role in the culture, one that is ongoing and carried out with vigour, leading in a national cultural debate? It should not merely act as an agency or consultancy but use the opportunity of strategic planning and project management to lay down a vision for the future.

Tamara Krikorian, Director of Cywaith Cymru from 1984 to 2005, engaged with these issues with a particular eye on the 'culturally relevant' rather than the short-term dictates of urban developers or a recourse to generic 'art for public spaces'.

66 Art challenges. Artists like Santiago Sierra and Thomas Hirschhorn question art and its institutions, and they do this in the public space. There need be no border separating art from 'public' art. When considering and commissioning artworks for new buildings, particularly those that aspire to the 'iconic', problems of 'purpose' arise. Art in its relationship to architecture is often seen as 'ornamentation', to be added at the end of the

process. This is possibly why Henry Moore's anthropomorphic and decorative sculptures were always a favourite. They never challenged the building itself.

Today, however, radical art is as concerned with the disruption of space as it is about harmony. It challenges the urban space, not by monumentalism, but by interaction and intervention. Examples of good practice, where artists can thrive alongside the architect and planner need to be built upon, and new modes of practice initiated where the artists' role might be to create an ambiance, a lighting effect, or an event.

Most of Wales, however, is not urban, so it seems misguided to focus overtly on architecture or the 'built environment'. The amount of new public building in Wales is finite, with the three major public buildings in Cardiff, the Stadium, the Millennium Centre and the Senedd completed as well as new theatre and gallery complexes elsewhere. With diminishing lottery funds it is unlikely that we will see the same level of public expenditure on new build in the coming years. Other ways to bring art to communities all over Wales are required and artist residencies and temporary interventions can provide 'live' contact between the public, the art and the artist, and increasingly allow exploration of pressing environmental issues. The environmental arts charity nva (www.nva.org.uk) in Scotland, for example, creates ambitious large-scale, site-specific, temporary and permanent artworks in cities and on mountains and islands.

This subject needs more analysis, and a major role of a public art body has to be research, development and critical reflection to augment practice. It should honestly look at the merits of what is produced as public art in Wales. It should not blithely replicate trends elsewhere, but adapt and introduce new possibilities relevant to the situation in Wales. Above all, as a major employer of artists in a country where prospects for earning a living are slight, the organisation has to be aware of the needs of artists, and be responsive and responsible to this 'workforce'. An opportunity for occasional work on residencies and commissions means the difference between having artists in Wales, or of seeing them leave.

Ultimately it is a responsibility to keep alive the idea that art is not surrogate to other disciplines and that a work of art may possess extraordinary power, and inspire an impassioned response. To understand the 'aesthetic considerations' of such work, the viewer needs to be drawn into the 'concepts' surrounding it, and the 'intentions' of its making. Consequently, public art today is far from simple to read. However, its importance to a given society depends on its capacity to operate as a symbolic language and through the belief (of artists, commissioners and administrators alike) that it has a significant function as 'Art'.

Y Casgliad (the Gathering) structure at the 2003 Meifod Eisteddfod, built by sculptor David Hastie. It became variously a theatre, seminar room, prison cell and student bedroom as different poets daily endured an hour within its confines.

Iwan Bala is an artist and Project Manager with Cywaith Cymru / Artworks Wales.



'By any standards, Technium OpTIC in St Asaph is a beautiful building.'

building for people

derek jones argues that a sense of place depends on public good taking precedence over private indulgence

this is a golden age for public architecture, and Huw Meredydd Owen (Agenda, Summer 2006) rightly claims some share of the accolades for north Wales. By any standards, Technium OpTIC in St Asaph is a beautiful building. The new Ruthin Centre for the Applied Crafts, on which work will start in early 2007, promises well, as does the extended Oriel Mostyn in Llandudno. All of them can rightly be mentioned in at least the next breath to their better-known contemporaries on the Firth of Forth, Tyneside, and in Cardiff Bay.

But Owen's claim that these new north Walian buildings in themselves generate a sense of place is much more debatable. Take Technium OpTIC. It certainly deserves the many awards it has received, and it stands out from its more conventional neighbours as a building on which considerable thought and creativity have been expended. It may well provide excellent working conditions. It has plentiful space, but can it be said to have a sense of place?

To decide whether or not an individual building contributes to a sense of place you have surely to look at it in relation to a wider set of factors. How does it stand in relation to its surroundings, to other buildings nearby, the wider locality, roads and landscaping? How do people use the space which the architects have created? Does it encourage casual meeting and easy movement?

Technium OpTIC is part of the St Asaph Business Park, not the best starting point for an architect interested in place. The park has the usual network of roads, car parks, and manicured landscaping, even, for the benefit of one of the office blocks, a



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pond, a fountain and carefully arranged slate chippings. Seating has been thoughtfully provided for staff who might want, for instance, to read a book while they eat their lunch. But on a hot day last July, at lunchtime, there was hardly a soul to be seen. You had the feeling that the perhaps 3,000 people who work on the Business Park had their heads down in meeting rooms or at their desks. A sense of place was the last thing that came to mind. Rather, it seemed to this visitor that he had no 'business' there (which he hadn't!).

The decision to keep business separate from other parts of economic and social life was taken long ago, and perhaps not much can be done to liven up these modern ghettos. For all its economic success, St Asaph is a particularly bad example. It is separated from the town which gives it a name by a mile of green fields. There is not a shop, a pub, or a church in sight. For all its splendid canopy, Technium OpTIC cannot compensate for the resulting deadness which pervades the rest of the Business Park.

The forthcoming new Ruthin Centre for the Applied Crafts, also praised by Huw Meredydd Owen, stands a better chance of avoiding ghettoisation, but the decision to site it in the same position as its predecessor is not without its problems. It is on the edge of the town centre, separated from it by a busy road and roundabout, and, if previous experience is any judge, local people might still easily decide that they had no pressing need to visit the Centre. After all, they belong to a town with no end of visual stimulus.



View of the Technium OpTIC's photovoltaic wall and rain harvesting system.

Of course, the new building will continue to be well worth the journey from the top of the town for the quality of its exhibitions. It is presided over by a world-class curator, Philip Hughes, who makes no concessions to small-townery, and is firmly of the view that Ruthin deserves the chance to see the best and most challenging of contemporary art and craft. Sergison Bates' design must surely aim to serve that urbanity rather more than to evoke, in Owen's words, "both the vernacular architecture in the area and the hill-lined landscape of the Vale of Clwyd". Doubtless these are important

principles, but they have a sentimental edge at odds with the intellectual challenges which the new Centre must embody. An old and proud town, Ruthin needs to have such 21st century contributions to its heritage.

Local arguments about the appropriateness of such an uncompromising modern building do not preclude it developing a sense of place. The first Ruthin Craft Centre building reminded many of sheltered accommodation. And, indeed, the parallel was apt for the image it presented to the rest of the town, with its inward-looking and enclosed air of a private space. There is nothing wrong with enclosure as such, but in this case it merely compounded the centre's physical separation from the town centre. Even hardened conservatives, who hate modern buildings on principle, may be inclined to forgive the second craft centre if it achieves a sense of invitation to come in and look.

On paper at least Sergison Bates seem to have achieved that aim. Passers by will be able to see through the windows what's going on, at least in the main exhibition space. Hitherto round the back, the main entrance will now face the town. Meanwhile, the best feature of the first centre, the arrangement of craft workshops around a courtyard, has been retained, making possible, one hopes, not only fair weather eating and drinking al fresco, but perhaps also other arts events and public celebrations. The old gaol at Ruthin has already set an example of this by its use of the old prisoners' exercise yard, which has made a perfect venue for a monthly produce market.

Paradoxically, the recent arrival of a Tesco supermarket next door to the craft centre may actually increase a sense of place in the vicinity of the centre. Hardly unexpectedly, this is very far from an iconic building, but it is already bustling and has the potential to encourage some of its customers to cross the road, where a family was recently observed eating a picnic on the grass, almost certainly, an unprecedented occurrence.

As Huw Meredydd Owen argues, "good place making depends on an expectation of quality and creative significance." However, other factors are at work beyond the initial vision of an architect, albeit at first sight seemingly banal and even accidental. In the cases of Technium OpTIC, and the new Ruthin Craft Centre the discernment of place is uphill work. In neither case will it be achieved unless, as Owen suggests, the public good takes precedence over private indulgence.

Derek Jones has been chairman of Ruthin and District Civic Association for four years. He also sits on the board of the Civic Trust for Wales, and chairs the editorial board of their magazine, About Wales.

who do we think we are?

jonathan scourfield asks what being 'Welsh' means when you're 10 years old

the journalist Hugo Hamilton has written an autobiographical novel about his childhood in Ireland. For Hamilton's father, his children were his nationalist project. He puts it like this:

My father says he loves his country as much as ever, but he has a different way of fighting now, through his children. From now on he's going to use his children as weapons, he says, because children are stronger than armies, stronger than speeches or articles or any number of letters to the government. One child is worth more than a thousand guns and bombs, he says.

This is a familiar theme, isn't it? We only have to see the fuss that gets made from time to time in the British media about the school history curriculum to see how important children are to people who care about a particular version of their nation. Because we were interested in what all this means to children themselves and because Welshness more specifically is something that is endlessly debated, we thought it would be interesting to research how children talk about Wales and other nations. We went to six primary schools in all corners of

Children at an Urdd event on the S4C stand during the Felindre Swansea Eisteddfod in 2006. With that backcloth would they question their Welshness?



'Many of the children connected being Welsh with the Welsh language in various ways. They frequently confused being Welsh / English with speaking Welsh / English.'



Wales. We chose the schools to get a mix of social class, ethnicity and language use, as well as geography. And what did we find out?

Well, most people I think want modern Wales to be both distinctive and inclusive, so let's start from there. What I mean is that there is widespread concern about globalisation making everything bland and samey. Most of us want Wales to stand out in some way, to be culturally distinctive. At the same time, there is a concern amongst many ordinary Welsh people as well as in the National Assembly about inclusive citizenship – Wales being a place to which diverse peoples can belong, irrespective of ethnic background, religion or whatever.

To take the inclusive theme first, and more specifically the issue of ethnic diversity, in a taken-for-granted way in casual talk the children tended to make an automatic connection between being Welsh and being white. That said, many of them also had an inclusive idea of what it is to be Welsh when specifically asked about it. They would insist that black people are 'just as Welsh' as white people, although they tended to do this with reference to some traditional aspect of Welshness – referring to black people they know who speak Welsh or a black child having a Welsh-sounding name. The problem here is that the idea of Welshness is narrow. You can only be co-opted if you can be seen to conform to this narrow definition. It is not children who are too blame for this narrowness of course. They are largely stuck with the ideas handed down to them from the adult world.

None of the ethnic minority children we spoke to chose the label 'Welsh' as their main national identity and there was no expectation that it could be used as an umbrella identity – as in 'Welsh Muslim' – although some of the children did use 'British' in this way. Also on the theme of who belongs to Wales, we were encouraged to note we found very little hostility between children from English medium and Welsh medium schools. There was, though, some tension surrounding children who identified as 'English', with some of these children being nervous to admit to this identity.

There was, though, some tension surrounding children who identified as 'English', with some of these children being nervous to admit to this identity.

Many of the children connected being Welsh with the Welsh language in various ways. They frequently confused being Welsh/English with speaking Welsh/English. When asked to say what being Welsh meant, they would most often make reference to the Welsh language, whether or not they spoke it themselves. This could be seen in an optimistic light, as in the Welsh Language Board rhetoric that the language belongs to

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everyone in Wales. However, given how narrow the children's ideas about Welshness seemed to be, as we noted above, we could also say that an automatic connection between being Welsh and speaking Welsh is a problem for developing an inclusive Wales. What about the four out of five people who do not speak Welsh?

We would not wish to impose a compulsory Welsh identity on all children who move to Wales from elsewhere, or whose parents are not Welsh. However, we believe that it is important that this identification remains an option for all living in Wales. Promoting the inclusive idea that there are many ways of being Welsh is not only important for the visible ethnic minorities, but also for monolingual English-speaking children in Wales and for children whose families have migrated from other parts of the UK (e.g. those who are English-born – there are more of them living in Wales than there are Welsh speakers). In practical terms, a more vigorous promotion of diverse Welsh identities in the media and educational materials might be one step forward. As well as combating the idea that an ability to speak the Welsh language is necessarily core to Welsh identity, another very different strategy would be to open up that language by making it more accessible to a diverse population. Welsh medium schools and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin might, for example, ensure that their facilities are actively promoted amongst ethnic minority communities.

We turn now to the issue of Wales as distinctive. We live in a world that is increasingly diverse in some respects, with more global mobility resulting in greater cultural diversity. But in other respects we see increasing homogenisation. Certainly the English language is becoming more dominant all the time, particularly via the expansion of global media, trade and travel. This poses a challenge to a country like Wales whose most obvious claim to distinctiveness is its unique language.

Although the children made frequent connections between being Welsh and speaking Welsh in casual talk, our research does not necessarily bode well for the future of the Welsh language. One school we went to, in a part of Wales where the language has traditionally been very strong, could clearly give cause for concern if it indicates in any way what is going on elsewhere. Although the children there were fluent in Welsh, they did not see the language as having practical use as a community language. They saw it as something that old people speak and that children speak in the classroom (not outside the school gates).

Many of the Welsh-speaking children saw the language as something that would help them get on in life, to learn other languages and get better jobs. We could be optimistic about this as evidence that the language now has status in public life – a great improvement on the scenario fifty years before when it was seen as holding people back. However, the children did not speak of the Welsh language meaning anything to them on a deeper level. They did not speak of any strong attachment to the language or any particular identification with it. To be more pessimistic, we could see this lack of personal

attachment as undermining policies designed to extend the use of Welsh. The risk is that we get a Wales with more people able to understand the language if not speak it but who do not actually use it at all in their everyday lives, because they do not need to and because it does not really matter to them.

We need to maintain the Welsh language as the most obviously distinctive aspect of our culture, but we cannot have exclusive ideas about Welsh identity as necessarily tied to an ability to speak the language.

We could, therefore, conclude with a rather pessimistic picture both for an inclusive Welsh citizenship and for Welsh distinctiveness with regard to language. However we did find some things to challenge this pessimism. Some children were actively and creatively engaged in finding new ways to construct an inclusive Wales. The linguistic territory was pretty free of tensions and trouble for the children and those who were bilingual tended to be very relaxed in their dual language use.

To bring together the twin issues of distinctiveness and inclusivity, we could turn to American philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, who writes about 'rooted cosmopolitans'. These are people who are attached to a specific place and its own particular culture but are also open to other people with different cultures. I would suggest that it is rooted cosmopolitans that Wales needs. We need to maintain the Welsh language as the most obviously distinctive aspect of our culture, but we cannot have exclusive ideas about Welsh identity as necessarily tied to an ability to speak the language. We should encourage children to look beyond narrow versions of Wales from the adult world and encourage them to build their own creative visions of Wales and what it means to be Welsh citizens.

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last word

confidence boost



peter stead

Surely nobody can deny that Wales has done well since the advent of the Assembly. It's not that we love, or even admire, our politicians but rather that the mere fact of devolution has given significant groups of activists in Wales a new sense of confidence and a new appreciation that the opportunity is there to do things for ourselves.

Undoubtedly, Culture and the Arts have been the main beneficiaries, and this is not inappropriate as the Assembly would never have come into being without the campaigning of arts leaders. They played a more important part than politicians. Wales is now buzzing with artistic, literary, architectural and musical endeavour and expression.

As 2006 came to a close one could sense the politicians eagerly wanting to cash in on all this new sense of energy and purpose. Obviously they were thinking that the political conjuring trick could work for a second time. If 1997 gave us a

confidence boost, a renewed sense of identity and a cultural renaissance, then why shouldn't the implementation of the Government of Wales Act work in the same way? Their intentions, of course, as nearly always, are entirely honourable, but one can also sense their envy and their paranoia. "Hang on," they're telling the musicians, broadcasters and arts promoters, "this is our Wales and we set the agenda and we make the headlines. You belong on the inside pages or after the Sports News and Weather."

Already I am exhausted by the mere thought of what 2007 holds in store. The Presiding Officer (who in his television demolition of John Marek provided the comedy highlight of 2006) talks of a massive legislative programme, and one suddenly has a vision of huge armies of lawyers and civil servants being recruited to fill Cardiff offices to do the drafting. With Lord Richard warning us of the dangerously piecemeal process that the new dispensation ensures it is clear that we are entering an era when few of us will understand the politics of our own country. In record time our politics will have passed into the hands of a highly paid and anonymous bureaucracy.

And then came our First Minister's great Swansea speech offering us 'Progressive Universalism'. Is this, I wondered, the straw that will break the camel's back? My fears were misplaced. This was an important and challenging speech, so interesting that

even the Western Mail admired it. It gives Wales a clear agenda for the century ahead, but as a speech it needs editing, annotation and a note of caution.

Rhodri offers the full statement of Welsh inclusiveness and democracy that we have been crying out for, and yet he did it in a party idiom and on party terms. Obviously Labour activists and voters have to be fired up for May, but this speech could have become a Jeffersonian Constitution for the nation if Rhodri had accepted that there is one big audience in Wales, not two. In Wales the Labour Party should have no need to talk to itself. The heavy emphasis on distancing Welsh Labour from Blair and the reference to '21st century Socialism' constituted spin for the party faithful and were therefore a diversion and a dilution. Presumably the Economic Development Minister does not go to New York and California and announce that American help is needed to create a socialist republic in Wales.

Inevitably the speech is at its strongest and most creditable when promising protection for the vulnerable. However, what is needed most in Wales is an emphasis on individual fulfilment. The first call on Government must be the encouragement of wealth creation both by companies and individuals. Outsiders have to be invited to prosper in Wales, and our own people must be instructed to go and do likewise. Rhodri clearly senses the opportunity to offer

fulfilment and betterment to everybody in Wales. He virtually concedes that the way forward in that respect is overwhelmingly cultural rather than narrowly political. He must emphasise now that Progressive Universalism is best defined culturally rather than in party idiom.

In many respects this was a breakthrough speech, not least in its emphasis on the need for a new era of soapbox politics. But in calling for that, Rhodri should realise his unique standing in Wales. Who else is there to rival him in attracting an audience? His very existence has sanctioned the legitimacy of the Assembly.

Rhodri should now use his soapbox to refine his message and to tell everyone in Wales (and that includes those two huge groups usually ignored by Welsh politicians, young people and the professional middle classes) that it is their responsibility to help create a new Wales in their own image. Politicians are not there to crowd us out and exhaust us with their schemes and their jargon. They are there to give us room to breathe and express ourselves. In Wales we need to break down the barrier between party activists and the rest of us and, even more, we must avoid the emergence of a dominant political élite. As Rhodri has shown, the job of politicians is to exhort not boss. The beauty of the new Wales will be that we will not rely on our politicians to define us.