



THE LEARNED SOCIETY OF WALES
CYMDEITHAS DDYSGEDIG CYMRU

President's
Annual Address

Sir Emyr Jones Parry GCMG FInstP PLSW

18 May 2016

Prynhawn da Gymrodyr, Gyfeillion / Good afternoon Fellows, Friends

Croeso i Gyfarfod Cyffredinol Cymdeithas Ddysgedig Cymru.

A very warm welcome again to you all to this, the sixth Annual General Meeting of the Learned Society of Wales. My particular congratulations to the 46 newly-elected Fellows. Our Fellowship now stands at 427.

(Llongyfarchiadau i'r rhai a etholwyd sy'n dod â'r gymrodoriaeth nodedig i 427)

It is right that I recognise and thank the Officers and Council of the Society for their work over the year, and the immense contribution made by our Chief Executive, Professor Peter Halligan and his excellent team. We owe a debt to all those who have contributed to our activities, particularly to the members of the panels who scrutinised nominations and recommended our newly-elected Fellows.

The Society is now financially supported by each of the eight universities in Wales, and the Fellowship is more widely drawn after this year's election. This is vital. As a national society we must be representative of Wales as a whole, and indeed of both genders. Our thanks to all those who are supporting us, in particular to those individual Fellows who donate generously. Putting the Society on a financially sustainable basis is vital and we intend to launch a fund raising campaign later this year to support in the future a small number of high profile Scholarships and Research Fellowships.

(Diolch i bawb a gyfrannodd mewn cymaint o wahanol ffyrdd tuag at ein gwaith).

Our mission bears repetition. To celebrate, recognise, preserve, protect and encourage excellence in all scholarly disciplines, and in the professions, industry and commerce, the arts and public service.

To promote the advancement of learning and scholarship and the dissemination and application of the results of academic enquiry and research.

To act as an independent source of expert scholarly advice and comment on matters affecting the research, scholarship and wellbeing of Wales and its people, and to advance public discussion and interaction on matters of national and international importance.

Our strapline remains clear and its purpose unambiguous – to celebrate scholarship and serve the nation.

(I ddathlu ysgolheictod a gwasanaethu'r genedl)

As the Society approaches its sixth birthday, what is its current status? As the 'new kid on the block', how are we perceived? After all, for an academic, peer group recognition is much valued. So how does your Society stand? The answer in short - it's been an outstanding year.

(Mae hi wir wedi bod yn flwyddyn gofiadwy gyda chynnydd gwirioneddol i'w adrodd).

In November at the Wales Millennium Centre, we celebrated the award of Royal Charter. The Charter is intended for bodies that work in the public interest and which demonstrate "pre-eminence, stability and permanence in their particular field". The accolade enhances the standing of the Society as the national academy of Wales and recognises the commitment to celebrate scholarship and serve Wales. The Royal Charter came in to effect legally when the Great Seal was applied at the end of September 2015. Administratively, the Charter will replace the current Memorandum and Articles of Association at the end of this financial year, 31 July 2016. The grant of Royal Charter does not of course confer the title "Royal" to our Society, but it is a handsome recognition. We continue to work for the grant of that Royal title.

(Yn y byd academaidd mae sêl cymeradwyaeth Frenhinol yn dystiolaeth sefydlog a sylweddol o gydnabyddiaeth).

During the celebrations, the Society's award was saluted by the Cymmrodorion, and by representatives of the Royal Society, the British Academy, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the Royal Irish Academy. This was the best of peer group recognition, and reflected our deliberate policy of establishing and developing relations with these august bodies. Indeed, the Royal Society, at our instigation, then hosted a discussion in February to explore the role, relevance, and public benefit of learned societies. The invitation to some fifty learned societies began with the words "Catalysed by the Learned Society of Wales receiving its Royal Charter ...". Discussion underlined the continuing importance of the work of learned societies.

(Mae gan gymdeithasau ac academiâu dysgedig rôl parhaus a pherthnasol yn y gymdeithas gyfoes)

The event also demonstrated a particular community of interest with the RSE and the RIA, each of us being a national academy representing a wider academic spectrum of talents. We profit and will continue to profit from this cooperation, and in particular will draw on the experience of our partner national academies. Specifically we plan to work together when there is mutual advantage to express collective or joint views. Through such practical action, we shall also enhance our own influence. Recently for the first time, we worked with the RSE when we submitted a joint response to Lord Stern's review of the REF. Again, in partnership with the President of the Royal Society, I have sent an email to all newly elected AMs, welcoming them to their role but also including sector level information to illustrate why they should care about science and research in Wales.

(Mae datblygu gwerthfawrogiad mwy brwdfrydig o bwysigrwydd gwyddoniaeth a thechnoleg ymhlith Aelodau'r Cynulliad yn amcan pwysig. Nid yw ychwaith yn llai pwysig i feithrin eu diddordeb ar draws pob disgyblaeth).

Rooted in Wales as its national academy, your Society is international in outlook, intent on broadening horizons and cooperating with others to mutual benefit. That is the essence of higher education, to open minds and ideas to the world. Nowhere is this more important than in Europe. European Union support is a vital source of funding for research in the UK. Currently 18% of EU spending in the UK (EUR 8.8bn) is on research. The European Commission has put in place a new advisory mechanism, the European Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM). It comprises three elements; a High Level Group, the SAM unit in the Commission, and the Science Advice for Policy contributed to by the 5 large European Academies. Two of these are ALLEA, the Federation of European national academies, and the Academia Europaea. The Academia Europaea Cardiff University knowledge hub, led by Professor Ole Petersen, Vice President of both the Learned Society and Academia Europaea, will contribute actively to the new Science Advisory Mechanism through Academia Europaea. We will therefore be able to input into the development of EU research policy. This is a valuable opportunity to signpost science in Wales, and indeed your national Academy in the European domain. We are pleased to be associated with the annual meeting of the Academia Europaea in Cardiff in June where the Society is sponsoring the debate on Scientific Advice Mechanisms on the first day. The related launch of the new Cardiff hub of Academia Europaea at this annual meeting will also be a particular occasion to project and promote Wales. The excellence of our research and teaching deserves emphasising.

(Mae rhagamcanu a hyrwyddo'r gorau o Gymru yn hollbwysig, a gall y Gymdeithas gyfrannu'n gymedrol at y nod hwn).

Back in April in Vienna, at the Austrian Academies of Sciences the Learned Society was formally admitted in to full membership of ALLEA, a second means to contribute to EU science policy. ALLEA brings together 60 academies from more than 40 countries belonging to the Council of Europe. Member academies include learned societies from across all field of the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. We are now the fourth (and final) UK member of ALLEA, joining the British Academy, the Royal Society and the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Our links with Europe were also to the fore last month in Aberystwyth, at the International Literature Forum on Audience Development, organised by Literature Across Frontiers and Ned Thomas FLSW. The keynote lecture by Professor Patrick McGuinness, another Fellow, on 'Other people's countries: tales of literary and cultural belonging' was supported by the Society, and the lecture explored how best to develop an audience for the literature of other cultures, large and small.

Our ambitions extend westwards too, to the North American Association for the Study of Welsh Culture and History, who hold their annual conference at Harvard in July. The Society will be sponsoring a lecture by Professor Marc Shell, the Irving Babbit Professor of Comparative Literature and of English and American

Literature at Harvard University. This support is part of our programme to heighten the profile, beyond Wales, as well as within our nation, of scholarship relating to Wales.

Last year, the Society held its first International Symposium in Portmeirion in partnership with Bangor University. Entitled 'Economic policies for peripheral economies' the 3 day symposium attracted Academic luminaries and international economics analysts who examined the scope for regional economic development in a globalised economy which restricts the capacity of government to act discriminately. On 10 May this year, a special edition of Welsh Economic Review on 'Economic Policy for Peripheral Economies' was launched, featuring papers from this first International Symposium. Thanks to Prof Gerald Holtham (FLSW) for editing this special issue and also for being the driving and co-ordinating force behind this successful conference. Follow up to such a conference is crucial. We need action to develop the Welsh economy. I was appalled last week to be reminded that the average GDP per head in West Wales and the Valleys is 71% of the EU average, which is less than the average in parts of Romania and Bulgaria, and less than the average in the whole of Slovenia, Slovakia or the Czech Republic.

(Mae cyfraniad Addysg Uwch i'r economi yn sylweddol yn nhermau diriaethol, ond hefyd o ran denu buddsoddiad a chynhyrchu gweithlu medrus).

The Society is also working on another important international issue – global health, sometimes referred to as One health, namely the interdependence of human, animal and plant health. Professor John Wyn Owen, the Society's Treasurer, has led this work in conjunction with Public Health Wales and Aberystwyth University. A High Level Expert Group was convened at the Celtic Manor back in February to prepare recommendations on global health security. The outcome of this meeting sponsored by the LSW were presented by John at a meeting of the Inter Action Council in Baku. The Council, largely composed of former world leaders, endorsed the recommended approach and adopted practical conclusions for further action. Follow up will include Wales' role as an exemplar of a comprehensive health system seeking to respond to the different issues, including being prepared for global health emergencies. Plans are also in progress for the next LSW symposium in Cambridge in 2017 on the '*Ethics of Sustainable Development*'.

Our work on Wales Studies continues to progress slowly given our resources. The subject can be defined as the intellectual exploration, explanation and understanding of all things related to Wales and its relations with the wider world. As such, Wales Studies describes the inclusive, cross-disciplinary study of Welsh history, literatures, science, creative arts and cultural expression. One aim of this project is to bring together existing organisations and networks who share the strongly held belief that access to a vibrant and relevant development of Wales Studies has much to offer Wales, inspire its people and contribute to the delivery of the Future Generations (Wales) Act. Many of you will recall Neil MacGregor's classic Radio 4 series, the History of the world in a hundred objects. Similarly, in Ireland and Scotland there are histories

based on one hundred objects and events. I hope that in time we can see the same concept developed for Wales. There is a rich tapestry on which to draw.

I doubt that our role in serving the nation has ever been more relevant or appropriate. We do so in the external promotion of Welsh scholarship and the successes of our Higher Education sector, in signalling what is being achieved by excellence and talent in Wales. The Learned Society has a wider sectorial role distinct from the contribution of individual universities and Vice-Chancellors. Currently, we are working in partnership with HEFCW on promoting the scientific, research landscape of Wales for a wider global scientific audience by commissioning a non-advertorial, awareness raising article in the prestigious journal SCIENCE. The intention here will be to highlight areas of scientific research in Wales, and profile some of the key players with a view to achieving greater international coverage and understanding of developments from Wales. The article will be independently edited, thus maintaining integrity of the content.

Within Wales we have been invited to offer opinions and expertise in a range of areas. We do that on the basis of evidence and without favour. I'm glad to report that our opinions are increasingly being sought and I believe, taken more in to account.

(Mewn system un siambr lle bydd un blaid wleidyddol wedi bod mewn grym am fwy na 20 mlynedd, bod angen cryn dipyn o lais gwrthrychol annibynnol).

I noted last year our considered submission to the Diamond Review. We will soon see if we had any effect on its recommendations. But clearly the Review, and in particular the response of the Welsh Government, will have a substantial influence on the future of Higher Education in Wales. The students have a direct interest but we also have a responsibility to safeguard the sustainability of university institutions in Wales. Any reduction in the total support to students should lead to a corresponding increase in payments direct to universities. We shall follow developments closely.

(Mae'r her ariannol ar gyfer ein prifysgolion yn llym. Byddai ailgyfeirio rhywfaint o'r cyllid cymorth i fyfyrwyr yn uniongyrchol i'r brifysgol yn gam bach i gyflwyno rhywfaint o sicrwydd yn eu hincwm).

We submitted comments to Professor Hazelkorn whose review on a post-compulsory education system for Wales was published on 10 March. We pressed the case for retaining an arm's length body between the Welsh Government and the sector. This will probably be the outcome. But the successor to HEFCW seems likely to cover Further Education as well as Higher Education. This may offer more equitable treatment for the former, but it will be imperative to ensure adequate funding of research. I was not impressed personally with the Professor's analysis. It will be vital that the Society monitor the emerging governmental response and comment critically to protect the real interests involved for Higher Education.

(Mae'n diddordeb cyffredin rwy'n credu o safbwynt llywodraeth a phrifysgolion y dylid cael corff rhyngddynt sydd â phwerau clir).

We must keep emphasising the fact that the higher education sector is one of Wales' most important industries, creating tens of thousands of jobs and stimulating substantial economic activity in local communities, as well as in the wider Welsh economy. In 2014 Welsh universities generated £4.6 billion of output in Wales.

Welsh universities have the highest percentage of world-leading research of any part of the UK in terms of its impact, with almost half of it having a direct transformational effect on society and the economy. But we can't be complacent. Consider the ill-timed proposed cuts to HEFCWs core funding only some months ago. Accordingly we need as a Society to continue to argue against any real terms cuts in the quality-related (QR) research budget that underpins Wales' world leading research. For Welsh Universities, the United Kingdom brand of higher education is all important. The challenge is then to offer in addition a sufficiently distinct and positive benefit from studying a given subject in Wales. This is crucial to the ability of Welsh universities to compete in a challenging external environment.

(Mae'n ddyletswydd ar ein prifysgolion, o fewn brand y Deyrnas Unedig, i werthu'r gwerth ychwanegol gwirioneddol o astudio yng Nghymru. Mae'n hanfodol yn y gystadleuaeth ddwys sydd ohoni i recriwtio myfyrwyr, sydd, yn ei dro, y ffynhonnell incwm sylfaenol ar gyfer y brifysgol).

Changes in the Higher Education arrangements in England can affect us directly in Wales, often to our disadvantage. We shall be looking at the implications for Wales of this week's UK White Paper and parallel developments on HEFCE and the QAA. It will be vital that any consequential changes here reinforce the reputation of Welsh Higher Education within the UK context.

(Mae'n rhaid i ni gynnal enw da'r sector. Rhaid i drefniadau gwahanol yng Nghymru gael eu gweld i fod o'r safon uchaf).

Recognition of merit and achievement remains an essential and rewarding feature of all national academies. Your Society does it in many ways, and it is important for individuals, for the nation, and for the academic sector and its reputation.

As we saw earlier, this year 46 outstanding scientists, eminent academics and celebrated professionals, joined the ranks of our National Academy. While clearly important for recognizing individuals, the election also strengthens the Society's Fellowship. Bringing together the most successful and talented Fellows connected with Wales provides the LSW with a range of expertise. This enables us both to contribute to the shared purpose and common good of advancing and promoting excellence in all scholarly disciplines, and

to provide independent and expert advice to government and to other bodies. This year, for the first time the Society also elected 2 Honorary Fellows: Sir Michael Atiyah and Professor Lord Martin Rees.

At the same time the society has made considerable progress in growing the number of women Fellows and also ensuring that they are more represented in the governance, mission and activities of the Society. In March 2013, women made up 11.8% of the Fellows. We are slowly beginning to see the results of Professor Dame Terry Rees's review back in 2013. Today 16.4% of LSW Fellows are female.

(Ond mae llawer mwy i'w wneud, o fewn y Gymdeithas ac mewn prifysgolion unigol i annog a grymuso academyddion benywaidd).

Individual medals, competitively won on the basis of merit, have provided a long and distinguished history of recognition in academia. We are developing our own portfolio of medals slowly and strategically. This evening we will present the fourth Menelaus Medal for *excellence in any field of engineering and technology*, and the inaugural Frances Hoggan medal for outstanding female researchers in STEMM. On 4 July in the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea, we will launch the Dillwyn Medals for early career research excellence in STEMM, the creative arts and humanities, and social science and business. In the autumn, it will be the turn of the Hugh Owen Medal, funded by Welsh Government, to recognise major contributions to educational research or the application of research to produce significant innovations in education policy and/or professional educational practice in Wales. The medals not only recognise academic excellence, but also recover and promote a long legacy of Welsh achievement.

The written material circulated for this meeting gives a comprehensive list of our activities over the past year. We strive to present lectures and other occasions which will interest both our Fellows and the wider community. Similarly, John Tucker and Gareth Roberts are producing a series of short monographs on the Scientists of Wales for the University of Wales Press, a companion series to the long established and highly regarded Writers of Wales series, founded by Meic Stephens, and now edited by Jane Aaron and Wynn Thomas.

I hope Fellows will also appreciate the continuing efforts to enhance both internal and external communication, not just on achievements and activities, but also by way of informative summaries of the wider developments in the sector. InBrief and a much improved website are examples.

(Anelwn at well cyfathrebu gyda mwy o ffocws. Ein nod yw cyflwyno cyfrifon byr y bydd Cymrodyr yn awyddus i'w darllen. Un o ryfeddodau Technoleg Gwybodaeth yw ein bod yn gwybod faint o negeseuon e-bost sy'n parhau heb eu hagor).

Of course the Council is determined that the Society operate efficiently and cost effectively, and the resources available determine what can be accomplished. Peter Halligan and his team do us proud. The

demands on them increase as our activities expand, and as we engage with a wider range of people and organisations.

We have a huge pool of talent within the Fellowship. I hope we can draw more upon your expertise in the year to come, particularly as we respond to invitations to submit considered opinions to governments and legislatures and increasingly to reviews and debate which directly affect the interests of the Fellows. Evidence based opinions require the established expertise of our Fellows. We shall not of course offer opinions on political or controversial issues where we could not hope to represent the views of the Fellowship.

In little over a month the British people will determine if the nation's future lies in the European Union. The next year promises its excitements and challenges. There promises to be much for the Society to do and the Council will need to prioritise. We have a particular responsibility as the national academy to comment constructively on the evolution of Higher Education in Wales, and indeed in the United Kingdom. Moreover harnessing and developing intellects is crucial to any future. The Learned Society represents and recognises excellence. It also has a vital responsibility to inspire talent, particularly in the young. We cannot too often repeat the message that first rate researchers and teachers do this daily in Wales and are making real contributions to society and the economy.

We have progressed well so far on our mission to support emerging talent and help and inspire individuals to achieve. We shall continue to keep our Society relevant and valued in an ever changing environment where public service is increasingly measured, compared and judged.

(Mae ein cenhadaeth yn glir. Rydym yn gwasanaethu'r genedl mewn sawl ffordd. Ond mae ysbrydoli uchelgais, hyrwyddo rhagoriaeth, a meithrin talent yn gyfraniadau sylfaenol i Gymru).

Diolch yn fawr / Thank you

18 May 2016