



THE LEARNED SOCIETY OF WALES CYMDEITHAS DDYSGEDIG CYMRU

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY – CELEBRATING SCHOLARSHIP AND SERVING THE NATION
YR ACADEMI GENEDLAETHOL – YN DATHLU YSGOLHEICTOD A GWASANAETHU'R GENEDL

Annual General Meeting, 23 May 2018
Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynnyddol, 23 Mai 2018

AGM/2018/03
Agendum 6
CCB/2018/03
Agendwm 6

Developing the Next Strategic Plan

1. Strategic Plan 2013/14-2017/18

In 2014, the LSW Council agreed a 5 year Strategic Plan (2014-18) where the key priorities while *“aspirational and ambitious”* were at the same time *“realistic and achievable”*. The Strategic Plan indicated that by 2018, the Society would have developed itself: *“as a sustainable organisation that is fit for purpose and acknowledged as the recognised representative of the world of Welsh learning internationally and as a source of authoritative, scholarly and critical comment and on policy issues affecting Wales”*.

That plan outlined that subject to securing the necessary funding by the end of 2017/18, the Society intended to have:

- engaged in special initiatives, including the establishment of a “Young Academy” for promising younger scholars and the organisation of high-level International Symposia;
- organised or be associated with c. twenty to twenty-five other public lectures and symposia or conferences a year;
- conducted c. two independent studies on policy issues each year, and publish the results;
- engaged on a regular basis with the Welsh Universities, the National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Government, Welsh industry, and cognate organisations elsewhere in the UK and internationally;
- celebrated, recognised and encouraged excellence by electing to its Fellowship persons of outstanding ability and achievement.

The majority of these goals have been delivered, and the Society’s activities and profile are now significantly higher than at the start of the planning period. Although the Young Academy initiative was stalled, the Society has developed a partnership with the Welsh Crucible, and established its own series of early career medals.

2. Developing the next Strategy and Implementation Plan (2018/19-2023/24)

The LSW continues to play a growing and important role in Welsh society fulfilling its Royal Charter for *“advancing learning and knowledge, and promoting and contributing to scientific, cultural, social, environmental and economic development within Wales and beyond”*.

In preparation for the next plan, the Society conducted a stakeholder perception exercise in the summer of 2017, to take stock of the standing of the organisation, and to identify areas for improvement.

A number of stakeholders made the point that the Society was unique amongst organisations in Wales for being able to speak out on issues and convene discussions from a non-partisan, neutral position, using its credibility as an independent, evidence-based organisation to address difficult, long term issues.

They considered that there is a space in the public sphere for the Society to lead and shape debate.

The key issues raised by respondents (external stakeholders and Fellows) were:

- ***Uncertainty over the role, focus and narrative of the Society***

Although there was a strong perception that the Society had been built on strong foundations and was considered to have made a positive impact in its short life, there remained some uncertainty about what exactly it did. Around **half of those interviewed felt they did not have sufficient knowledge or understanding of the breadth of the work of the Society and did not feel they could articulate its key areas of work or priority**. These stakeholders were keen for the Society to raise its profile and articulate a concise, clearer message about its role and focus. A number spoke about the need for the Society to “tell its story” in a simple, more compelling way.

- ***Going further on diversity and inclusion***

The ongoing Equality and Diversity Review is addressing this issue, and the recommendations of the Review will be embedded in the strategy and its implementation in the next five years.

- ***Gap in the market for an independent, respected, authoritative, impartial voice***

Stakeholders and Fellows raised a number of specific issues and areas of work where they felt the Society’s voice could be heard or amplified.

On Brexit, there was a strong view that the current debate in Wales – and especially in learned circles – was too narrow. The view expressed during this project was that the Society could help broaden this debate. They also spoke about a need for much greater, better-informed, debates about long-term issues which will shape the future of Wales.

This is an opportunity for the Society to set the agenda, rather than respond.

- ***Redefining “learned” and growing the Society’s reach and impact***

Although stakeholders consistently praised the quality of the work done by the Society and the credibility and status of its Fellows, many suggested that it would be helpful if the Society considered taking a broader definition of what it means to be “learned”. They suggested that this would help the Society to maximise its impact by reaching out to others - outside of traditional areas of academia that make up the Fellowship of the Society – especially in industry and other areas of civic life, such as the voluntary sector and the arts.

This is something that other academies are also addressing, and the RSE has recently made progress in this respect, and many of the 66 newly-elected Fellows (announced at the end of February) are from outside academia.

The Society’s Equality and Diversity Review (see Agendum XX) has considered this issue, and will make a number of recommendations to address the diversity of the Fellowship.

3. Strategic Framework

On the recommendation of the Strategic Plan Working group, and the General Purposes and Finance Committees, the Council of the Society has developed and endorsed a Strategic Framework for the next planning period:

Our Mission

- To **celebrate and recognise excellence** in all scholarly disciplines and more widely.

- To **promote the advancement of learning, scholarship and education** and their dissemination and application.
- To act as an **independent source of expert advice** and to influence public discussion on matters affecting the research, scholarship, economy, languages and well-being of Wales and its people.
- To **champion excellent research and researchers, catalyse ambition** and **inspire** researchers, youth and society more generally

Our Values

- Our ambitions for the next five years are underpinned by the **core values of**:
 - excellence
 - diversity, and
 - independence.

Our Objectives

- We will **promote research and its value to society**, press for sufficient funding and for the free movement of researchers, and seek to influence government policy, recognising that research and skills training will be even more important in the context of the UK's proposed withdrawal from the European Union.
- We will **enhance our role as a source of informed advice** and comment to government, legislatures and more widely. We will draw on the Fellowship and be more proactive where we have particular expertise.
- We will be **outward-looking, across Wales and civil society, in the United Kingdom and internationally**, working collaboratively and with sister academies as appropriate. We will develop our public-facing engagement and strengthen the impact of our work, particularly with younger generations.
- We will communicate and promote our activities widely, deepen the Fellowship's engagement, and continue supporting diversity and achievement wherever it occurs.
- We will make our Society **financially sustainable** by securing diversified funding streams, strengthen our delivery capability and infrastructure, and work for Royal Title.

4. Next Steps

An assessment of potential risks has been completed, and planning principles have been considered by the Council. Priorities have been identified, and a draft strategic and implementation plan is in development; the next iteration will be considered by the next meeting of Council in late June, and the new Chief Executive will continue to refine the plan over the summer, for consideration by the Council in October. The intention is for the strategy and implementation plans to be a 'living' documents which are tested, reviewed and revised throughout the five year period.