



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

President's Address

The Learned Society of Wales 23 May 2018

Croeso I'r Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol o Gymdeithas Ddysgedig Cymru, yr wythfed.

A warm welcome to this, the eighth Annual General Meeting of the Learned Society of Wales, Wales' national academy. A particular congratulations and recognition is due to the 42 newly elected Fellows. Our total fellowship has now reached 500. The election demonstrates the richness of the talent nominated.

As usual I wish to begin by thanking the Council and Officers for their stewardship of the Society during the past year, as well as all those who have contributed in committees, scrutiny panels, and in diverse activities. Again I thank our staff, and Dr Sarah Morse in particular, for their consistently excellent contributions over the year.

I want to express our special thanks to Professor Peter Halligan who served as Chief Executive for three years. He brought to the role his experience of Higher Education and was instrumental in helping expand the Society's horizons and activities. Our publication 'Wales and the World' illustrates my point. He directed the research and with the staff of the Society, produced a powerful document underlining the quality, quantity and effectiveness of research carried out in Wales. The Society was therefore a strong advocate for Wales. We wish Peter every success as Chief Scientist to the Welsh Government. This is my first opportunity publicly to welcome his successor, Martin Pollard, who was formerly Chief Executive of the Welsh Centre for International Affairs and who will bring well qualified experience to the role.

This meeting marks the end of distinguished service by two Officers of the Society, each of whom was a founding Fellow. Professor Ole Petersen ends his term as Vice President, during which he has brought his immense reputation and experience in European academies- he is a Vice President of Academia Europaea - to help develop the Society. Professor John Wyn Owen has served as Treasurer for six years and worked indefatigably for the Society. No one has done more in so many ways for Wales. Both deserve our heartfelt thanks. Diolch i'ch dau.

Your Society is in good health as the tabled reports confirm. We are grateful for the financial support we receive from Fellows and from each of the Welsh universities, as well as from other donors. The Welsh Government, HEFCW and Airbus have given specific support for medals and other projects. We look forward

to the prospect of the promised dividend from the Diamond Review in due course. Such targeted support is consistent with the independence of the Society. Financial sustainability remains an overriding objective and indeed a requirement of our young Society. Resources ultimately determine the reach of our ambitions. There are sufficient uncertainties ahead which mean that more than usual we have to calibrate desired objectives with an assessment of the risks involved.

As the national academy of Wales we must be active across and on behalf of all of Wales. In particular we aim to ensure that there is visible activity at each university. In this regard, the role of liaison officers is vital. They encourage Society activity, communicate with Fellows, and I hope spot talent. We're working to support and strengthen their role so that we enhance the Society's value to Fellows and in turn, Fellows' contributions to the Society.

The General Secretary has reviewed the past year's activities. We have maintained a steady rhythm of electoral cycle, medal awards, informed opinions, lectures and much more. I think it's an impressive list of achievements. Wrth edrych yn ôl, mae llawer yn cael ei gyflawni, a mwy bob blwyddyn

One of the key projects for the Society is our leadership of the campaign for increased recognition of Wales Studies / Astudiaethau Cymreig. For the first time there is now one national organisation bringing together stakeholders and practitioners across sectors. We have convened a Steering Group to identify the key challenges, and opportunities. Work has already begun on the new Welsh Curriculum, a priority, drawing on the expertise of relevant Fellows. The intention of the wider Wales Studies campaign is to showcase the outstanding, but often over-looked or under-appreciated work in the field, and to bring researchers from across the disciplines together. Wales needs now, more than ever to appreciate the multiplicity of its narratives in order to strengthen its national confidence. Y mwyaf rydym ni'n deall pwy ydym ni, ac o ble rydym ni'n dod, yna bydd y genedl mewn gwell sefyllfa i wynebu'r dyfodol

Brexit has been and will remain a preoccupation for the Society. The consequences for HE strike at the very nature of a university. Free movement of staff and students is at the heart of the system and a key element of the success of British universities. Additionally access to European Union Research programmes has not just produced the benefit of income, but it has broadened research collaboration massively throughout Europe and in particular Wales. In a 2017 UK report *Wales had the highest international collaboration share across the UK constituent countries, with nearly 70 % of its publications involving co-authors outside of Wales.*

These are interests which we share with sister academies. The seven have been working closely together, making common representation to governments. We have also joined in a Europe wide statement led by the Wellcome Foundation. Mobility of talent is crucial to the conduct of cutting edge research and innovation. The UK must continue to be able to access easily the EU-wide talent pool that currently provides 17% of our university staff and over two thirds of the founders of UK based start-ups. European researchers should be able to work, cooperate and travel freely across borders. I consider it very desirable that UK should

participate in post 2020 EU programmes. This should be provided for in the future UK/EU Agreements under negotiation or in a bespoke agreement on research and innovation cooperation.

Of course British researchers have a tradition of cooperating globally. It is vital that this should persist and increase. But we need to be global and European – it is not a binary choice. Mae llawer mwy i'w weld os ydych chi'n edrych tuag allan yn hytrach nag i mewn

'Wales and the World' showed that research output in Wales expanded significantly over past decade. It was not a coincidence that this followed substantial EU Structural Fund expenditure supporting Welsh universities.

Of course the implications of Brexit go way beyond research. We have been pointing out the implications for the model of devolution, and the need for post Brexit arrangements to reflect the distribution of powers already approved by Westminster. Membership of the EU requires the National Assembly always to legislate consistent with EU law and to implement EU decisions on matters devolved to Wales. When we leave the EU those constraints are lifted, depending on the terms of our departure. But the devolved powers remain as legislated by Parliament. Nid yw gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd yn lleihau'r pwerau y mae San Steffan wedi'u trosglwyddo i Gaerdydd

This is a complex area and there needs to be accommodation between the governments in the UK. This needs to be resolved politically in a manner which reflects both the interests and the constitutional provisions within the four constituent nations. The Learned Society has been offering advice on these issues and is represented on the First Minister's advisory group on Brexit.

A huge challenge for Wales will be the ending of Structural Fund expenditure. Category 1 status delivered large sums to Wales £5.3 billion from 2000- 2020 including to Higher Education. No doubt some of these monies could have been better spent. But crucially they were allocated to areas judged to be in need. It is a big question as to how revenues currently contributed to the EU budget will be allocated within the UK after Brexit. We've all heard of the £350 m per week for the NHS. From a Welsh perspective, the Barnett formula where the calculation is population rather than needs related, has been shown to be unfair. However no successor has been proposed.

The advocates of Brexit extol the advantages of more liberal trade, of the UK competing in new export markets unfettered by EU regulation. We shall see what transpires. However opportunities will be accompanied by challenges, not least in terms of revenue available for Wales in general and for education and research in particular. The British Government has already anticipated the short term outcome on research. Until 2021 £2.3 billion will be available for research and innovation in the UK. This compares with total EU spend in the UK currently of some £1.5 billion, including that structural Fund support. Of course the increase is welcome, but the funding will be controlled by UKRI and will be won competitively. I have written to Sir Mark Walport, Chair of UKRI, pointing out the obligation to take account of devolution, and arguing

that geography and the commitment to spread prosperity across the UK should also be factors in the disbursement of these funds.

But the message for Wales and for research in serving the future prosperity for Wales is simple – it will be a much harsher more competitive environment and we shall have to be on our mettle. I'm confident that we have the talent and skills to do so, but a change of mind set will be needed. I note that currently we only win some 3% of Innovate UK funding compared with Scotland's 24%.

In Wales we have Reid Review which is currently being considered by ministers. It rightly highlights the importance to the Welsh economy of high quality research and innovation together with a more strategic approach involving the range of stakeholders. Reid emphasises that UKRI funding will be awarded competitively and that Welsh research must be able to respond. If Wales does not secure this money, it will go elsewhere in the UK. Nid yw hyn yn newydd, ond yn fwy nag erioed, bydd curo'r gwrthwynebwy'r yn hanfodol i sicrhau cyllid ymchwil

I'm addressing all types of research here. The arts, humanities and social sciences are vital to a thriving economy, vibrant culture and cohesive society. They help deliver the skills which are crucial to the services sector, which makes up 80% of the UK economy and 75% of the Welsh economy. These skills are ever more needed when technological, socio-economic, geopolitical and demographic changes are already transforming the way we work and live. Communication and collaboration, research and analysis of attitudes and behaviours, a global perspective, and intercultural understanding are just some of the issues relevant for the future of a democratic society.

These issues underline the challenges facing Welsh Universities. Funding with its premium on student recruitment cannot be guaranteed. There are changes ahead in the structure of the Higher Education Funding Council, on which we will be submitting evidence. Moreover there may well be consequences in Wales from the Review of Student fees in England and from the operation of the new Office for Students. The sector in Wales can look forward to continued tumult and will need support.

Your Council has been considering the Society's Strategic Plan for 2018 – 2023 and the priorities which should be undertaken during this period. Currently three objectives inform the work of most academies – recognise outstanding merit, support research and scholarship, and be a source of expert independent advice. These will remain.

A fourth is I believe particularly germane to Wales. The Society, and especially its Fellows, should be an inspiration, a source of pride, not just to other researchers, but much more widely. Wales needs ambition to identify and nurture talent whatever the particular talent, and then give it the opportunity to flourish. Most academics do this naturally, leading and mentoring colleagues. Naturally society should provide equality of opportunity to all and help the disadvantaged. But it was good to see Kirsty Williams recently recognise the

need also to encourage the gifted and more talented. Do we have enough ambition and aspiration in Wales today?

I think that the Society, and particularly Fellows, can play a very positive role as exemplars of achievement and talent. I would like us to do more in schools. We are already starting. We're in the process of developing a pilot scheme with the Seren Network in Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, which will be delivered in late June.

This project aims to provide Welsh Baccalaureate pupils the key independent study skills to excel at Higher Education. The 2-day residential course will introduce Welsh Bacc. pupils to undergraduate level research and connect the pupils with postgraduate students and early career researchers who will act as mentors, supporting the pupils during the preparation of their Welsh Bacc. Individual Project. We have worked closely with the regional coordinator to develop the scheme, identifying needs of the Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire Seren network – in particular gaps in research and study skills, and providing access to expertise and established figures in pupils' chosen fields.

We hope this pilot will grow in to a programme that catalyses ambition and inspires young people in Wales to make the most of the best education and training opportunities. We want to give our Fellows an opportunity to contribute. In England Robert Peston conceived 'Speakers for Schools', where talented individuals offer to deliver one or two speeches a year in schools. Would Fellows, especially those who have fewer academic demands, be prepared to do the same in Wales? With little administration, the Society could facilitate bringing willing Fellows together with interested schools.

The Society has encouraged and supported the Welsh Crucible. We're still keen to develop a Young Academy, to bring together emerging leaders from science, arts and humanities, the professions, business and civil society. This would be a platform for innovative young entrepreneurs, professionals and academics to develop a coherent and influential voice, and to address the most challenging issues facing Welsh society. The plan is in place but we need specific philanthropic support to get it off the ground.

In June the council is expected to adopt the new Strategic Plan together with an action plan to deliver the priorities determined. This work draws on the Stakeholder Review we carried out last year. There is a clear appetite from stakeholders and our Fellows for the Society to maximise its impact and help shape discussions on issues of national importance to Wales. Stakeholders want the Society to consider broadening its definition of what it means to be 'learned'.

Our Stakeholders report provided a positive endorsement of the work and leadership of the Society – the organisation is viewed as authoritative, independent, credible and thoughtful. Stakeholders and Fellows want the Society to build on these strong foundations to help power Wales forward and inspire the next generation of researchers, academics and learned people. Stakeholders believe that there has never been a more important time for the Society's voice to be heard with major, long-term issues to discuss within public

life and a crisis of trust in institutions and with expert advice. I think our stakeholders are right. Mae'r neges yn glir – mae awydd i weld eich Cymdeithas yn gwneud mwy.

Like our sister academies in Edinburgh and Dublin, our regulations permit us to have an all embracing fellowship. But are we sufficiently diverse?

We are making progress on gender – today 20% of the Fellowship are female, a proportion which has doubled in six years, But what of age, and especially are we taking advantage of our rules to elect fellows from business, the arts, government, the third sector, the media and more. It will be an even richer Society if we can identify and elect the talent which is out there. As you heard earlier, Professor Terry Threadgold is doing sterling work to broaden the fellowship.

We need Fellows to draw on their experience and contacts and please make nominations. If we broaden the pool, we will increase the choice and even enhance the quality as we become more diverse and therefore more effective, and more reflective of society.

The stakeholder survey identified a need for us to be clearer about what we do and better in our communication. I agree. Our financial and staffing resources may be modest. However we have one outstanding resource – our fellowship. When Fellows with legal and political expertise have come together we have produced opinions recognised by Assembly committees and others as being of the highest quality. Similarly on regional economic issues with two excellent symposia

It's not difficult to identify areas where we can make a real constructive contribution. The NHS will celebrate its seventieth anniversary in July – but what of its next seventy years? In the last year a group of Fellows was convened to respond to the Parliamentary Review in Health and Social Care in Wales, and made a number of recommendations, including the huge potential to harness the power of big data to model future scenarios. More future facing work is in hand.

This is a model I would like to see replicated in other areas. The Society has widespread expertise. Can we mobilise it more effectively in more areas. The more Fellows can contribute, the more your Society is able to do. The more we do, the more the Society is recognised and the more it exerts its growing 'soft power'. The greater the appreciation of our work, the clearer becomes the benefit of the Society to Wales and to individual Fellows. It's a circular argument but if we can energise the fellowship it becomes a win –increasing win scenario.

Looking ahead I'm confident the Society is in the right place and going forward strongly. We have achieved much in a short period. The foundations have been securely laid. The forthcoming agenda is complex and we have the possibility of an influential role in the future of our nation. Wales faces a testing period, and in my view will be more adversely affected by Brexit than most other parts of the UK. The country's resources are limited.

What we have going for us is the innate ability of our people. Harnessing and developing those skills will be vital if Wales is to prosper in these new circumstances. The quality of our education at all levels, teaching, scholarship and research, innovation, will determine how successful we can be.

The Learned Society and its Fellows can be pivotal in delivering the success which our nation deserves. Mae gennym ni'r potensial, os gallwn harneisio ein hadnoddau, i wneud llawer mwy dros y blynyddoedd nesaf.

Thank you. Diolch yn fawr.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry

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