



The Learned Society of Wales – Strategic Plan for 2018-2023

1. Our purpose

The **mission** of the Society is to promote excellence and scholarship, inspire learning and benefit the nation.

To achieve this mission, our main **aims** are to:

- celebrate and recognise excellence in all scholarly disciplines and more widely
- champion excellent research and researchers, catalyse ambition and inspire researchers, youth and society more generally
- promote the advancement of learning, scholarship and education and their dissemination and application
- 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

Our ambitions for the next five years are underpinned by the **core values** of:

- excellence
- diversity
- independence

2. Learning and achievements 2010-18

Development so far

In the eight years since its launch, the Learned Society has developed a reputation as an independent, authoritative voice within the Welsh civic sphere.

The Society's Fellows are an essential part of the organisation. The Fellowship has developed significantly since the Society's establishment, and over 450 Fellows have been elected to join the Founding Fellows. Since 2014, at least a third of all new Fellows elected have been women, and efforts to diversify the Fellowship continue.

The Strategic Plan for 2018-2023 marks the third phase of the Society.

The first four years were dedicated to ensuring the organisation was robust and fit for purpose in terms of governance and remit; the granting of Royal Charter charity status in 2015 was recognition of the young organisation's significance and good standing. Our website has more details on the establishment and early development of the Society.

The second phase saw efforts to establish the Society's position within Welsh civic life – developing constructive relationships with stakeholders and asserting the organisation as a critical friend of government. During this time, our policy influence developed and the voice of the Society became more prominent.

The third phase will see the Society build on its strong foundations, further develop its distinctive position as an authoritative and independent source of informed advice, and extend the reach and impact of its activities.



Feedback from stakeholders

In preparation for the development of this plan, we commissioned a Stakeholder Perception survey in the summer of 2017. Fellows of the Society and over 60 external stakeholders were consulted. Stakeholders represented a broad range of organisations, and in order to collect feedback and perceptions from unfamiliar as well as familiar audiences, individuals were included to represent organisations or areas that would not know the Society well or had only a minimal connection with it.

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 felt 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) are described below.

- ***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. Respondents also identified 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 core of 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.



3. Operating environment for the Learned Society

The above feedback from stakeholders should be considered in tandem with several external environmental factors affecting our work.

- **Ongoing uncertainty over higher education funding.** While there have been positive developments in student financing in Wales (which should make Wales a more attractive place for recruiting undergraduate and postgraduate students), there are still significant uncertainties around post-Brexit funding arrangements for HE research and investment. Both UK and Welsh Government policy decisions will shape the future picture, and whatever knock-on impact there may be for funding available to the Learned Society. We must be alert to any changes in the much-valued core support and office accommodation provided by the University of Wales.
- **Devolution arrangements for Wales.** As the National Assembly reaches its 20th anniversary and devolution arrangements continue to mature, there may be good opportunities for the Learned Society to make its mark as a valued national institution with a strong body of expertise. There may also be further Wales/UK divergence in policy and law, potentially opening up opportunities for the Society to consolidate its role as an independent source of expertise.
- **Third sector funding.** Since the Society's key partners are HE institutions, as a small charity we need to consider our plans against an increasingly constrained and competitive funding environment. We will need to develop innovative projects and strong partnerships to attract the funding the Society requires, and a balanced approach to fundraising from multiple sources.

4. Planning for the future

It is evident from stakeholders' feedback that they value the Society and see it as having a unique role in Wales' educational and civil society landscape. However, it is also clear that we must make a concerted effort to expand and clarify our role as the Society matures.

Broadly, the direct beneficiaries of the Society's work currently fall into two categories:

- academics within higher education institutions, who benefit from our Fellowship, events, medals, and opportunities for networking and collaboration in Wales and internationally
- governments, public bodies and universities, who benefit from the Society's ability to harness expertise and marshal informed opinions on a wide range of topics

The Society must take care to continually improve its offering to these existing beneficiaries – working to meet the needs that they have already identified. We need to broaden the appeal of the Fellowship by becoming more diverse and providing further opportunities to engage and support our Fellows. We also wish to reach beyond the Fellowship and do more to engage early- and mid-career researchers, sharing their achievements and supporting them with professional development opportunities. This will help Wales to develop and retain its academic talent, as well as supporting the sustainability of the Society itself by nurturing future generations of Fellows.

We will develop the Society's role as a respected independent voice, so that government and other bodies can benefit from our input on the key issues that face Wales. Experience shows that the Society is able to react quickly and authoritatively to current debates and consultations, and this function will be consolidated over the coming five years. We will also work more proactively – seeking to 'lead the conversation' in key policy areas where our Fellows have expertise.



THE LEARNED SOCIETY OF WALES
CYMDEITHAS DDYSGEDIG CYMRU

CELEBRATING SCHOLARSHIP AND SERVING THE NATION
DATHLU YSGOLHEICTOD A GWRSANAETHUR GENEDL

Beyond the Society's current beneficiaries, we have identified three types of new beneficiary whom we wish to support:

- the wider public (beyond academic), who will be reached through public events and awareness-raising programmes
- teachers and pupils in schools, who can benefit from the expertise and support that can be offered across the academic disciplines
- third sector organisations, which will be helped to access research and expertise to support their work

Further work is needed to identify, in greater detail, the needs of these new audiences and the best ways for the Society to serve them. Nonetheless, this strategy outlines a range of potential activities that could be developed to reach these audiences, as well as the likely costs for each.

It will be important that we communicate the Society's mission and aims clearly to all beneficiaries. This is particularly the case for new audiences who may not immediately recognise the Society's name or recognise its developing role. We also need to improve the way we monitor and evaluate Society activities, so that we develop a strong evidence base for the effective aspects of our work as well as learning from experience. This will help to make the Society more attractive and supportable by external funders.

In developing the strategic plan that follows, we have attempted to balance a sense of ambition with a realism about what is achievable within the environment. While the Society has sound finances, governance and staffing arrangements, the external factors noted above (especially constrained funding and political uncertainty) mean that we must remain prudent and, where appropriate, cautious about expansion. The risks within each area of activity have therefore been clearly spelt out.

In summary, this five-year strategy envisages an expanded role for the Learned Society of Wales. By 2023, we intend to have developed into a broader, more effective organisation which is making an impact across different sectors in Wales. This strategy is an important stepping-stone towards a long-term vision – that the Society becomes a vital national institution, enhancing public knowledge and debate as well as strengthening the achievements of education in Wales at all levels.

Detailed strategic plan

Operational objective <i>What are we aiming to achieve?</i> The text below each heading is from the Strategic Framework agreed by Council	Outputs <i>What activities will we deliver to support this objective?</i> Green shading = Existing activities Yellow shading = Activities begun; further development needed Blue shading = Possible new activities	Monitoring and evaluation <i>How will we measure whether it's working?</i>	Diversity <i>How will we promote diversity through these activities?</i>	Funding / resource implications <i>What funding or other resources will this require?</i>	Risk management <i>What could stop this working and what can we do to mitigate this?</i>
1. Champion research Continuing to promote research and its value to society, pressing for sufficient funding and for the free movement of researchers, and seeking 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.	a) Deliver high-quality academic events to promote innovative research – including at least one partnership event per year with each Welsh university b) Award medals for achievement in engineering and technology, early career research excellence, educational research, public engagement, and outstanding contributions by women in STEMM subjects c) Work with other Academies to press government for sufficient funding and free movement of researchers, especially in the Brexit context	Number of events; qualitative feedback on events Number/diversity of nominations received Success in influencing Welsh/UK government policy stances	Establish targets for diverse representation of LSW speakers (esp. in terms of gender and ethnicity) Actively promote medal nominations process to a wider range of organisations, including private / third sector bodies Work to ensure balanced support for STEMM and AHSS disciplines	Continuation of existing LSW staff and funding arrangements Continuation of existing LSW staff and funding arrangements; we may wish to increase funding to cover LSW staff time Continuing good relations with Academies; active President/VPs	Potential to exclude lower-profile universities; need to ensure strong cross-institutional working Larger number of nominations would require additional time – will need to plan staff resource carefully May need to manage perceived conflicts of interests with Welsh Government funding for LSW

Operational objective	Outputs	Monitoring and evaluation	Diversity	Funding / resource implications	Risk management
	d) Develop the profile of Wales Studies across academic disciplines and institutions; investigate how research in Wales Studies could be enhanced and better served by publications	Degree of interdisciplinary working achieved; number of academics involved and articles / research produced	Promote fields of study currently under-represented in the Fellowship and LSW activities	Ongoing Wales Studies group; e-publishing expertise and editorial panel for journal; volunteer editor; £2,000-£3,000 p.a. for production and rights payments	Potential to absorb a lot of staff time – need to ensure sufficient support from Fellows / others
	e) Launch a Learned Society scholarship scheme to support doctoral/post-doctoral research in key areas (e.g. Wales Studies, Well-being of Future Generations) f) Strengthen opportunities for early- and mid-career researchers by establishing an Academy for this part of the sector. Activities may include a grants scheme for activities and mentorships encouraging researchers to work towards Fellowship (without suggesting this is guaranteed) g) Support third sector organisations in Wales to access academic research and expertise – helping to articulate the need for their work and to assess their impact more effectively	Number of applications / scholarships successfully administered Successful launch of Academy; qualitative feedback on opportunities provided Establishment of third sector/HE channels of communication;	Establish targets for diverse representation of scholarship recipients This activity inherently promotes age diversity Support organisations that reach diverse beneficiaries in terms of geography,	Ongoing Fulbright Scholarship (£12,000 p.a.); funding for other scholarships and LSW core costs (incl. new staff) – £50,000-£100,000+ p.a. depending on cost structures Initial set-up time and ongoing staffing/costs – £20,000-£100,000 p.a. depending on scale Time to develop relationships; potential project funding of £20,000-£50,000 p.a.	Significant expansion of LSW remit – requires careful planning of HR, communications and relationship management with universities Could be ineffective if insufficiently resourced; could launch small pilot project(s) initially, though this may damage reputation LSW is relatively unknown in the third sector – will need to build trust and profile

Operational objective	Outputs	Monitoring and evaluation	Diversity	Funding / resource implications	Risk management
	(potentially through a library service and/or 'buddying' service)	number of orgs supported	background and ethnicity		
<p>2. Contribute expertise</p> <p>Enhancing 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.</p>	<p>a) Coordinate detailed and informed responses to public consultations, drawing on our Fellowship's expertise</p> <p>b) Contribute a Welsh perspective to consultations, briefings and lobbying efforts coordinated by other academies in the UK and Europe</p>	<p>Number of responses and Fellows engaged; LSW's contributions noted in reports</p> <p>LSW contributions noted and used as appropriate by academies</p>	<p>Engage Fellows from a range of disciplines and specialisms in consultation/policy work</p> <p>Engage a broader cross-section of the Fellowship in producing these responses</p>	<p>Continuation of existing LSW staff/funding, plus engagement of Fellows</p> <p>Continuation of existing LSW staff and funding arrangements, plus engagement of President/Fellows</p>	<p>Need to manage the risk of staff time being depleted by the minutiae of this work</p> <p>Failure to engage Fellows sufficiently; need to keep Fellows well informed about our activities and impact</p>
	<p>c) 'Lead the conversation' in key policy areas – delivering proactive events, expert briefings or joint statements each year that reach beyond academia to policy makers and influencers</p> <p>d) Develop our work on evidence-based policymaking, providing briefings and seminars in partnership with academic and government institutions</p>	<p>Engagement and response of relevant policy makers</p> <p>Number of briefings/seminars and qualitative feedback received</p>	<p>Make policy events / briefings accessible to the widest audience possible</p> <p>Ensure engagement across a range of government portfolios</p>	<p>For (c), (d) and (e): As well as stronger engagement of Fellows, we may need extra staff time to organise events, briefings and pairing scheme; some may be found through efficiency savings, but we potentially need an extra £10,000-£25,000 p.a. in staff time</p>	<p>May not have sufficient staff time to deliver; need to plan carefully to avoid overload. Could be seen as 'treading on toes' of WISERD or others; consult/work with our existing partners to address this</p>



Operational objective	Outputs	Monitoring and evaluation	Diversity	Funding / resource implications	Risk management
	<p>e) Launch a 'pairing' scheme, building on work by the Royal Society and Royal Society of Edinburgh, in which academics and Assembly Members/ researchers spend time learning about each other's work and applying research findings to policy-making</p>	<p>Positive feedback and application of learning from academics / researchers</p>	<p>Actively encourage diverse applications to the pairing scheme, in terms of applicants' gender, age etc.</p>	<p>See above</p>	<p>New area which requires careful consideration; discuss with Royal Society/RSE before progressing plans</p>
<p>3. Promote learning and debate</p> <p>Being outward-looking, across Wales and civil society, in the United Kingdom and internationally, working collaboratively and with sister academies as appropriate. We will inspire external audiences with the achievements of our diverse Fellowship. We will also develop our public-facing engagement and strengthen the impact of our work, particularly with younger generations.</p>	<p>a) Inspire external audiences (government, education stakeholders public bodies etc.) by communicating the excellence of our Fellowship, including through improved use of social media</p> <p>b) Build on our outreach work for schools/colleges – inspiring engagement in higher education (e.g. through seminars, retreats, debating opportunities, lectures) and supporting teachers to connect with subject experts in our Fellowship</p>	<p>Numbers reached and new contacts developed through external communications</p> <p>Number of students/teachers supported; feedback on impact of activities from students/teachers</p>	<p>Ensure communications focus on achievements across the disciplines</p> <p>Work with informed local partners to target diverse student groups and teachers across different academic disciplines</p>	<p>Developing our existing external communications into a newsletter may require freeing up staff capacity</p> <p>Requires clear identification of need through discussion with senior teachers</p> <p>Likely to need separate funding/staffing to succeed fully (£20,000 - £50,000 p.a.); alternatively, could partner with Speakers for Schools or subject learned societies</p>	<p>No specific risks identified for this activity</p> <p>Not yet a specialist area for LSW, so may be hard to get funded; will need to gather strong monitoring and evaluation data from pilot activities, and carefully research schools' requirements</p>



Operational objective	Outputs	Monitoring and evaluation	Diversity	Funding / resource implications	Risk management
	c) Organise/coordinate open events, discussion forums and international symposiums – bringing the work of the Society’s Fellowship (and later Academy) to a wider audience, and supporting public debate on key issues in Wales	Qualitative feedback on interest / usefulness of events and debates	Target events at a range of audiences in different locations	Large no. of events might need extra staff time (£10,000 p.a.?), but could partner with others (e.g. British Council, policy institutes)	Potential for insufficient public engagement and ‘treading on toes’ of unis; partnership and communication need careful consideration
	d) Deliver activities and volunteering opportunities that develop public awareness of Welsh achievements in research and innovation, and their application to our lives today e) Organise one or more 10 th anniversary events for the Society (in 2020), developing interest in our overall work, and potentially collaborating with other UK academies to reflect on the role of academies/learned societies generally. Include at least one event aimed at attracting media coverage.	Number of people engaged; qualitative feedback received Attendee numbers and feedback; increase in email/social media followers	Build audience diversity targets into initial planning of project Market events to audiences beyond the ‘usual suspects’	Funding for staff and activities, potentially £10,000-£50,000 p.a. Requires support from other academies, but achievable with existing staff and resources	New area for LSW; must plan carefully and take time to learn about opportunities/risks of heritage work Events could be too ‘inward looking’ to be interesting; work closely with partners to develop engaging programme
4. Develop the Fellowship Working to embrace a wider definition of ‘learned’, in order to benefit a wider range	a) Build on current involvement of Fellows in our activities across all academic disciplines – doubling the number of Fellows actively contributing to the Society’s work	Benchmark of Fellows currently engaged, with annual reports on progress	Work to ensure that Fellows from across all disciplines are involved (requires balance of activities across disciplines)	Achievable with existing staff and resources	Potential for Fellows to feel they are being asked to do too much; need to ensure involvement is mutually beneficial



Operational objective	Outputs	Monitoring and evaluation	Diversity	Funding / resource implications	Risk management
of people with our work.	<p>b) Work more closely with the private, public and third sectors to encourage the election of a wider range of non-academic Fellows of merit (building on existing contacts within the sectors as well as developing new connections)</p> <p>c) Strengthen the role of Honorary Fellows in developing the Society's public profile and reputation</p>	<p>Number of high-quality nominations received and new Fellows appointed from different sectors</p> <p>Level of Honorary Fellows' engagement in LSW activities</p>	<p>Public and third sectors are already diverse in age / gender, so more likely to contribute to these objectives</p> <p>Encourage diverse nominations in the same way as for normal Fellowships</p>	<p>(b)/(c)/ (f) potentially achievable by redirecting existing staff resource, but would benefit from greater resourcing – £10,000-£15,000 p.a.</p> <p>(b) may also require extra categories and scrutiny committees if many nominations are generated</p> <p>Achievable with existing staff and resources</p>	<p>Some Fellows may see us as 'diluting' concept of excellence; must retain and demonstrate robust assessment processes</p> <p>No specific risks identified for this activity</p>
	<p>d) Partnerships with other organisations, e.g. on BME engagement or engagement of early-career academics with research; also consider seeking accreditation for our work to promote diversity</p>	<p>Impact of these partnerships on LSW activities/practice</p>	<p>Activity specifically aimed to develop diversity of Fellowship</p>	<p>See note above under (b)</p>	<p>Could be accused of tokenistic work; must ensure all such activities genuinely help to advance LSW mission/strategy</p>