



# 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

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AGM/2019/04  
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## Review of Activities and Developments

The Society has had another busy and productive year. With a growing Fellowship across the academic disciplines, a wide range of events to organise and support, and significant contributions to the public policy arena, we have consolidated our position as Wales' national scholarly academy.

Martin Pollard was appointed as Chief Executive in July 2018, replacing Professor Peter Halligan who took up the position of Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales. Martin has a strong background in education and the third sector, having previously been a teacher and Chief Executive of the Welsh Centre for International Affairs. In January 2019, Phil Jones left the post of Fellowship and Engagement Officer to take up a position at BookTrust Cymru. His role was replaced in March by two colleagues in new part-time roles – Ruby Moore (Communications and Engagement Officer) and Fiona Gaskell (Fellowship Assistant). The staff team has also been enhanced by Tia Culley (Project Assistant), who has worked on a number of Society projects in the past year. The gap in staffing between January and March had a noticeable impact on other team members during a busy period.

The Society has also begun to diversify its fundraising, with a view to expanding its work and undertaking a wider range of public engagement activities. Our new fundraising strategy will emphasise the importance of public funds and contributions to our work from charitable trusts, foundations and individual donors.

We have also continued to benefit from generous funding contributions from all eight universities in Wales. The University of Wales Trinity Saint David provides us with additional in-kind support towards our premises, IT and other support costs.

After adopting a new five-year strategy (see paper AGM/2019/04), we now plan and report on the Society's activities against our four strategic priorities. The remainder of this report reflects on activities and developments within each area since the last AGM.

### Strategic priority 1 – Champion research

The Society has organised or supported **more than 20 inspiring lectures** in the past year. These include seven lectures so far in our first themed series, Our Future Health – prompted by the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the NHS.

Lectures and conferences included the following – some of which benefited from generous support from the South Wales Institute of Engineers Educational Trust.

- 'Gwlad y bwgan? Ysbrydion mewn llên Cymru o Kate Roberts i Mihangel Morgan'. Yr Athro Katie Gramich FLSW, National Eisteddfod, August

- 'Time and Memory in Early Medieval Wales – J E Lloyd Lecture'. Professor Nancy Edwards FLSW, Bangor, October
- 'I fyny bo'r nod: personal, civic and spiritual ambition in late-Victorian Wales'. Dr T Robin Chapman FLSW, Aberystwyth, November
- 'Meeting the Demand: The Science and Technology of Rapid Manufacturing of Composites'. Professor Richard Day, Wrexham, November
- 'The Mobility Revolution – Annual Zienkiewicz Lecture'. Professor Lord Kumar Bhattacharyya, Swansea, November
- 'Pensaerniaeth Waldo – Darlith Edward Lhuyd Lecture'. Yr Athro Mererid Hopwood FLSW, Carmarthen, November
- 'Bilingualisms and Multilingualisms in Medieval Wales'. Professor Paul Russell, Cardiff, December
- 'The NHS – A Success, But Where Next?' Sir Leszek Borysiewicz FLSW, Cardiff, January
- 'The Future of Health and Healthcare in a Changing Climate'. Sir Andy Haines, Carmarthen, February
- 'A Medical School for Swansea, West Wales and the World'. Professor Julian Hopkin FLSW and Professor Keith Lloyd FLSW, Swansea, February
- 'Don't Die of Ignorance: The impact of health promotion and prevention in the context of HIV.' Dr Olwen Williams FLSW, Wrexham, February
- 'The NHS in Wales: A health economist's perspective on the next 70 years'. Professor Rhiannon Tudor Edwards FLSW, Bangor, February
- 'Dying in Today's World'. Professor the Baroness Iloria Finlay of Llandaff FLSW, Cardiff, March
- 'Sea-level Changes and Paleolithic Archaeology: Lost Landscapes of La Manche'. Anne-Lyse Ravon, Cardiff, March
- 'Quantum Geometry and the Fate of Space and Time': Inaugural David Olive Distinguished Lecture. Professor Robert Dijkgraaf, Swansea, March
- 'The Business Life of Amy Dillwyn – truth stranger than fiction?' Dr Carol Bell, Swansea, March
- 'Smart Civil Engineering Infrastructure and Construction' – annual William Menelaus Memorial Lecture. Professor Lord Robert Mair, Cardiff, March
- 'Is Free Universal Health Coverage Sustainable?' Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, Cardiff, April
- 'Translating the Absurd: The plays of Samuel Beckett in Welsh.' Dr Rhiannedd Jewell, Aberystwyth, April

The Society continues to award **Medals** to recognise particularly strong research contributions by academics connected with Wales. At this year's Awards Dinner, the President will announce medal winners in the following categories: the Frances Hoggan Medal for outstanding female researchers in STEMM, the Menelaus Medal for excellence in engineering and technology, the Hugh Owen Medal for outstanding educational research, and Dillwyn Medals for early career researchers in STEMM and the social sciences.

We have developed the Society's role in raising the profile of **Wales Studies**. Over the past year, we have established a Wales Studies working group to collate examples of excellent Wales-focused research across academic disciplines and institutions; these will be developed into a brochure to be launched in the autumn. We have also used the expertise of this network to contribute to development of the new school curriculum in Wales (see under strategic priority 2).

The past year has also seen the Society continue to champion research and innovation more broadly, in part by **pressing the case for Welsh research** at UK level. In addition to calling for stronger Welsh representation on UKRI and the research councils, we have worked with our sister academies to develop joint policy positions, particularly in light of the continuing Brexit negotiations. We also hosted the first meeting of the Celtic Academies – LSW, the Royal Irish Academy and the Royal Society of Edinburgh – which resulted in a [joint letter](#)

to UK Government about the importance of respecting the devolution settlement in future funding arrangements.

We continue to support WISERD's annual research poster competition, with a £250 cash prize for the best poster by a PhD student; we are working with the initiative to establish an Academi Heddwch Cymru / Wales Peace Institute; and we hosted our New Zealand counterparts, Royal Society Te Apārangi, when they visited Wales in January.

## **Strategic priority 2 – Contribute expertise**

In addition to the advocacy efforts described above, the Society has provided expert responses on a number of public policy matters over the past year.

We have undertaken extensive work on the **new school curriculum**, drawing on the expertise of our Fellows and other academics to advise Welsh Government on the 'Welsh dimension and international perspective', a cross-cutting theme in the curriculum. Our two reports on this matter were also submitted to the relevant National Assembly committee as evidence, and they have had a clear impact on the [draft curriculum](#) now available for public consultation. It is notable that Welsh Government commissioned the Society to deliver this work on a paid basis. We also contributed to an [Institute of Welsh Affairs report](#) on the curriculum, *Common Purposes: the implications of curriculum reform in Wales for further education, higher education, skills and business*.

The Society has now established an **Education Committee** to develop policy positions on a number of educational matters. Its short-term focus is on the school curriculum consultation, but it will consider a range of issues in relation to school, further and higher education.

In October, we worked with the Royal Society of Edinburgh to produce a [joint paper](#) on *The Balance and Effectiveness of Research and Innovation Spending*. This was submitted to the **House of Commons Science and Technology Committee** during its inquiry into this subject. We also submitted a [response](#) to the short inquiry by the **National Assembly Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee** into research and innovation in Wales.

The chair of that committee was one of seven **Assembly Members** with whom the President and Chief Executive have met in recent months. They highlighted the Society's role and its willingness to contribute more to the business of relevant committees. They also raised the continuing question of 'Diamond dividend' funds for the Society; one AM subsequently raised this as a question in the Senedd.

Building on previous work, including the Cambridge Symposium (see under Strategic priority 3), Professor John Wyn Owen FLSW has convened a High Level Expert Group on **One Health** – the concept of considering the health of people, planet and animals together. This work is carried out in partnership with the Bevan Commission, and has the support of the Future Generations Commissioner and Cardiff Metropolitan University.

In March, the Minister for International Relations and Welsh Language asked the Society and the Welsh Centre for International Affairs to coordinate expert input (primarily from the third sector) for the emerging **International Strategy for Wales**. A [report is available](#) on the LSW website.

We also joined the Third Party Expert View Mechanism on a **geological disposal facility for nuclear waste**. This is a partnership with UK and Welsh Governments, the company contracted to build the facility, and other learned societies including the Geological Society of London and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

Finally, the Society is developing a position on **open access publishing**, in response to plans in this area which

have been advanced by Coalition S.

### **Strategic priority 3 – Promote learning and debate**

During the year, the Society worked on a number of events in non-lecture formats – designed to attract a wider range of participants, inspire new generations of scholars, and allow the opportunity for more in-depth discussion and debate.

The highlight of the year was the Society's [2018 International Symposium](#) on *The Ethics of Sustainable Prosperity for All*. This was hosted by the Rt Hon Lord Rowan Williams FLSW at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and was attended by 57 participants including scholars from South Africa, Australia and Sweden. As well as academics working across several disciplines, the symposium attracted representatives from non-governmental organisations and the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. Over the course of seven panel sessions, participants investigated the ethical issues and dilemmas that need to be addressed as the basis of a sustainable and prosperous future for all, both at global and intergenerational levels. Cardiff University, the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, the British Academy, the University of Johannesburg and the University of Sydney provided generous financial support.

The year also saw the Society's first **school engagement event** – a pilot outreach day in conjunction with the Seren Network for Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, hosted by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. This enabled 133 pupils from 12 schools to benefit from hands-on workshops tutored by subject experts in Geography, Physics, Biochemistry, Law, Cymraeg and a number of other areas. Building on the positive feedback received from both pupils and tutors, we have developed this idea into a broader project proposal, for which we are currently seeking funds from several charitable trusts and foundations.

In March, we worked with the Royal Society to deliver [Creating Connections – Science, Innovation and Skills in Wales](#). This day-long conference in Cardiff explored the role of Wales in driving innovation and prosperity. Scientific and technical opportunities and challenges in Wales were addressed by leading experts from academia, industry and government. A key element sponsored by the Learned Society was *Net Zero Wales 2040* – reflecting on how the science, assets and political will of Wales could be harnessed to provide a prosperous and healthy future for its citizens through low carbon innovation.

In another partnership with a sister organisation, we worked with the British Academy to organise a panel discussion, '**Miliwn o Siaradwyr Cymraeg erbyn 2050? A Million Welsh Speakers by 2050?**' This took place in Bangor in November, and formed part of the Academy's activities in the Being Human festival.

Small grants from the Society supported a number of other **events and public engagement opportunities**. These included 'Photography and the Languages of Reconstruction after the Second World War, 1944-49' (with Cardiff University); 'Social Anthropologies of the Welsh: Past and Present' (with WISERD, the Royal Anthropological Institute and the Cymmrodorion); the annual conference of the Association for Welsh Writing in English; the launch of a book on the Arthurian legend in Celtic literature; and public science events in Swansea, Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff.

The Society has now started to invest in **improving its communications** for both Fellows and external audiences. We have recently appointed our first Communications and Engagement Officer, and will soon be seeking Council approval for a Communications Strategy with practical proposals for style, branding and audience development.

## Strategic priority 4 – Develop the Fellowship

In tandem with our desire to benefit a wider range of people with the Society's work, we have recognised the need to engage more Fellows with our activities, and to attract a wider range of candidates for Fellowship.

A total of **48 new Fellows** (including one Honorary Fellow) were elected this year, in another highly competitive and professionally scrutinised process. This is a slightly higher number than the usual annual intake, reflecting the Council's decision to be more flexible with the usual cap on numbers. As ever, the focus remains on demonstrable excellence, but the flexible cap was one measure amongst several taken to encourage a more diverse pool of nominees. Other changes – following recommendations by our working group on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – included clearer benchmarks for assessing candidates, the introduction of an Individual Circumstances form (allowing candidates to highlight any factors that have affected their career), better training and guidance for Scrutiny Committees, and improvements to the process of providing feedback to unsuccessful candidates. A new Fellowship Committee is being established to oversee further developments and encourage nominations.

A **Strategic Equality Plan**, which builds on this work and considers actions for the Society more broadly, will be presented to Council in June.

To help build the nation's future capacity for excellence, we have been considering ways to establish an **Early Careers Academy**. The intention is that such an Academy will complement the existing work of individual universities and the Welsh Crucible by providing networking, professional development and collaboration opportunities for early-career researchers (ECRs). We have written to Vice-Chancellors across Wales to canvass opinion, and have held a focus group with Cardiff ECRs to help inform these developments. Similar meetings are planned elsewhere in Wales over the coming months.

Finally, we are working to strengthen our links with other organisations that may help us to develop the Fellowship and Academy. These include the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, the Institute of Welsh Affairs, the National Assembly Commission, the Ethnic Minority Welsh Women's Achievement Association, the Muslim Council of Wales and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

Our ability to support the Fellowship, manage future nominations and manage relationships with other stakeholders will be enhanced by the replacement of our current database with Microsoft Dynamics, a Contact Relationship Management system.