



THE LEARNED SOCIETY OF WALES CYMDEITHAS DDYSGEDIG CYMRU

Welsh Government Draft International Strategy Consultation Response

Your name:

Cymdeithas Ddysgedig Cymru / Learned Society of Wales

Organisation (if applicable):

As above

Are you responding on behalf of the organisation?

Yes

No

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Are you responding from outside of Wales?

Yes

No

General Comments

The proposed draft international strategy is a welcome initiative. The Learned Society would welcome a more assertive approach to the projection of Wales internationally.

There is much good material in the text. However, the strategy would benefit from a sharper focus, highlighting its principal purpose, with more prioritisation. The strategy should primarily reflect the right of Wales at a crucial time to promote its interests and achieve clearly determined goals, and better produce policies with an international dimension across all key sectors.

The aim should be to deliver benefits for Wales, its people and strategic partners, not just to showcase Wales. The strategy should be more focussed and practical in its approach, reflect the limitations of Wales' position, and say more about what a louder, more focused and more confident Welsh voice will hope to achieve and how the assets of the UK can be better harnessed for the benefits of Wales.

The strategy would also benefit from indicating the government's ambition for what the Welsh national and international profile will be in five years' time; a narrative of existing projects reflects current activities, but does not express the future potential.

To project Wales, the strategy needs to give a clear idea of what is it that makes Wales distinct. This will facilitate identification of what is to be projected and to whom. Wales' qualities include its culture, values, history, bilingualism, the importance of community and cynefin, political and social traditions, diversity and much more. They are what epitomise the nation. These are not backward looking clichés. They are assets which set Wales apart. While these areas are mentioned in the draft, there needs to be a clearer foregrounding of this context and a more developed sense of the distinctiveness of the nation.

Recognising these aspects is vital for our self-awareness and self-confidence, as is now acknowledged in the new national curriculum for schools,. Knowing and appreciating better who we are is an important step in promoting and representing Wales. Evidence from the 2016 Welsh Election Study reveals that over half of respondents considered taking pride in Wales' history, heritage or landscape, and its culture, literature and arts as an important part of what it means to be Welsh. The richness of our 'beirdd a chantorion' are not simply useful tourist attractions; they are at the core of a cultured bilingual nation.

We would therefore propose a fourth goal:

- To promote the cultural and historical dimension of Wales, both inside and outside the nation.

Overall, the strategy needs to read more coherently across from the overarching goals to the individual sections on people, product and place. For example, the Products section currently appears to be linked almost exclusively to prosperity, rather than contributing to all of the goals.

Urgent consideration should be given to Wales' soft power resources, an element of international relations which is largely absent from the draft strategy.

Question1

The three goals set out in the strategy are:

- **to raise Wales' international profile**
- **increase exports and inward investment**
- **showcase Wales as a globally responsible nation.**

These goals have been developed to bring coordinated outcomes to the international work being undertaken by the Welsh Government and its partners.

Do you agree with these goals? (mark one box with an X)

Yes

Partly

No

Are there any other goals that should be considered?

Yes

No

We propose that the three goals be re-worked as follows:

- to identify and support the interests of Wales internationally and work with partners to influence policies and actions which would be mutually beneficial to Wales, its people and partners;
- through implementing globally responsible policies, Wales will contribute to international goals while benefitting from these policies. We will demonstrate how Wales and its values can be a positive exemplar building on Wales' traditional internationalism and the existing involvement of individuals, organisations and education in an outward looking nation. Individuals will be encouraged to have greater awareness and understanding of global issues and respect for human rights, security and development;
- promote a more prosperous and sustainable Wales, notably by enhancing exports, influencing trade policy, and encouraging inward investment, in order to produce a competitive economy.

We suggest further that a fourth goal is developed to '**promote the cultural and historical dimension of Wales, both inside and outside the nation**' to realise the potential of the strategic promotion and development of Wales' culture, languages, arts and heritage. Without embedding the innate distinctiveness of the nation at the heart of this strategy, there is a risk that what it outlines is generic and not 'of' Wales. Culture is one of Wales' most significant soft power resources, and is a devolved competence. As well as promoting this internationally, government should redouble its efforts to develop this sense of distinctiveness internally amongst people in Wales, so that culture is not a mere marketing exercise, divorced from real Welsh experiences.

There should be a more overt expression of the stories of Wales to communicate what sets the nation apart: its sense of values, community and cynefin, its reputation as a land of poetry and song, and its two languages.

Knowing and appreciating better who we are is an important step in promoting and representing Wales.

Question2

People – the strategy highlights the important role that our people and cultural organisations, in Wales and overseas, can play in raising Wales’ international profile. Do you agree with the ambitions set out in this chapter? (mark one box with an X)

Yes

Partly

No

It is important that the people of Wales are engaged with the strategy; it needs to speak to the domestic audience as it does the world. The core message of the nation’s profile requires refinement.

Currently, this section is descriptive and does not sufficiently develop policy implications. There is much on increasing Wales’ profile but less on the purpose and how it is to be delivered. Not enough is made of the important role of Higher Education, which has universal reach, and the centres of excellence in academic research in Wales; to promote Sêr Cymru is not enough. Crucially, continued financial support, from the EU or the Westminster government, must be secured. International cooperation will not happen meaningfully without a strong research base, and future economic growth depends on this.

Wales’ cultural assets should be better integrated into this part of the strategy. These they provide evidence of distinctiveness, and provide opportunities to engage with other bilingual nations and regions. Culture and language is arguably Wales’ most notable expression of identity, and its value should be promoted in its own right. We should be working on cultural exchange and global projection of our arts and culture in a far more strategic and systematic manner than is set out in the document. The Hay Festival and the National Eisteddfod are events of international significance in their differing ways and could have a more prominent role in promoting Wales.

In 1995 in Barcelona, the British Council organised some 30 different events about Wales, its languages and the arts in Wales. It remains an excellent exemplar.

The concept of soft power is underdeveloped in the strategy. It represents a powerful tool for a nation such as Wales. Sport, education, and culture are a means of influencing others and of raising the profile of activities which have wide ranging benefits to Wales, internally and externally. The Learned Society is organising a series of events to consider this subject in depth. It is important that the strategy does not view immigration to Wales merely as instrumental to the economy, but also as a dynamic part of Welsh cultural identity. Diaspora living in Wales can help develop Wales’ international connections, as well as the Welsh diaspora overseas.

Question 3

Products – Wales has a strong global commercial relationship both in terms of exports and attracting inward investment. The strategy sets out plans to showcase Wales’ expertise in cyber security, compound-semiconductors and film and television production to demonstrate we have a modern and vibrant economy. This, in turn, will enhance our wider export and inward investment offer to the rest of the world.

Do you agree showcasing these areas will demonstrate Wales has a modern, vibrant economy and skilled workforce? (mark one box with an X)

Yes

Partly

No

The section on Products focuses on three areas, but could be developed to incorporate a fourth: climate/biodiversity and sustainability. This would bring together expertise across subjects, experience and creative policies which are leading to new economic and environmental developments. It is an area where Wales can be seen as an exemplar, where the nation is already benefitting as global challenges are being met. It is also a narrative *of* Wales, acknowledging the legacy of the role of carbon extraction in the development of the industrial economy, and the efforts to bring this story full circle.

Specifically, clarity is needed on the £17.2 billion figure for exports; it is unclear whether this refers to exports out of Wales or out of the UK.

If full unfettered access to the Single Market is the goal, then it is inconsistent to be unconvinced that it is in the Welsh interests to leave the Customs Union. We need to remain within if the goal is free access. The references to Welsh Government Offices would be strengthened if their purposes were set out.

On trade and international relations, Wales has no trade policy, those are UK wide, but it has trade interests. The first four exhortations to HMG are mostly process and could be replaced by 'the British Government should negotiate for a liberal trade policy, with maximum unfettered access to the EU, and take account of the interests of all parts of the UK'. The last point is impractical. Consultations at the conclusion of a negotiation are worth little. Instead 'the British Government should consult and keep devolved administrations informed during negotiations, and in particular, consult the devolved administrations when their interests are directly or indirectly, but substantively, engaged'.

There is little indication of how actions will be delivered throughout the draft, and this should be addressed.

Question 4

Place – Wales' culture and language have contributed to international tourism and increased recognition as a visitor destination. In this strategy, we have identified the need to promote sustainable tourism as a priority. Wales has also demonstrated a commitment to global responsibility, for example, through its Wales for Africa programme and our Health Boards.

Do you agree the ambitions set out in the strategy will promote Wales as a globally responsible nation and showcase our commitment to sustainability?

(mark one box with an X)

Yes

Partly

No

It is encouraging that language and culture are presented as assets. Indeed they are, to the people of Wales, the people living in Wales and to our international interests. The text rightly describes the assets which we have. But we have not succeeded in bringing together the different dimensions to present a cogent attractive narrative, drawing on the richness which is available in Wales. This is not to disparage investment in outdoor pursuits. But Wales' history, literature in two languages, its multicultural character,

our museums, and heritage can be better packaged. This would not only open up economic possibilities but would reinforce to the people of Wales the breadth and value of things Welsh, in keeping with the cross-cutting elements of the new Welsh school curriculum, which considers the ‘Welsh dimension and international perspective’ .

The strategy should be more firmly rooted in the nation’s long story of international engagement and collaboration, and also what it is to be *of* Wales. Its message should capture where Wales has come from, as well as where it wants to go.

The draft is silent on one area which the Learned Society of Wales considers offers great potential. One Health is a trans-disciplinary approach among human, animal, plant and environmental health disciplines. It is intended to bring together synergies so that Public Health systems can be resilient, better respond to and prevent infectious diseases, remove extreme poverty and tackle issues such as obesity.

The World Bank has developed a One Health Operational Framework. A country or region is needed to be the laboratory for the concept. Such an approach in Wales could have enormous impact internationally, but crucially would lead to the implementation of better policies and outcomes in Wales. We would encourage consideration of this approach in Wales, which would draw on our expertise and structures in public health and which is highly complementary to the Well-being of Future Generations approach.

Wales for Africa is a splendid initiative. It does good in Africa but is also rewarding for those in Wales who are involved. It is largely altruistic but is another part of Wales’ contribution to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, reinforcing the contribution of policies being pursued domestically. Much is again made in the text of raising profiles, but not enough on how and for what purpose.

As ‘global responsibility begins at home’, an explicit aim might be to raise awareness and understanding among people in Wales to encourage and facilitate globally responsible action on a domestic and international level, ranging across environmental and ecological issues, as well those that promote human rights, human security and development.

Wales’ role as an international participant should be more developed, and policy areas where we lead should also be emphasised.

Conclusion

This strategy will obviously be owned by the Welsh Government. It will be vital to develop partnerships with the many Welsh organisations, companies, third sector and more who have international interests. The aim should be to harness what is being done already, identify new initiatives, offer greater focus and provide assistance so that more is done, that what is done is done better. It is vital that there is a greater coherence cooperatively to address Wales’ international interests. This ambitious effort will require an appropriate budget and increased capacity. The strategy is by definition dynamic – it will need updating in the light of experiences.

The draft does not bring out the cardinal importance of relations with London and the other devolved nations of the United Kingdom. Improving the working of devolution remains a prime objective.