



**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

Sir Emyr Jones Parry GCMG FInstP PLSW

17 May 2017

## **Learned Society of Wales AGM 17 May 2017**

**Prynhawn da Gymrodyr, Gyfeillion / Good afternoon Fellows, Friends**

**Croeso i Gyfarfod Cyffredinol Cymdeithas Ddysgedig Cymru.**

A very warm welcome again to you all to this, the seventh Annual General Meeting of the Learned Society of Wales. My particular congratulations to the 42 newly-elected Fellows. Our Fellowship now stands at 464.

**Llongyfarchiadau i'r rhai a etholwyd sy'n dod â'r gymrodoriaeth nodedig i 464.**

This represents a substantial body of scholarship of which the nation can be proud. Your Society continues to make progress in growing the number of women Fellows. 35% of the new Fellows elected in 2016/17 were women. We are also ensuring that they are more represented in the governance, mission and activities of the Society. We are slowly beginning to see the results of Professor Dame Terry Rees's review back in 2014. Today 18% of LSW Fellows are female, a 50% increase since 2013/14.

**Ond mae llawer mwy i'w wneud, o fewn y Gymdeithas ac mewn prifysgolion unigol i annog a grymuso academyddion benywaidd.**

It is right that I recognise and thank the Officers and Council of the Society for their work over the year, and the immense contribution made by our Chief Executive, Professor Peter Halligan and his excellent team. This has included improved communication with Fellows and wider publication of our actions and activities. We also owe a debt to all those who have contributed to our activities, particularly to the members of the panels who scrutinised nominations and recommended our newly-elected Fellows.

The Society continues to be financially supported by each of the eight universities in Wales, and the Fellowship is more widely drawn after this year's election. This is vital. As a national society we must be representative of Wales as a whole. Our thanks to all those who are supporting us, in particular to those individual Fellows who donate generously. Putting the Society on a financially sustainable basis is vital.

**Diolch i bawb a gyfrannodd mewn cymaint o wahanol ffyrdd tuag at ein gwaith.**

But realistically our resources are limited. We are nonetheless achieving a great deal and promoting our aims of celebrating excellence and serving the nation. Our greatest resource is the Fellowship. Harnessing the available talents offers a rich vein of expert scholarly advice, and this year we have notably drawn on Fellows to prepare submissions on constitutional issues, Higher Education in Wales, the UK and Europe, on the Welsh language and on the Health and Social Care Review. We want to enhance the involvement of Fellows in our future work to mutual benefit so that we can do more.

In the noughties a group of distinguished scholars came together to create the Learned Society. Two of those founding Fellows have continued to serve as Officers since the inception of the Society. Professor Wynn Thomas has served with great distinction as Vice President for arts, humanities and social sciences for seven years, and was a Co-Chair of the Shadow Council, which took forward the planning for the

academy. A Professor of English at Swansea University, Wynn is a renowned scholar in the two literatures of modern Wales as well as in modern American poetry. He has published some two dozen books and contributed widely to Welsh life. His wisdom has helped guide the Society and he has led the work to develop the concept of Wales Studies, which he will continue to champion.

Professor John Tucker has served as General Secretary of the Society since May 2010. A Professor of Computer Science at Swansea, he is an expert on computability theory, that is, what can and cannot be computed by people and machines. In the early 1990s, John developed the idea of a Science Academy for Wales with his colleague Professor David Evans. They revisited this in 2006, as early discussions about a possible pan-discipline, all-Wales, national academy for Wales were also underway. John's enthusiasm has helped guide and develop the Society; he created the University of Wales Scientists of Wales series, supported by the Society, and he will continue to lead out work to promote the history of science and technology in Wales.

Both have nurtured the growth of the Society and contributed hugely to its present development. I personally am grateful for their unstinting advice, support and hard work.

#### **Diolch o galon i'r ddau ohonoch chi.**

I want also to thank Professors Ken Dyson, Keith Robbins and Robin Williams, members of the inaugural Council whose terms have just concluded after seven years of service. They were also involved in the discussions which led to the establishment of the Society.

The papers circulated for this meeting demonstrate the range and quality of activity which has taken place and how the Society is striving to fulfil its aim to serve Wales. Recognition of scholarship and merit is a fundamental purpose. Fellows are proposed for election because of their outstanding achievements and contributions. Individuals are recognised for their academic distinction.

Individual medals, competitively won on the basis of merit, have provided a long and distinguished history of recognition in academia. We are developing our own portfolio of medals slowly and strategically. This evening we will present:

- the fifth Menelaus Medal for excellence in any field of engineering and technology,
- the second Frances Hoggan medal for outstanding female researchers in STEM,
- the three inaugural Dillwyn Medals for early career research excellence in STEM, the creative arts and humanities, and social science and business, each of which is to be awarded to a female;
- and the first Hugh Owen Medal, funded by Welsh Government, to recognise major contributions to educational research or the application of research to produce significant innovations in education policy and/or professional educational practice in Wales.

**Nid yn unig mae'r medalau hyn yn cydnabod rhagoriaeth academiaidd, ond maen nhw hefyd yn adfer ac yn hyrwyddo gwaddol hir o lwyddiant Cymreig.** These medals not only recognise academic excellence, but

also recover and promote a long legacy of Welsh achievement.

As the Society recognises individuals, recognition and the contribution of Fellows in turn helps to reinforce the reputation of the Learned Society. Last year we recognised two Honorary Fellows, whose acceptance of the award was itself an accolade for the Learned Society. Both Sir Michael Atiyah and Lord Martin Rees gave lectures for the Society in the last Society year, and we look forward later this year to welcoming this year's similarly distinguished Honorary Fellows, Professor Mary McAleese and Lord Stewart Sutherland.

The Diamond Review (2016) provided a significant and welcome endorsement of the Society's role in helping to grow and promote Wales's ambitious research programme.

Specifically, the Review noted that "The LSW is a very welcome addition to the Welsh intellectual landscape, particularly given its multidisciplinary and multi-sectorial fellowship" and highlighted that "the need to harness the most talented members of their society to provide advice; to challenge and to debate, similar to other learned societies such as the Royal Society of Edinburgh or the Royal Society of London" was important for successful knowledge-based economies.

Commenting on the future role of the LSW, the Review continued: We believe it has the potential to develop into a real resource for a) improving the public understanding of science and stimulating and contributing to public debate and engagement on key contemporary issues; b) contributing to the development of Wales' 'soft power' by promoting international networks of interest in Welsh institutions, culture and values; c) inspiring and supporting Wales' most promising young talent across the research, business and public sectors, in order to create value for the economy and society; d) providing independent advice and horizon scanning across a wide range of areas through ensuring that Wales' policy makers and influencers have access to the best national, and indeed global expertise; e) better recognising the quality of scholarship existing in and associated with Wales; and f) promoting Wales' interests and reputation on the global stage.

**Allen ni ddim fod wedi dweud hynny'n well ein hunain.** We couldn't have said it better ourselves.

For the Society to deliver on this remit and function effectively, the Review recommended that the LSW should be provided with "the kind of core funding seen in other jurisdictions" and recommended "that the LSW should receive funding of £1m per annum, directed through HEFCW against a set of objectives agreed between the LSW and HEFCW, taking into account important future challenges and priorities for the Welsh Government."

This support chimes well with the objectives of the Society. The funding would be restricted to tasks to deliver objectives agreed with HEFCW that help promote and advance excellence in research and scholarship in Wales. Similar 'grant-in-aid' schemes are employed in Scotland for the RSE and Ireland for

the RIA. Reaching such agreements and disbursing funds would not compromise the Society's independence.

**Yn realistig, fodd bynnag, ni fydd hyn yn digwydd tan 2019/20 a bryd hynny dim ond ar lefelau y bydd HEFCW neu TEA yn gallu eu darparu.** Realistically, however this will not happen until 2019/20 and then only at levels at which HEFCW or TEA are able to provide.

The Learned Society had contributed to the Diamond Review, essential to our Royal Charter objective of "advancing learning and knowledge, and promoting and contributing to scientific, cultural, social, environmental and economic development within Wales and beyond". We therefore welcomed the Review's main recommendations and subsequent Welsh Government acceptance in November 2016. These, which were not dissimilar to our original suggestions, which provided that

- (i) the current Tuition Fee Grant for full-time undergraduate students was dropped and replaced by an additional student loan, and means tested maintenance grants introduced.
- (ii) 'Institutions providing higher education should be funded at a level that enables them to deliver teaching and research of the highest quality, in line with their respective strengths, specialisms, and missions'.

**Cadarnhaodd adborth unigol gan y Cadeirydd a nifer o aelodau o'r pwyllgor adolygu fod cyflwyniad y Gymdeithas Ddysgedig a'r rhyngweithio dilynol wedi cyfrannu'n helaeth at ffurfio'r argymhellion terfynol.** Individual feedback from the Chair and several members of the review committee – confirmed that the LSW submission and subsequent interactions contributed in no small way in shaping the final recommendations.

Implementing the full range of recommendations from Diamond Review will however be vital, both for the benefit of future students and encouraging their access to higher education, but also ensuring that Wales has a sustainable, successful and competitive higher education sector. Even so the commitment to provide direct financial support to universities is caveated and will not be delivered for some years.

The Society has been similarly active in promoting additional research capacity in Wales. The Welsh Government report "Delivering Science for Wales 2015-2016" notes under the rationale for the Sêr Cymru II programme that Professor Peter Halligan and Dr Louise Bright's The Case for Growing STEMM Research Capacity in Wales (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, February 2015) underlined that more was needed to complete the original Sêr Cymru actions. Their research showed Welsh universities had not secured their expected percentage of competitively awarded research funding largely because of a long-standing shortfall of some 646 researchers." The Sêr Cymru II Fellowships and capacity building schemes, amounting to £60 million are now contributing directly to bridging this gap. **Ased pwysig i Gymru yw rôl y Gymdeithas fel ffynhonnell annibynnol ac arbenigol o gyngor ysgolheigaidd.** A primary asset for Wales is the Society's role as a source of independent and expert scholarly advice.

We have submitted considered opinions and Officers have appeared before Parliamentary and Assembly Committees.

The LSW is committed to playing its full part in helping the people of Wales and their elected representatives to secure a more prosperous and successful nation. Over the past 3 years, the Society has been doing this assiduously and we believe our evidence based comments are being increasingly sought, appreciated and indeed have helped to shape and inform policy. The advice is offered without favour, and illustrates the value of working with government and other partners with common purpose to contribute to national strategic objectives. Working with WG has included sourcing funding for Society medals, funding for commissioned reviews, agreeing to serve on Government committees and Reviews (Brexit and Science advisory Councils, Reid), together with regular meetings with CSA and senior Civil servants.

Over the past year we have further developed the international aspect of our activities, both in seeking to promote and represent externally the successes in Wales, and in strengthening our cooperation with sister academies.

Wales operates in a competitive global environment. Yet international awareness and recognition of its scholarly excellence and research is weak and under-appreciated. **Mae angen i Gymru adeiladu ei phroffil academaidd ar draws y sector a chyfoethogi ei henw da am ragoriaeth mewn ymchwil, addysg ac arloesi.** Wales needs to build its sector wide academic profile and enhance its reputation for excellence in research, education, and innovation.

Few issues are more important in the competition for good students, research funding and research staff at a time of tight economic and political challenge. With this in mind the Society has embarked on a variety of initiatives to grow Wales's National and international academic profile by better showcasing research and education excellence. We do this on behalf of the sector as a whole, and not for individual institutions.

In addition to organizing occasional international symposiums and lectures, tangible delivery of this strategy has included promoting the Welsh research environment in the journal *Science*, which reaches an international audience of over half a million readers each week. The LSW (and your President) has been very active in the aftermath of Brexit, highlighting the various consequences of Brexit for science and research and offering, with sister academies appropriate responses.

Over the last year, the Society has continued to strengthen its relationships with sister national academies in the UK and Europe, both to enhance recognition of Wales and its scholarship, but also to strengthen our various representations at a UK level.

This has included joint projects with the Royal Society and British Academy and, joint submissions with the Royal Society of Edinburgh and attendance at the (first ever joint meetings) of the 7 UK based Academies. This multiplies the effect of our efforts and ensures that a Welsh voice is heard. Examples of this closer working together can be found on our website.

The Society has commissioned Kings College to undertake an independent review on the “Impacts of Academic Research from Welsh universities”, and this will be published later this summer. The analysis covers for the first time, all case studies submitted from a single UK country, providing in-depth insight into impact from Welsh universities. The UK’s 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014) was the first nationwide assessment of academic research that formally evaluated non-academic impact.

Across all submissions, Wales impressively secured 49% at 4\* (outstanding) in the impact sub-profile, which exceeds the UK average of 44%. A further 37% of the submitted impact for Wales was judged to be 3\* (very considerable impact).

37% of the case studies reported impacts specifically for Wales. Within this sample, impacts on policy and society were prominent, mostly describing contributions to policy reform. **Mae’r adolygiad yn cadarnhau mantais uniongyrchol ymchwil academiaidd i Gymru, i ddiwylliant a threftadaeth y wlad, ei heconomi, i addysg gyhoeddus a chydlyniad cymdeithasol.** The review confirms the direct benefit of academic research to Wales, to the country’s culture and heritage, to its economy, to public education and to social cohesion.

The geographical reach of the research impact activities from Wales’s involved 102 countries and covered six continents. Science, engineering, manufacturing and industry saw the highest concentration of activity outside of Wales, with 42% of all references to impacts on the sector situated in the UK and 45% internationally.

Research in Wales has a global reach. The recent Elsevier Bibliometric report (No 2016), commissioned by HEFCW confirmed that nearly half of Wales’s research papers were co-authored with a researcher from outside the UK. The Report confirmed that the Welsh research base continues to be highly productive and efficient, outranking many comparator countries of similar size. In particular, the report noted that:

- As of 2014, Welsh publications were cited 68% more often than the world average – an increase of 9 percentage points since 2011.
- The average number of citations per published researcher in Wales increased to 9.6 in 2010-14 – two points above the UK average.
- 1 in 10 research papers from Wales ended up in the top 5% of most cited publications worldwide.

Welsh higher education continues to be highly efficient. In fact, Wales receives more citations per one million dollar equivalent of research investment than any other comparator country.

However Higher Education throughout the United Kingdom faces an unprecedented array of challenges. Universities are increasingly dependent on student fee income in a very competitive sector. Yet demography and student demand are turning downwards. More students are choosing to study locally so that they can live at home, and the prospective debt is daunting. Additionally we face the impact of the UK

Industrial Strategy, UK legislation on Higher Education & Research (UKRI) and in Wales the Hazelkorn Review. These are all matters in which your Society is active.

However the biggest and most immediate challenge for Wales is Brexit. This is the case both, academically and more generally given the historical engagement of the EU with Wales. There is a striking difference in policy focus between the UK's Industrial Strategy last January (which makes little mention of Brexit) and the Welsh Government's White paper also in January which emphasises the importance of securing UK funds to compensate Wales for the loss of EU expenditure.

More specifically, the reputation of UK Higher Education sector, a key strength for Wales, and its international research base are under threat because of the fallout from the EU referendum result. The potential threat to competitive R&D funding risks making the UK a less friendly /attractive place for overseas scholars and students, and our Institutions less favoured for international collaboration.

Any restrictions to the free movement of workers would further severely impact Wales' ability to attract academic talent, access research production and foster international collaboration.

The UK Government's commitment to underwrite Horizon 2020 funding with new money is welcomed and significant. But looking further ahead, I consider it vital for so many reasons that the continued involvement of the UK, and parochially especially Wales, in EU research programmes and collaboration should be a priority for the Brexit negotiations. It is also critical that, under whatever arrangements result, the present level of expenditure on R&D in Wales should be at least maintained.

Ahead of the general election on 8 June 2017, the LSW would want to encourage all political parties to support higher education by advocating policies that facilitate and enhance its economic, social and cultural benefits, and crucially retains its global competitiveness post-Brexit. Specifically we would welcome policies which:

- Secure an effective post-Brexit settlement for universities
- Support higher education in its role as an anchor for growth in local economies
- Increase funding for science, research and innovation to match our competitors
- Support world-leading teaching, student experience and improving outcomes
- Propose an effective immigration system which encourages free movement of academics and students

LSW took no position during referendum, but is now committed to protecting HE in Wales and contributing to the debate about the way forward. The risks to universities are apparent. Free movement of staff and students enriches. Collaboration across Europe enhances research.

The British Government has given assurances that Horizon 2020 is secure. I find it unimaginable that academics from other member states who work in British universities will not be allowed to remain. But uncertainty is damaging and undermines the very nature of a university.

Make no mistake. The impact of Brexit on Wales will be substantial, and at least initially, is unlikely to be positive. Moreover the complexity of the divorce process and the negotiation of a future relationship with the EU is not appreciated. Nor how long it will take.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in consideration of the Great Repeal Bill, itself a misnomer. Its primary purpose is to transpose thousands of EU Regulations into UK law before exit. Yet most of the subject areas are devolved. The handling is politically sensitive and potentially a constitutional time bomb.

HMG has suggested that the repatriation of powers from the EU will offer scope for more powers to be devolved. It has also argued that Brexit will provide an opportunity to determine the level best placed to make new laws/policies. Personally, I don't believe that powers are being returned. They rest where Westminster has already decided. In the case of e.g. agriculture the power for Wales as a result of successive Government of Wales Acts is in Cardiff. Post Brexit, the big difference will be that the National Assembly will not be constrained to follow policies agreed in Brussels or to implement EU laws. Those powers which have been transferred to Cardiff can only be changed or withdrawn by Westminster legislation.

The sensitivity should be obvious. There may be a need for some UK wide law on e.g. animal health. **Ond gallai'r modd mae Llundain yn mynd ati i ymgynghori â'r gweinyddiaethau datganoledig, ac a ydyn nhw'n dod i gytundeb, sbarduno argyfwng cyfansoddiadol mawr. Hyd yma ychydig o ddealltwriaeth mae Llywodraeth Ei Mawrhydi'n ei ddangos o'r sensitifrwydd dan sylw.** But how London sets about consulting the devolved administrations and whether they reach agreement could provoke a major constitutional crisis. So far HMG is showing little understanding of the sensitivities involved.

Higher education (and I include here national academies) is often evaluated according to a limited set of indicators. Such narrow valuations often ignore or undervalue the wider role that higher education plays in building a stronger and more tolerant society, relevant skill base, prosperous economy, better healthcare and a thriving culture. In particular we know the experience is often life changing for the individual. The Learned Society will work to maintain and enhance this excellence and competitive edge in the face of the challenges currently facing the sector by:

- Promoting the wide range of Wales's rich research, cultural and innovative national profile
- Communicating the impact and intellectual vitality of Wales.
- Showcasing the excellence and talent in Wales that contributes to society and to the economy
- Inspiring youth by demonstrating what talent and merit can achieve and by example help create a more confident, self-assured, resilient and successful country.