

Cross Party Group on Wales International

Tuesday 14th February 2017

Attendees: Rhun ap Iorwerth AM (Chair)
David Rees AM
Julie Morgan AM
Adam Price AM
Heledd Roberts – Rhun ap Iorwerth AM office
Makayla Donigan – David Melding AM office
Jillian Purvis - Huw Irranca-Davies AM office
David Hughes - European Commission Wales Office
Kirsty Davies-Warner - Head of Oxfam Cymru
Linda Tomos – Chief Executive National Library
Jenny Scott – Director British Council Wales
Alison Cummins – Communications & External Relations Manager, British Council Wales
Lyndsey Halliday – British Council Wales
Susan Bowen – Positif

Apologies: Ken Skates AM
Huw Irranca-Davies AM
Simon Thomas AM
Jeremy Miles AM

1. Welcome from the Chair

Due to the cancellation of the main speaker, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, Ken Skates AM, Rhun ap Iorwerth AM said that the group should discuss ways of building a relationship between Wales and the rest of the world.

2. Welsh Diaspora: Tapping in to Welsh links worldwide

The Chair commenced by talking of the value of diaspora in Ireland and Scotland and that Wales should be aspiring to their models. He felt that Wales is not strategic or determined enough in seeing the value that the Welsh diaspora holds for Wales. He asked for comments:

- Jenny Scott (British Council) suggested that the area of soft power – education, arts and sports – could be used to build connections. We need to establish a baseline of understanding to see where Wales sits in the UK. She suggested that the group talks to Scotland to learn from their lessons of what has been done well and not so well. Wales also needs to capitalise on where it has built its profile, such as the Welsh football team during the Euros.
- David Rees AM suggested that the education network needs to be used from an early age to promote connectivity with other countries and get young people around the world learning about Wales.
- Julie Morgan AM agreed that a baseline of understanding is important. She suggested that Wales needs to build upon the well-established positive links that it already has, such as the students who have studied in Wales and speak highly of their time here. She also suggested that we need to look at how Wales is promoted through the UK networks, such as the UK embassies. It would also be good to know where the Welsh diaspora groups are across the world.

- Linda Tomos said there is no one organisation collating the Welsh diaspora groups and this would be useful. She said that we need to consider what image of Wales we want in the outside world. She highlighted the value of the digital agenda in drawing-in audiences from overseas, such as those who are eager to trace ancestors from Wales, and said that it should be a duty for national institutions to take an interest in these bodies.
- Adam Price AM agreed that there is room for learning from Scotland and Ireland and there should be a Government strategy and a Minister responsible for global links. He said it would be good to find out how many UK embassies hold an event for St David's Day (as many do for St Andrew's Day) and to see if Wales is getting value for money in that regard. He also noted the wealth of diaspora from other countries who are based in Wales, such as the Bangladeshi community, and to use these groups as a bridge in the other direction. He noted that we need to target fora with different methods otherwise it is the same discussion with the same people time and time again so there needs to be a change of focus and generation. He suggested collaborating with Welsh universities and identifying personnel who they could offer Honorary Degrees as a way of establishing and maintaining relationships.
- David Hughes said that it was unfortunate that the referendum result had given a negative image of the UK as a whole and there is a lot of work to be done in overturning this impression. He said that there are certain forms of co-operation with the EU that Wales need to stay in, such as the Erasmus programme, which can give out a powerful message. He also valued the school visits overseas. He noted that in the Welsh Consular Association there are quite a few countries who do not have a consular in Wales and it would be good to encourage more to set up here.
- Kirsty Davies-Warner said that Wales needs to have a long term view. Building links internationally through international aid can help as a first step in any relationship.

3. Conclusion

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and said he would be writing to the Cabinet Secretary asking for a clear strategy on how to build links internationally. A press release of the meeting will also be released.