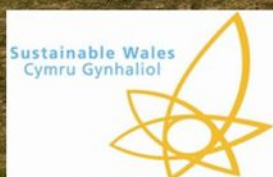




Sustainable Wales National Conversation Pilot: **THE WALES WE WANT**

- A. Presentation Paper to Cynnal Cymru
2nd June 2014
- B. Themed Summary of Contributors
Conversations



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A) NATIONAL CONVERSATION: “THE WALES WE WANT” presentation to Cynnal Cymru 2nd June 2014

Sustainable Wales interviewed six people via film and audio.



IOAN JENKINS



RHIAN EDWARDS



JUSTIN HORTON



RORY McLAGGAN



ROGER BURNELL



ROBERT MINHINNICK

(A landowner/green entrepreneur, 2 writers, one male, one female both Wales 'Book of the Year' winners, a Third Sector Worker - working to combat homelessness, a former drama teacher - now a dramaturge Director, working with young people, and a Strategic Development Director whose working life has been mainly within the energy sector, now with the Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon.)

So all are working in the community.

Trying to envisage Wales in 2050 was uniformly difficult.

The template was prescriptive and did not inspire conversation.

The background briefing notes were quite useful.

Everyone received this information – though it seemed clear that people hadn't really engaged with it.

Conversations were covering mainly the here and now.

Discussions covered:

Energy and Climate Change,

Education, Young People, Entrepreneurialism,

Homelessness, The Valleys, Local Government,

Welsh Environment,

Welsh Identity, Creative Wales, Economy,

Energy and Climate Change

Interviewees were critical of The Welsh Government and Local Authorities, together with the media for what they perceived as failure to communicate the urgency of climate change.

*Maybe we should abandon certain areas (coast?) if damage is to be regular.
We should provide financial incentives for people to adapt to CC.*

Education, Entrepreneurialism, Economy

Our interviewees all emphasized that young people, whilst computer literate, can be illiterate in the soft skills of communication, relationship building and adapting to the demands of a modern work environment.

people are not coming “work ready”. They come for interview or employment “without a clue” and are “scared to death”

This reservoir of young people poorly prepared for employment was seen as a major problem. We will need to work collaboratively and interact face to face. This cannot be done via IT.

An answer? More training and more work-based learning.

The Valleys

The valleys are seen as lacking confidence, with a pronounced dearth of role models and entrepreneurialism. The Valleys are the antithesis of the ‘Wales we Want’ – which is a Wales perpetually remaking and reimagining itself.

“Are an intractable problem. In Spain, mining towns were abandoned. Here, the whole area is a drain on Wales, because the costs of deprivation are ongoing – education, drink/drugs, health, welfare, transport.”

Overall though it was said that there is a reservoir of cheap housing and low rents. Once railways are electrified, might people work in S.E. England and live in the valleys? (As is being done with Scotland-London train services?)

Local Government

This is perceived as male and elderly and not in touch with aspirational and creative Wales. This is considered a major reason for lack of social change and existing inertia.

Too often local government encourages or rewards political conformity. Such conformity is described as stifling and a deterrent to innovation.

(Rhian Edwards) She felt that working with the council was both restrictive and prescriptive

The Media

Are blamed for perpetuating an exhausted imagery of Wales.

Welsh Environment

Our subjects all felt the topography of Wales / Cymru – was an enormous asset. They regretted not knowing more of Wales (and the UK as a whole) and also trying to spend ‘leisure’ in Spain, Turkey, etc. They perceived this way of using leisure time as belonging to the past.

All were conscious of how demand for, and use of energy has created the Welsh environment. The Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon and the Severn Barrage were singled out as suggestive of a future innovative, creative Wales.

Welsh Identity

One voice strongly dismissed any emphasis on political difference existing in Wales, especially a Wales subject to the urgencies of climate change.

All others were convinced of those political differences. This included the belief that the Welsh language is an inestimable asset.

National identity was perceived as very close – maybe the same – as cultural identity, as long as that cultural identity is fostered by creativity.

RMc) Wales has allowed itself to be defined too narrowly. Its ‘icons’ have become cliches. Only the language stands out. The remainder is stale.

Wales lacks confidence and must redefine itself.

(RM) *We are approaching a time when identity is entirely cultural. Or linguistic. It’s impossible now to ignore multiculturalism. So many people want the keys to Babylon.*

Creative Wales

This idea of ‘creative Wales’ came through strongly, exemplified by the new Swansea Bay film studio, linked with Pinewood and Hollywood.

RB “an indicator of the new Wales, the Wales we want”.

Creative Wales depends entirely on education, role models and the belief that ambition can be rewarded HERE in Wales.

This creative Wales depends on ‘soft skills’, which can be learned, taught, encouraged. Soft skills can be summed up as communication and the arts.

Economy

Our green entrepreneur sees social enterprises as a key business model for Wales to support filling the gaps being created by cutbacks in local authorities and social services etc. The new austerity promoted by the UK government could be an electric shock to the system that propels us from the necessity into action.

(RB) Increasingly the arts seem the way to develop economically. Thus good for overall (national) confidence.

So Wales is seen as backward-looking, with a need to engage its children differently. This is how we might offer a forward looking and exciting future.

THE END

B) THEMED SUMMARY ‘WALES WE WANT’ NATIONAL CONVERSATION PILOT

(Coloured according to contributors’ voice)

ROBERT MINHINNICK	(55-64)
JUSTIN HORTON	(34-44)
RHIAN EDWARDS	(34-44)
ROGER BURNELL	(55-64)
RORY McLAGGAN	(45- 54)
IOAN JENKINS	(45-54)

All based in Bridgend, but work across Wales.

POVERTY, HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING -

JUSTIN HORTON of 'EMMAUS' (Speaking as an individual not for Emmaus).

*Emmaus seeks a **long-term** solution to homelessness in Wales, and the cycle of homelessness here. Emmaus is a social enterprise by day and provides roofs over heads by night.*

There is in Wales plenty of support for homelessness – that's great. But there's little help to provide roofs over-heads.

A major problem is the price of property, the boom in rental accommodation and inflation. This needs to be kept under control. Dilapidated homes, lack of social housing and fuel poverty all add to the problems.

New homes refresh the existing stock. We need a relaxation on the planning rules to encourage building on brownfield and former industrial sites.

MAKING PROGRESS

Voluntary groups should be trusted to deliver action for needy people “within controlled mechanisms”.

No wide-ranging discussion involving WG, local authorities and voluntary groups are taking place.

Justin feels that “you can have a good dialogue with local government but it moves too slowly and peters out”.

Justin feels that any successes that come out of working with politicians is because the third sector has been involved.

EDUCATION, READINESS FOR WORK AND FUTURE WORK

ENTREPRENEURIALISM

(Justin Horton)

Priorities should be education and skills, but there is concentration on qualifications. Yet people are not coming to Emmaus “work ready”. They come for interview or employment “without a clue” and are “scared to death” the minute they enter the work environment. Even those with A levels and Welsh BACS. Thus something is “fundamentally wrong” with preparations for the work experience.

The blame for this must lie with Job Centres and the agencies now hired to harvest the young unemployed.

Young people might be computer literate but are completely clueless about creating and adapting to relationships.

There is a “dearth” of young people with a spark of creativity. Computer literacy is essential but there’s little evidence young people are thinking for themselves.

The answer? *More training and more work-based learning.*

(Roger Burnell) *Young people are not ready for the world of work, and more effort must be made to make them so. We need to develop communication skills, while people have to be multi-skilled.*

(Robert Minhinnick) *Education has a huge role in instilling confidence in young people. This cannot be over estimated.*

I think creativity can be encouraged and channeled and allowed to flourish in various ways. Surely everybody is naturally creative? But how does our society value that creativity?

(Roger Burnell) *Specialisms require a place in wider society but need to fit in. Communication skills – including relationships – are crucial. And not via technology. Human skills – soft skills – are not always valued or taught in schools.*

Even after higher education, young people lack communication skills.

What employers want is vision, commitment and not a 9-5 mentality. We have to develop a more flexible way of looking at employment. The hooter in the pit is gone and the world requires a new purpose. Surely it's in soft skills.

Wales lacks entrepreneurial culture. We also need vision and better communication.

Partnerships too are vital – Swansea Bay and Pinewood Studios, even Hollywood. Thus breeds international awareness.

(Ioan Jenkins)

Regrets loss of practical skills. – the days when we knew how to grow our own food, and cook it.

(Rory McLaggan) *Rory has paid for his children's private education. Local schools are not good enough because state education is based on production line values.*

Social enterprises can step in to fill gaps created by cuts in social services. They will do a better job because motivated via entrepreneurialism. We should trust people to sort their own problems out.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(Rhian Edwards) *“Climate Change needs to be top of the agenda. And politicians have to take it seriously!”*

(RMinhinnick) *Climate change is not treated seriously by our politicians and I believe we will pay for this in the future... I would like government to treat it as an existential crisis for ourselves, our children, our grandchildren.*

(Ioan Jenkins) SWANSEA TIDAL LAGOON DEVELOPMENT OFFICER.

Ioan Jenkins believes there will be significant temperature increases and tidal rising, with more erratic weather, by 2050.

*Politicians are not communicating the urgency of climate change. It is at point of being critical. Too many people (politicians) are 'sitting on the fence'.
We have to face the situation and take firm and immediate action.*

Rory McLaggan, LANDOWNER, ENTREPRENEUR

(He is a green entrepreneur – e.g. growing biomass from the start)
We have to adapt. Mitigation is in the past. Climate Change is here.

However, there is not enough creative thinking about how to get people out of their cars. And public transport is no alternative.

One idea: cycleways alongside railways.

*Maybe we should abandon certain areas (coast?) if damage is to be regular.
We should provide financial incentives for people to adapt to CC.
We've lost battle against CC – other issues like ocean acidification and deforestation also major.*

(Ioan Jenkins) He hopes the world's first tidal lagoon will be constructed in Swansea Bay.

There are 5 others – 4 in Wales. They are keen to develop a manufacturing base in Wales. Wales requires forward thinking. What worries him is possibility of not seizing this opportunity.

At times the Welsh are afraid to take risks, letting other people exploit good ideas and their energy. This must not happen.

Wales has to have ambition – and measured risk is important. There is no future in the past – we have to stand up and get things done.... Our strengths lie within our communities...

(Roger Burnell) *Climate change should not affect the personal skills of people – the soft skills. What we need to create is community-based work.*

(Robert Minhinnick) *Local knowledge is crucial and local action a big part in adapting to what climate change now demands of us. Local knowledge must influence all major steps to adapt. But whether politicians will listen to local knowledge, I'm not sure...*

RM: Climate change is requiring us to live more thoughtfully, more caringly and more lovingly. Indeed it requires us to live more spiritually.

CULTURE AND THE ARTS

ROGER BURNELL, TEACHER, DRAMATURGE, DIRECTOR

Developed many well-known performers in Wales now directs “It’s My Shout” with Arts Council support, also helped by broadcasters, BBC, HTV, S4C.)

Arts

(Roger was brought up in a village of public forums – chapel, pub, dancehall, cinema, shops.) *“These are far less common now. People were ‘rich’ in those days, it was a vibrant community. A story-telling community. Today, people have less awareness of each other”.*

“The spaces artists require are of paramount import, and this must be acknowledged. Local authorities are failing to provide them.”

(Rhian Edwards) Rhian stated Bridgend was a priority zone for arts funding. “The thing I felt about coming back to Bridgend was about returning to a cultural wasteland”.

She stressed that the borough possessed very few performance venues. Despite existence of excellent writers and good publisher here, etc.

She felt that working with the council was both restrictive and prescriptive, and that there had been too much interference during her arts residency and commission.

(Roger Burnell) *The arts will always require subsidy. But what they offer is inestimable in terms of wellbeing.*

The film studio at the old Ford's plant in Swansea is an indicator of the new Wales, the Wales we want.

Local authorities can be slow to understand and value the creative industries. Some LA's are stuck in the past with outdated ideas of what constitutes work. This is largely because too many councillors have no experience of this new world.

(Rhian Edwards)

The answer, she felt, was a reduction in rates. Town centres have to develop differently. Bridgend is blighted with empty properties, which might be used for gallery space and performance areas.

Local businesses do NOT support the arts. This has to change as public subsidy declines.

(Roger Burnell)

Work seems male and metalbashing to too many.

We need Wales to be constantly redefined.

HTV, BBC, Arts Council, Skill Set Cymru are developing the infrastructure for long-term success.

Local Authority money is shrinking. It's in interests of Arts Council, BBC etc to develop homegrown talent rather than importing it. It's economically unviable.
(5.37)

Increasingly the arts seem the way to develop economically. Thus good for overall (national) confidence.

(Rory McLaggan)

Film-making and TV are rare beacons in Wales. They are huge new successes.

Welsh business has to be dynamic and entrepreneurial.

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

(Ioan Jenkins) said The Welsh language was vital for his own identity. Regrets his younger children claim they don't "need" it in Bridgend!

(Roger Burnell) *Identity can be boosted even created – by the arts.*

(Robert Minhinnick) *We are approaching a time when identity is entirely cultural. Or linguistic. It's impossible now to ignore multiculturalism.*

RB + RM both said Wales has to ask whether the media are guilty of peddling outdated and damaging (because limiting) stereotypes.

(Rory McLaggan) *Wales has allowed itself to be defined too narrowly. Its 'icons' have become cliches. Only the language stands out. The remainder is stale.*

Wales lacks confidence and must redefine itself.

THE VALLEYS

Are an intractable problem. In Spain, mining towns were abandoned. Here, the whole area is a drain on Wales, because the costs of deprivation are ongoing – education, drink/drugs, health, welfare, transport.

The old society is over – it ended cruelly. But we still hark back to its echoes. As if they might mean a recovery of what's lost.

We lack a critical mass of talent. Opportunities here are too rare. But the Welsh film industry is a reversal of this and a hope for the future...

(Robert Minhinnick)

The greatest social danger, I see, is inequality. I remember walking the streets of Babylon, its culture described as collapsing because of social inequality. At present I feel our society has become iniquitously unequal. I feel, with climate change, inequality is our greatest social threat.

There is no right way of seeing Wales. There are one thousand different Waleses.

Our greatest challenge is to instill confidence in those who see themselves as Welsh and that Welsh is worth preserving... Confidence is all

The positives

- The Welsh environment
- A genuine belief in an “idea whose time has come” – the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon. The urgency of climate change helps impel this.
- The new Film studio at the old Ford works in Swansea, its links with Pinewood and Hollywood.
- Partnerships.
- Areas of cheap housing – valleys.
- Soft skills (communication, the arts) being recognized as the way ahead.

The negatives

- Climate change
- The valleys – a permanent financial drain on the Welsh state, needing EU help.
- Local authorities: their chronic inability to imagine the new Wales, tied to an outdated idea of what work is. A 9 – 5 image.
- Dearth of entrepreneurialism.
- Political conformity.
- Nationalism – when Climate Change cannot be treated in fragmentary fashion...
- The young poorly prepared for the world of work.
- The young poor at communication.
- The young computer literate but poor communicators.
- High rent & high property prices (but both of these cheap compared with areas of England).