

5 December 2008

Draft Submission to the All Wales Convention

On behalf of University of Wales, Newport

Included in the University's mission and vision statement is that we will play a powerful role as, among other things,

- A magnet for enterprise
- A hothouse for creativity
- An agent for social change and inclusion
- An engine for regeneration
- A force for health and well being.

In other words, a major part of how we see our role is to be a force for enriching and enhancing the society within which we operate. Our views on the questions of administrative devolution being examined by the All Wales Convention are informed by this mission – our concern is to see the form of governance in place that is most likely to provide a fertile context for this mission.

We believe that effective development in society and the economy requires different partners to collaborate effectively with each other in achieving strategic change, particularly in the kind of regeneration effort that is being undertaken in Newport and the Heads of the Valleys. Educational institutions, local authorities, private employers, community groups and others need to work together in order to bring about the kind of multi-dimensional change – physical, social and economic - that is needed for regeneration to be effective in a lasting way.

We are aware that the one form of governance that makes such partnerships effectively impossible is a highly centralised one, where each sector is highly controlled from a central point – and this would be the case even more where that central point were to be London rather than Cardiff. The main advantage of devolved administration, in our view, is that it should facilitate the mobilisation of coherent tailored responses at a regional level to regional challenges across sectors and across public services.

We are currently working with the University of Glamorgan on developing a strategic response to the regeneration challenge in the Heads of the Valleys, which we have also been discussing with FE and local authority colleagues. We hope that because of Wales' smaller scale, it will be possible to mobilise support for such a partnership in a way that would be much less likely in the absence of a devolved administration. The same holds true in the context of Newport.

However it should be noted of course that simply because Wales is smaller than the UK as a whole does not guarantee that such agile and flexible response to challenges will be mobilised – it does depend on internal governance arrangements within Wales also, and on leadership.

A devolved and distinctive region the size of Wales also offers an opportunity to effectively utilise models such as Research Pooling, which has been successfully exploited (with government support) in another UK region - Scotland - to give Scotland a leading role in STEM research. In the Welsh context, equivalent opportunities exist, for instance in Art & Design and Newport is leading the way with UWIC in a major research partnership, Wales Institute for Research in Art & Design, (WIRAD), which is designed to build over time a pan Wales Art & Design research partnership in an area of significant strength in the principality.

We note that WAG policy currently promotes strengthening of partnerships in the field of education, and we are actively supportive of this aim. The RISE partnership is one example in which we have played a leading role. We would encourage WAG to continue moving in this direction and are ready to support it in innovating further along these lines.

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