



Sefydliad Materion Cymreig
Institute of Welsh Affairs

Newsletter May 2008

A busy start to 2008

As signs emerge that summer is now approaching, it is time to update members on what has been a busy period of activity for the Institute. Late winter and Spring have seen a number of important publications, conferences and other events, considerable branch activity up and down Wales and new personnel joining the organization.

The year got off to a promising start with a very well-attended conference on the *Heads of the Valleys Experience* at Penderyn, near Hirwaun. More than 150 people, drawn mainly from the public and voluntary sector, gathered in February to hear a range of speakers, including Prof Kevin Morgan of Cardiff University, Ieuan Wyn Jones, Deputy First Minister and Leighton Andrews, Deputy Minister for Regeneration, talk about plans to regenerate an area still characterized by severe economic and social deprivation.

Break-out groups discussed housing, transport, and culture and tourism and some of the issues raised were taken back to a seminar held in association with the Regeneration Institute at Cardiff University. The keynote speaker was Professor Steve Fothergill of Sheffield Hallam University, the UK's leading expert on older industrial areas. Presentations from the two events are currently being edited and will be published later this summer in a new IWA publication.

On the political front, four leading academic commentators, John Kay, Will Hutton, David Marquand and Peter Stead each in turn led one of a series of four seminars under the broad rubric, *The Progressive Consensus*. The aim of the series which ran from February through to April was to look at the ideas underpinning the July 2007 One Wales coalition agreement between Labour and Plaid Cymru. This, too, will be published shortly.

This was followed by another important seminar series *Assembly to Senedd*, organised jointly with Cymru Yfory / Tomorrow's Wales, the organisation led by the Archbishop of Wales, the Rt Rev Barry Morgan. Four half-day conferences in Wrexham, Carmarthen, Aberystwyth and Cardiff during April explored the process under way to hand primary legislation powers to the National Assembly for Wales. Speakers included Sir Emyr Jones-Parry, chairman of the constitutional convention set up by the Welsh Assembly Government to look at the issues, the Rt Rev Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales, Lord Elystan Morgan, a number of Assembly Members and MPs drawn from all four political parties and the Institute's director, John Osmond.

Branches discuss key local concerns

Branch events during this period have included a lecture by Professor Christopher Pollock of Aberystwyth University on *Science and Government, Options for Wales* in Swansea, a discussion on the role of supermarkets in Wales with Felix Gummer, Tesco's corporate affairs director for Wales, and a seminar on West Wales transport

issues, both in Carmarthen. Earlier in the year the Deputy First Minister, whose brief includes transport, addressed a conference in Llandudno on *Uniting the Nation*, an examination of how north and south Wales could be better linked through improvements to the existing roads network.

The IWA's 21st

This year also happens to be the 21st anniversary of the IWA's foundation, and in what is planned to be the first of several commemorative events the Institute hosted the April 4th edition of *BBC Radio 4 Any Questions?* from Cardiff Business School. The panelists for the night were First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, Plaid Cymru's Helen Mary Jones AM, Dr. Evan Harris MP of the Liberal Democrats and Cheryl Gillan MP, Conservative Shadow Welsh Secretary.

A full summer programme

The busy programme is set to continue during the summer with events planned on the Future of Welsh Broadcasting in association with Ofcom on June 9th in Llandudno and on the following two days firstly in Aberystwyth and then Cardiff. Speakers will include Geraint Talfan Davies, Chair of the IWA, Rhodri Williams of Ofcom Cymru, Rob Irvine, Editor of the Daily Post, and Ron Jones, Chief Executive of Tinopolis, the independent producer. Then on June 12th we will be returning to the newly refurbished Parc (Thistle) Hotel in Cardiff for a one day conference with various partners on Making Business Sense of Sustainable Development. This side of the holidays, three further events will take place. On 17 June, Geraint Talfan Davies will talk about his career in the media and arts at a north Wales dinner at Bangor University. On 26 June the Gwent Branch will host a half-day conference, A Cultural Quarter for Newport, looking at the role cultural activity might play in the large-scale regeneration of the city centre, including the riverside, now underway. Finally, on 30 June, the West Wales branch is organising a summer evening event at Aberglasney, which includes a tour of the gardens and talk by Geraint Talfan Davies. Full details of all these events can be found on the IWA website www.iwa.org.uk.

Research puts media under the spotlight

During this period the main research activity undertaken by the Institute has been into the role, status, performance and prospects of the Welsh print and broadcast media. The study, by Geraint Talfan Davies and Nick Morris, has been paying particular attention to the lack of diversity in the Welsh print media and the dangers posed by the shrinking service ITV Wales may provide in the future. It also looks at the way Wales is represented in the London-based media and the difficulties posed for a developing Welsh civic society by the very limited coverage of Welsh news in the press media read by most people in Wales. The research, supported by Ofcom and the Welsh Assembly Government, will be published shortly and followed by a conference. Nick incidentally is the IWA's new research officer who joined the organization on a permanent basis after previously working for us under the Welsh Assembly Government's GO (Graduate Opportunities) scheme. (If you would like details of this scheme, please let us know and we will pass your inquiry on.)

Other research projects on *Tackling Educational Disengagement in Wales*, on the socio- economic and political impact of a Severn Barrage, on the Severn Bridge tolls and their effect on the Welsh economy and on a number of other topics are either under way or being developed. Another study on Aerospace Clusters in Wales, undertaken jointly by the IWA with Cardiff University and the University of

Glamorgan for the Welsh Assembly Government has just been published and will, it is hoped, help to inform public policy on this key industrial sector for Wales.

Publications from the IWA during the past few months include *A strategy for the Welsh Economy* by Dr. John Ball of Swansea Metropolitan University, in which he suggests a number of radical new ideas for encouraging the development of new business activity and increasing the growth rate of the regions of Wales. Geraint Talfan Davies, the IWA chairman, also published his reflections in *At Arm's Length* on a range of Welsh issues from the successful battle to maintain independence in arts funding to the needs of the emerging new Welsh civic society. www.seren-books.com

The website gets a new look

Regular visitors to the website will also have noticed recent improvements, including a less cluttered front page and easier navigation between the various other pages. Much of the work has been carried out by Helen Dodd, a masters student from Swansea University, who has also built search facilities into the site, enabling visitors to find much more quickly back articles and publications. There is also now a mechanism for purchasing goods and services from the IWA directly off the page through PayPal without the need to contact the IWA's offices.

Another new feature of the website is an IWA blog where members and non-members are welcome to comment on issues they feel need attention. A few blog posts have already been uploaded and your engagement in the debate is welcome, particularly with comments on the blogs.

We are also in the process of constructing a members area accessible only through an individual password where it will be possible to gain access to various IWA services, including discounted publications. If you have any ideas about benefits you would like to see offered through this area within the website we would be very pleased to hear from you.

The IWA at Caerdydd 2008

Finally, the IWA will again this year be present at the National Eisteddfod, which is, of course, being held in Sophia Gardens only a few hundred yards from the IWA's offices in Museum Place, the other side of Cathays Park. This year's annual IWA National Eisteddfod lecture is being delivered by Heritage Minister Rhodri Glyn Thomas on the theme *Treftadaeth Yfory / Tomorrow's Heritage*. It will be held on the Maes in the Pagoda at 2pm on Tuesday 5 August. All are welcome.

Agenda

The next issue of the IWA's journal *agenda*, currently in preparation, will be published in late July.

If you have any comments or suggestions to make regarding any of the points raised above do please let us know on wales@iwa.org.uk This address or our phone number 029 2066 6606 are also available to take any bookings you may want to make for events or for publications or other inquiries.

With many thanks for your continued support

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