

**Minutes of the meeting of the Research, Innovation and Engagement
Committee held on 21 April 2009 at Linden Court, Ilex Close, Llanishen,
Cardiff, CF14 5DZ**

Present:

Members:

Professor Garel Rhys (Chair)
 Professor Peter Blood - Cardiff University
 Ruth Brooks - representing Welsh Heads of Careers Services
 (WHECS)
 Alan Davies – business sector representative
 Dr Alastair Davies – representing Welsh Assembly Government
 (DE&T)
 Professor Richard Davies – representing Heads of Higher Education
 Wales (HEW)
 Professor Dylan Jones-Evans – University of Wales
 Dr Steven Hill – Research Councils UK
 Professor Brian Hobbs – University of Glamorgan
 Geraint Jones – representing Network of Welsh Industrial Liaison
 Officers (WILOs)
 Gwennan Jones - representing Network of Welsh European Liaison
 Officers (WELOs)
 Sue Morgan - representing Welsh Assembly Government (DE&T)
 Ken Richards – HEFCW Member
 Professor Sir Brian Smith – HEFCW Member
 Professor Duncan Tanner – Bangor University

Attendees:

Roger Thomas – Chair of HEFCW

Observers:

Dr Rachel Garside-Jones - Welsh Assembly Government
 (DCELLS)
 Karen Latham - Welsh Assembly Government (DCELLS)
 Greg Walker (HEW)

Officers:

Roger Carter - Head of Research Business & Communities
 Teresa Cooper – Senior Economic Development Manager (Joint
 Secretary)
 Jackie Cresswell-Griffith – GO Wales Programme Manager
 Linda Tiller – Senior Research Manager (Joint Secretary)
 Dr Tove Oliver – European & International Manager
 Dr Alyson Thomas - Senior Economic Development Manager

1 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

- 1.1 Professor Garel Rhys welcomed everyone to the inaugural meeting of HEFCW's new Research, Innovation and Engagement (RIE) Committee. He noted that this was very much a scene setting session with the purpose of:
 - (i) Introducing members and attendees to one another; and
 - (ii) Agreeing a forward agenda and mode of operation for the Committee's first year of business.
- 1.2 Before proceeding to business Professor Rhys invited Roger Carter to set the general scene by highlighting the differences between the new RIE Committee and its predecessors, the Third Mission Committee and the Research Sounding Group. This was supplemented by a further short introductory address from HEFCW's Chair, Roger Thomas, who provided some extracts from the Council's latest remit letter that underlined the importance now being attached to the sector's research and third mission activities by the Welsh Assembly Government.
- 1.3 Following on from this, the Chair invited each person present to introduce themselves and explain their particular interests in attending meetings of the RIE Committee.
- 1.4 Professor Garel Rhys also presented apologies for absence from Dr David Walker and Simon Bradley who represented the interests of the Welsh business sector on the new Committee. He also noted that Alan Davies had been invited to attend on behalf of Simon Bradley.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING DATE OF HEFCW'S THIRD MISSION COMMITTEE

- 2.1 The minutes of the final meeting of HEFCW's Third Mission Committee held on 28 November 2008 were accepted as an accurate record.

3 SETTING THE RESEARCH SCENE IN WALES

- 3.1 The Committee received a presentation from Linda Tiller, HEFCW's Senior Research Manager, on the current position of research in Wales. This included consideration of the outcomes of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise; research policy drivers in Wales; and issues in the wider research environment.
- 3.2 The presentation was followed by a general discussion, during which points made included the following:
 - It was suggested that there is a historic deficit in the number of STEM researchers in Wales compared with other parts of the UK. This is seen as a factor in the sector's relatively low share of UK Research Council funding, the majority of which is provided for STEM subjects. Addressing the historic deficit in STEM subjects would be expensive, and should not be at the expense of other disciplines, but it would significantly boost the sector's

capacity for Research Council grant capture, knowledge transfer and international collaboration.

- The Engineering and Physical Research Council (EPSRC) is looking to build partnership arrangements with institutions. However, at present, the Welsh HE sector does not have a very high profile with the EPSRC, and there is scope to address this.
- More effort should be made to map private sector investment in research in Wales onto HEIs' research activities and to establish linkages between the two. In this context, it was noted that EADS is an excellent example of a successful partnership between industry and the Assembly.
- It was suggested that there is a need for mechanisms to support research collaborations between Welsh HEIs and those in other parts of the UK.
- In relation to the RAE it was noted:
 - that, whilst critical mass is important, some small units had also achieved excellent results
 - that research focused on specifically Welsh topics did not seem to score highly with RAE Panels unless it could be presented as an illustration of wider national or international issues.
- From HEFCW's point of view, significant issues included:
 - The Assembly increasingly expects the HE sector to contribute to the delivery of its policy objectives. The latest remit letter included a statement to this effect, whilst acknowledging that the sector also needs to remain competitive in the wider UK context.
 - The RAE outcomes had confirmed that the overwhelming majority of HE research in Wales is undertaken in four of the pre-92 universities, plus the University of Glamorgan. The sector should seek to bring these institutions closer together.

4 Setting the third mission scene in Wales

4.1 The Committee received a presentation from Teresa Cooper, which summarised:

- The way in which HEFCW defined third mission activities;
- The policy background behind the development of the third mission agenda in Wales and across the UK;
- The funding of third mission activities; and
- Measurement of institutions' performance and impact in this area

4.2 At the close of the presentation the Committee was invited to return to the challenges highlighted in each of the presentation areas and offer advice on how they might be taken forward. Members were also asked to identify other issues and challenges, which might impact on HEFCW policy and strategy in this area.

4.3 In the ensuing discussion members concentrated on the following areas, all of which would need to be picked up in subsequent meetings :

4.3.1 **Funding Matters**

- Whilst there was a general endorsement of the principles that underpinned HEFCW's Third Mission Fund, it was agreed that the percentage of overall core funding allocated to these activities should be revisited.
- The *dual-support system* provided by HEFCW and the Welsh Assembly Government in respect of HEIs' third mission should be kept under review and re-examined in the context of a potential funding gap in this area between Wales and the rest of the UK's HE sector.
- Consideration should also be given to a potential role for HEFCW and its strategic partners, including departments within the Welsh Assembly Government, in facilitating HEIs' abilities to draw upon non-Council sources of third mission funding from both within the UK and from overseas.
- Especially in the current economic climate, further consideration should be given to incentivising HEIs to adopt a more holistic approach to their third mission. This would entail coherent, overarching institutional strategies that deliver on all three of the sector's missions, and effectively articulate the impact of all planned activities on economic and social well-being. It was also noted that linking the release of all core funding to institutions' ability to demonstrate their contribution to economic and social development would tie in with the remit placed upon the Council in respect of a more strategic use of funding.
- The need for all of the above funding matters to be debated in the context of the current review of the mission, purpose, role and funding for HE in Wales being led by Professor Merfyn Jones.

4.3.2 **Policy Matters**

- The sometimes conflicting *policy pulls placed* on HEIs in Wales because of differing Assembly and Whitehall Government policy imperatives.
- A need to evaluate the extent to which regional-based third mission collaborations enhanced the capacity of participating institutions to impact on their local community and economy.
- A need to consider whether or not the policy context within Wales currently placed too much emphasis on encouraging HE interactions with SMEs at the expense of attracting enhanced levels of investment in Wales from larger national and multi-national companies.

4.3.3 Performance Matters

- It was acknowledged that the economic and social impact of HEIs in Wales tended to be under-recognised by both policy makers and the public at large, with expenditure on HE still too often portrayed as a drain on the public purse and not as an investment with a significant rate of return.
- However, it was agreed that there was no mileage in extolling the sector's past performance (as, for example, evidenced in successive annual HE-Business and Community Interaction Surveys); emphasis must be placed on the sector's current and future performance. As demonstrated in the Council's 2009-10 Remit Letter (see minute 7.1 following), the current economic downturn only reinforced the need for HEIs to enhance both their contribution to and the articulation of that contribution to delivering Assembly Government policies for economic and social well-being.
- Notwithstanding the sector's role in supporting economic and social development in Wales, the third mission agenda also helped thrust HEIs' activities onto a wider UK and international stage. Consideration therefore needed to be given to developing third mission performance indicators with a strong public interest perspective and/or which would be of universal interest as possible indicators of strong economic and social benefit.

5 Annual report from the Chair of the Third Mission Committee

- 5.1 The Committee received the last report from the Chair of the Third Mission Committee, which covered the academic years 2007/08 and 2008/09 and noted that it would now be submitted to Council for information. Anyone who had any questions arising from this report was asked to contact Teresa Cooper outside of the meeting.

6 HEFCW's 2009-10 Remit Letter

- 6.1 Roger Carter tabled for information copies of the Council's latest remit letter, which was published on HEFCW's website that same day. He took the Committee through the remit letter, drawing particular attention to tasks where the Council would look to the RIE Committee for advice and guidance.

7 Forward Agenda

- 7.1 In view of time restraints, the Chair decided that a discussion about methods of working and future discussion topics/themes should be deferred until the Committee's next meeting.

8 Date of next meeting

- 8.1 Three dates for future meetings had been agreed so far, but it was noted that a clash with a HEW meeting also scheduled for the third date listed below, might lead to another date being canvassed for January 2010:

7 July 2009, 20 October 2009, 14 January 2010