

**Notes of RIE Committee Meeting
26 January 2010**

Cyngor Cyllido Addysg Uwch Cymru Higher Education Funding Council for Wales		Disclosable
		Reference RIEC/10/09

**Notes of the meeting of the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee
held on 26 January 2010 at Linden Court, Ilex Close, Llanishen, Cardiff,
CF14 5DZ**

Present:

Members:

Professor Robin Williams (Chair)
Professor Peter Blood - Cardiff University
Nick Bodycombe - representing Network of Welsh European Liaison Officers (WELOs)
Ruth Brooks - representing Welsh Heads of Careers Services (WHECS)
Dr Alastair Davies – representing Welsh Assembly Government (DE&T)
Professor Richard Davies – representing Heads of Higher Education Wales (HEW)
Dr Steven Hill – Research Councils UK
Professor Brian Hobbs – University of Glamorgan
Geraint Jones – representing Network of Welsh Industrial Liaison Officers (WILOs)
Sue Morgan - representing Welsh Assembly Government (DE&T)
Ian Risk - Business representative
Professor Sir Brian Smith – HEFCW Member
Dr David Walker- Business representative

Attendees:

Cheryl Moore & Matthew Taylor – Strategic Insight Programme
Kathryn David, Jennie Evans and Ceri Jones – Dragon Innovation Partnership

Observers:

Karen Latham - Welsh Assembly Government (DCELLS)
Greg Walker (HEW)
Virginia West (Wales International Consortium)

Officers:

Roger Carter - Head of Research Business & Communities
David Blaney – Director of Strategic Development
Teresa Cooper - Senior Economic Development Manager (Joint Secretary)
Professor Phil Gummatt – Chief Executive
Linda Tiller – Senior Research Manager (Joint Secretary)
Alyson Thomas - Senior Economic Development Manager

Apologies	Simon Bradley – Business representative Professor Dylan Jones-Evans – University of Wales Jackie Cresswell-Griffith (GO Wales Programme Manager) Tove Oliver – Europe and International Manager Duncan Tanner – Bangor University
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1 Welcomes and Departures

- 1.1 Professor Robin Williams reported that Garel Rhys' and Ken Richards' membership of HEFCW had now come to an end and that both had also therefore retired from the RIEC. Robin Williams was now a member of HEFCW and the Chair of the Council, Roger Thomas, had invited him to take over as Chair of the RIEC. Members agreed that Robin Williams should write on behalf of all members to thank Garel Rhys and Ken Richards for their work on the RIEC.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Ian Risk, Head of EADS Innovation Works UK, who attended on behalf of Simon Bradley as a business sector representative. He also welcomed to their first meeting Nick Bodycombe as the Chair of WELOs, replacing Gwennan Jones on the Committee, and observer Virginia West from the Wales International Consortium.

2 Declaration of Interest

- 2.1 The Chair formally noted that business sector representative, David Walker, had recently been appointed as Professor of Optics at Glyndwr University (part-time) and promoted to Professorial Research Associate (part-time) at University College London.

3 New Way of working

- 3.1 The Chair announced that following concerns raised at the previous meeting regarding an over-busy agenda he would be instigating a new format that would include:
- One major policy issue for presentation and discussion in depth for around one hour;
 - Discussion of appropriate short business items usually involving specific proposals;
 - No discussion of information papers unless specifically requested by a Member in advance of the meeting;
 - A new start time of 10 am.
- 3.2 Professor Williams also indicated his intention to make use of ad hoc working groups from time to time and emphasised that contributions from observers and

officers would be as welcome as those from Members in all areas of the Committee's activities.

4 Notes of the Meeting held on 21 April 2009

4.1 The Notes of the meeting held on 12 October 2009 were approved without amendment.

4.2 The following matters arising from the last meeting were noted:

a) *Note 4: Improving Wales' Share of Research Council Income and Enhancing research Collaboration*

Members agreed with the Chair's suggestion that this would be an appropriate topic for a special-interest working group as mooted at 3.2 above. In particular, it was agreed that further consideration should be given to tackling Wales' deficit in STEM researchers and to developing more of a *team Wales* approach to capturing a greater share of European Research Funding especially in the context of Framework Programme 8. Ian Risk noted that it would also be important to work with the business sector in this respect.

b) *Note 8: NAW Learning and Enterprise Committee Report: The Economic Contribution of HE in Wales*

Roger Carter reported that in the light of the publication of *For Our Future* since the last meeting (Note 5 following refers), which drew heavily on the outcomes of the above inquiry, it had been decided to defer discussion until the proposed joint meeting with the Council's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee on 12 March 2010 (Note 8.2 of the meeting on 12/10/09 refers).

5 Third Mission Funding

Presentations

5.1 The Chair welcomed Cheryl Moore and Matthew Taylor from the Strategic Insight Programme (SIP) and Ceri Jones, Kathryn David and Jennie Evans from the Dragon Innovation Partnership (DIP) to the meeting.

5.2 Members received with interest presentations on these very different collaborations funded via the Council's current 3M Fund. The first presentation by Cheryl Moore on behalf of SIP (partners: University of Glamorgan, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, UWIC and University of Wales, Newport) reported on the emerging outcomes of a project-based collaboration aimed at increasing interactions between the partner HEIs and public, private and third sector organisations. Within this project 3M funding was being used to *buy out* academic time in order to allow academics to undertake a short placement in an external organisation in order to improve their understanding of business needs. A recent extension to this project was also funding placements for business people within HEIs (known as "Reverse SIPs"). Cheryl Moore reported that to date the project had delivered:

- 148 academic placements, many involving staff who had hitherto not engaged with the 3M agenda (completed or underway);
- 28 reverse SIPs (completed or underway);
- £110k in commercial income;
- £2m potential early stage projects;
- Arrangements for 20 student work placements

5.3 Ceri Jones presented on behalf of the DIP, explaining that this was a strategic rather than a project-based collaboration in which three HEIs (Swansea University, Swansea Metropolitan and Trinity University College) had built upon an existing collaboration under the South West Wales HE Partnership (SWWHEP) to come together to produce a collaborative 3M strategy to better serve the businesses and communities of South West Wales. This presentation highlighted how 3M funding had been utilised across the partnership and deliverables to date, which included:

- 5 collaborative events with SSCs;
- Development of a new centre to deliver CPD for supply teachers;
- 6 collaborative funding applications (4 successful to date);
- Over 100 other knowledge transfer projects;
- Levering in additional funding of £2.284m

5.4 In the ensuing discussion, points made included:

- Both of these collaborations constituted models of good practice that could be replicated in other areas of Wales;
- Neither of these initiatives would have got off the ground without the support of 3M funding from HEFCW;
- Both sets of partners indicated that (subject to new 3M funding arrangements) they would wish to maintain and extend their collaborative activity.

5.5 The Chair thanked the representatives of the SIP and DIP for their contribution to the meeting.

Outcomes of consultation on future 3M funding arrangements

5.5 Teresa Cooper presented a paper that analysed the outcomes of HEFCW's recent consultation on the future of its 3M Fund and invited the Committee to offer advice as to how the Council should be recommended to respond to the consultation outcomes. In the ensuing discussion the Committee expressed its broad agreement with the overall conclusion of the consultation exercise. This was that in the current financial climate and in the context of *For Our Future*, which was predicated on two key priorities of contributing to a buoyant economy and delivering social justice, now was not an appropriate time for the Council to re-shape radically its support for HEIs' activities in support of economy and society. The Committee also noted the positive endorsement given to core 3M funding in both the consultation exercise and the

presentations received by the Committee (see notes 5.1 to 5.4 preceding) and agreed that removal now would:

- risk diluting the importance of 3M activities in the eyes of academics – ie the first fund to be cut in times of financial pressure because it was the least important – and also not an appropriate message in the context of the impact agenda of the forthcoming REF;
- send out the wrong signal externally as well as internally- ie that 3M was not a strategic priority for the sector when current Assembly and Whitehall Government policies increasingly allocate HEIs a role in delivering future prosperity;
- call into question the sector's commitment to the delivery of the Assembly's new long term strategy for HE in Wales, *For Our Future*;
- remove the only existing mechanism for allocating 3M support on the basis of rewarding 3M performance;
- put 3M funding at risk of being diverted to support core teaching and research activities in the current financial climate; and
- undermine the progress made to date in embedding and mainstreaming 3M thinking into all HEI activities and jeopardise its future sustainability.

5.6 Members also agreed that Council should be advised to:

- Rename the 3M Fund and maintain it at least at the current level of £6.3m pa;
- Remove the allocation of a common level of foundation funding to all HEIs and replace it with a guaranteed minimum funding allocation of £150k;
- Continue to allocate the bulk of 3M funding via a formula that rewards performance;
- Continue to make a proportion of 3M funding available on the basis of a competitive bidding process; and
- Enhance the strategic coherence of 3M funding and reporting with other streams of HEFCW funding and their associated monitoring and reporting regimes.

5.7 However, Members were more divided on the following issues:

- The extent to which (if at all) the Council should be invited to consider increasing the overall level of 3M funding;
- The criteria on which the proposed competitive element of the funding should be made available;
- The amount of emphasis that should be placed on 3M activities in support of social justice/well-being, as opposed to economic development activities (especially within the funding formula);

- How far institutions should be required to develop collaborative 3M strategies. The example of the DIP and the joint 3M Strategy of Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities were noted as potential models of regional planning in the context of *For Our Future*. However, it was noted that these had emerged organically and reservations were expressed about *imposed* collaborations.
- The appropriateness or not of attaching a funding premium to collaborative strategies and/or making bid-based monies available only to collaborative proposals.

It was agreed to recommend to Council:

- a) To move forward into a new three year cycle of core 3M funding in line with the views expressed in the consultation exercise;
- b) to delegate authority to the Chair of the Committee and the Chief Executive to implement a new three year cycle of 3M funding for 2010/11 to 2012/13 drawing on the above advice.

6 For Our Future

6.1 The Committee considered a paper on the Welsh Assembly Government's HE strategy and action plan, *For Our Future*, and its implications for the areas covered by the Committee. It was noted that HEFCW was in the process of developing a new corporate strategy based on *For Our Future* and an associated action plan.

6.2 Points made in discussion included:

- the present documentation was rather inward-looking. The action plan should place more emphasis on the international role of Welsh HE and its role in the rest of the UK.
- research is a national and international activity, and there were concerns that this dimension would be constrained by *For Our Future's* regional agenda.
- there were concerns that, in operationalising *For Our Future*, there was a danger of losing the big picture. The focus should be kept firmly on delivering a prosperous country by drawing on HE expertise.
- there was a need to address the STEM deficit in Wales in order to deliver effectively on several of the *For Our Future* priorities.
- in developing the action plan, it would be important to remember that all elements of the HE system are inter-linked, and that changes in one area could have unintended consequences elsewhere.
- it was suggested that Health and Wellbeing could be added as a third high-level objective.

- 6.3 Phil Gummatt commented that there was a need for speedy and visible delivery in response to *For Our Future*. The regional dimension related primarily to improving access to HE for local students who were unable to travel, and was not intended to constrain institutions' research ambitions.
- 6.4 It was agreed that the Chair would feed the Committee's views into the Council's discussion of *For Our Future* at its meeting on 29 January.
- 6.5 It was noted that a special joint meeting of RIEC, the Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee and the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Committee would be held to discuss *For Our Future* and its fit with the Corporate Strategy in more detail. This meeting would take place at 2.30 pm on Friday 12 March at the New House Hotel, Cardiff.

7 DE&T Economic Renewal Programme

- 7.1 Alastair Davies updated the Committee on the Welsh Assembly Government's Economic Renewal Programme.
- 7.2 The programme had been prompted partly by the economic downturn, and partly by feedback that the kinds of support currently provided by WAG were not necessarily the ones which businesses considered the most valuable.
- 7.3 The review would consider the direct and indirect policy levers available to WAG and determine how these could most effectively be used to promote business growth. The emphasis was likely to be on partnership working and a whole government approach rather than individual grant programmes. One example of the kind of options being considered was whether it would be more effective to promote ICT access through individual grants, as at present, or through the implementation of a high quality broadband service across Wales.
- 7.4 The review had started in October 2009 and would conclude in Spring 2010, with implementation starting from Autumn 2010. DE&T would ensure that appropriate linkages were made with the provisions of *For Our Future*.

8 Criteria for Designation as a National Research Centre

- 8.1 The Committee considered proposals for draft criteria for the designation of certain types of research developments as National Research Centres, in line with the commitment made in the Assembly Government's *One Wales* document.
- 8.2 It was noted that two of the collaborations supported through HEFCW's Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund had already been designated as National Research Centres (NRCs). It was likely that any future NRCs would be selected from among the other Reconfiguration and Collaboration

partnerships which HEFCW was already supporting, or which were already under consideration for support.

8.3 The following points were made in discussion:

- greater emphasis should be placed on the criterion of research excellence
- the title should not be awarded on a permanent or open-ended basis. NRCs should be designated for three or five years in the first instance, with renewal subject to satisfactory performance.
- in order to avoid ambiguity, NRCs should include the word “Wales” in their title, and would therefore be known as National Research Centres **for Wales**. Steven Hill confirmed that the use of the term “centre” in relation to distributed activities would not be contrary to Research Council practice.
- in order to maintain a clear status and distinctiveness, the number of NRCs should be strictly limited – perhaps to as few as three or four.
- BIS and TSB were also planning to designate a number of National Centres, and DE&T could provide HEFCW with copies of their criteria.
- it was suggested that reference could be made to the benefits conferred by NRC status, for example in relation to marketing.

It was agreed to recommend to Council:

- b) to draw on the above comments in preparing the advice to the Welsh Assembly Government.
- b) to delegate authority to the Chair of the Committee to finalise the advice, in conjunction with the Chair of the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Committee, the Chair of Council and the Chief Executive.

Information Papers

9 Review of Additional Funding for Part-Time Students

9.1 The Committee received, for information, a paper on the outcomes of a review of the additional funding for part-time students which had been made available following the 2006 Graham Review.

10 Minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee

10.1 The Committee received, for information, the Minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee held on 21 October 2009.

11 Forward Business Plan

11.1 The Committee received its provisional forward business plan for 2010.

12 Dates of Future Meetings

12.1 It was noted that future meetings of the Committee would be held as follows:

- 19 April 2010
- 29 June 2010
- 12 October 2010