

## News release

**Date:** 13 June 2018

**Title:** New report shows significant impact of higher education providers on communities

#HEFCWcivic

A new report published today will show the impact of higher education providers on local, national and international communities.

*Innovation Nation: On common ground* will be launched by HEFCW at a celebration of institutions' civic engagement activities in the Norwegian Church, Cardiff at 18:00.

Cabinet Secretary for Education Kirsty Williams AM will provide the keynote speech before delegates hear from a range of universities and partners, including:

- David Allen, **HEFCW** Chair
- Louise Casella, **Open University in Wales**
- Dylan Jones, **Penparcau Community Forum**
- Cathy Treadaway, **Cardiff Metropolitan University**
- Steph Mastoris, **National Waterfront Museum**
- Dave Horton, **CAER Heritage Project** | Ridwan Ahmed, **Grangetown Community Gateway**
- Jane Davidson, **University of Wales Trinity Saint David**

There will also be exhibitions – involving robots, artefacts, music and more - from universities, the Business Wales Youth Entrepreneurship, and Advance HE, which advances the professional practice of higher education.

The publication includes more than fifty case studies from higher education providers, and covers areas as diverse as healthcare and well-being provision; local access to arts, sport culture and heritage; aspiration-raising activities; and community and school engagement.

HEFCW Chair David Allen said: “HEFCW has always linked innovation with engagement. The activities showcased today are part of the sector’s innovative offer. Universities and colleges have a far greater influence on our day-to-day lives than many might realise.

“Universities in Wales are central in so many ways for encouraging long-term thinking and more joining up of people and communities to work on preventing problems in the future.”

Professor Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor of Aberystwyth University, said: “As universities, we have an important role to play in working with our local communities and economies, and to contribute to society as a whole through the impact of our research and education as well as the achievements of our staff, students and alumni. At Aberystwyth, our aim has always been to open the doors not only to those who want to study a degree programme or work with us, but also to those who live in the town and the wider area. We do this through a range of engaging activities, including creative learning classes at our Arts Centre, fitness and well-being classes at our Sports Centre lifelong learning, and Welsh for Adults classes. Our year-long partnership with the Penparcau Community Forum has been particularly inspiring and we hope to see further projects of this nature in the future.”

Steve Duffy, of Grangetown Community Action, which works closely with Cardiff University's Community Gateway project in Grangetown, said: "We weren't sure how Community Gateway would work when it was first set up but it's been a breath of fresh air. It's brought a lot of people together who are already doing things in Grangetown with others who want to; it's helped with a focus on getting things done properly. We've tapped into some valuable expertise and support, which is sometimes hard to access for people doing voluntary work, where time can be a precious commodity. It's essentially very practical - it's not wasted on theorising and endless meetings - and we are starting to see some real, tangible benefits. It's given Grangetown a friendly push in a positive direction."

Professor Hywel Thomas, Cardiff University's Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Engagement, said: "We're proud to be a Welsh university and it's important that we demonstrate the many ways that we benefit our country and its people."

"From paying the Living Wage to working with schools to improve attainment, from involving our communities in research to educating the healthcare professionals of the future, we are an important contributor to the success of Wales."

Director of The Open University in Wales, Louise Casella, said "Part-time higher education changes lives and makes a significant contribution to the Welsh economy. As the only university that operates across the whole of Wales, we are proud to be able to offer flexible, part-time higher education that enables students to fit study in around their busy lives."

"Social mobility is at the heart of The Open University and we offer a range of opportunities for people to study with us from our formal curriculum through to our free online learning, alongside specific support for students in secure environments or those with disabilities or caring responsibilities. We are very proud to be part of Wales' vibrant and innovative higher education landscape."

Ceri Jones, Director, Research, Engagement & Innovation Services, Swansea University, said: “The Innovation Nation publication is an amazing opportunity to showcase so many of the wonderful projects and initiatives taking place across Wales. Working together to support our local communities, driving economic and social development and inspiring the next generation is something we are all very passionate about, and proud to see shining through in this publication.”

Professor Julie Lydon, Vice Chancellor of the University of South Wales, said: “Our universities play a crucial role in the economic and civic life of our communities. At USW we engage right across the South East Wales region, whether it’s partnership with our local schools at every level from governors to students, enabling major technology investment from international companies like Thales, with spinoff for jobs, or educating active citizens who play a role in the future of our society.”

Wrexham Glyndŵr University Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Claire Taylor said: “A university like ours is a community in itself – but we know we are part of a wider, regional community and our work on civic engagement reflects this.

“Our staff and academics are at the heart of projects making a real difference across our region – and working alongside partners such as health boards, local authorities, schools, and more.

“These aren’t simply theoretical projects – they are making a real, tangible difference to people’s lives, from individual primary school pupils all the way through to entire towns.

“Developing genuinely collaborative approaches like these – some of which are outlined in the Innovation Nation – On Common Ground report - is key to our civic engagement strategy.”

Dr Jane Davidson, PVC External Engagement & Sustainability at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) said: “With campuses across South West Wales, the UWTSD Group is well-placed to make a positive social and economic impact upon its communities. We are using our research expertise and are working at grass-roots levels to transform the lives of individuals.

“As a sector, Welsh universities have a good story to tell. The case studies included in HEFCW’s publication are excellent examples of our work. UWTSD believes strongly in its civic mission to create opportunities for students, communities and companies in Wales to come together to upskill the nation and advance social, economic, environmental and cultural thinking in line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

“We are delighted that the ‘Innovation Nation’ features the university’s work in creating new health and wellbeing opportunities for children and older people; that our focus on tackling inequalities in societies is endorsed; that the social and financial benefit of our collaborative working with other agencies - including the police - is recognised; and that our work for some of the most disadvantaged people here and in developing countries is being celebrated.”

## **Ends**

## **Contact**

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## **Notes**

The report *Innovation Nation: on common ground* will be available at:  
[www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/hefcw\\_reports\\_and\\_statistics/INNOVATION%20NATION%20-%20ON%20COMMON%20GROUND%20-%20FINAL%20ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/hefcw_reports_and_statistics/INNOVATION%20NATION%20-%20ON%20COMMON%20GROUND%20-%20FINAL%20ENGLISH.pdf)

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## **About HEFCW**

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales – HEFCW – is the public body that sits between universities and the Welsh Government. We regulate fee levels at higher education providers, ensure a framework is in place for assessing the quality of higher education and scrutinise the performance of universities. We distribute resources for higher education teaching and research, and help to deliver Welsh Government priorities for higher education for the wider benefit of society and the economy.