

**P-06-1507 We call on UWTSD and the Welsh Government to create a viable, sustainable plan for the long-term future of Lampeter campus - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 04 March 2025**

Background information for Petitions Committee meeting 10/3/25

The university at Lampeter is Wales's oldest university; the 3<sup>rd</sup> oldest in England and Wales after Oxford and Cambridge. It is a globally significant institution of higher education. The decision to end undergraduate teaching at Lampeter marks a devastating blow not only to the Lampeter campus but to the cultural, historical, and educational heritage of Wales. UWTSD have allowed the closure of an institution that has shaped Wales's intellectual and cultural identity for nearly 200 years.

The decision has been framed as a financial necessity. We, the Lampeter Society, do not accept that narrative. The decline of Lampeter was not inevitable but engineered through successive cuts, neglect, and strategic missteps that reduced a once-vibrant institution to its current state. For decades, Lampeter has been deliberately and systematically stripped of its resources and identity. Fewer courses led to fewer students, which in turn justified further reductions - a clear and calculated process of managed decline.

The decision completely disregards the devastating economic and social impact on Lampeter and south Ceredigion. The 2008 HEFCW report explicitly warned that the closure of Lampeter would have a severe economic impact on the town and surrounding area. For a rural community like Lampeter, the university is not just an employer but a cultural and social lifeline.

Lampeter is more than a campus. It is an institution of global renown, a vital thread in the cultural fabric of Wales, and a symbol of resilience and intellectual excellence. Its closure represents a national scandal, and history will not look kindly on those who allowed this to happen.

The Lampeter Society calls upon UWTSD and the Welsh Government to develop a robust way forward that honours the institution's past while securing its future. Despite the current narrative, we believe it is certainly a matter for the Welsh Government. Not stepping in when the nation's Higher Education sector is struggling, and in some cases failing, is shortsighted and indeed contravening a precedent which has already been set.

The following are alternative proposals drawn up by the Lampeter Society for the Lampeter campus.

## ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS FOR THE LAMPETER CAMPUS

**A strategic review of higher education in Wales is ultimately needed as the sector grapples with a nation-wide financial crisis with falling student demand; rising costs; tuition fee-value erosion; research being undertaken at a net loss; and an over-reliance on international student income. The solution to this crisis so far has been to cut costs by reducing or closing down departments and faculties – as is the case with UWTSD, Bangor University, University of South Wales and Cardiff University. However, education should not be seen as a cost burden but rather as an investment in the nation's future. What is ultimately needed is a global and integrated vision of the future and a planned approach to reform and consolidation of HE institutions in Wales. A world-class University of Wales with member branches and campuses would rationalise course distribution, encourage world class departments, attract globally recognised academics and would reduce competition between campuses/universities across Wales.**

There are four **local business options** for Lampeter on the table. These are:

I - Positioning Lampeter as a leading institution in heritage-driven education and research excellence, developing interdisciplinary degree programmes combining humanities with practical and emerging fields, such as digital studies and sustainability

II – Offering a mainstream humanities degree teaching programme that focusses on popular subjects that the Lampeter Campus is noted for globally, and allied with the **Centre for Advanced Celtic Studies**, the **Welsh National College** and the prospective **National Welsh Language Learning Institute**. The Lampeter portfolio would include Celtic studies & the Welsh language; archaeology; geography; creative writing & English; religious studies & theology; ancient/medieval history & classics; philosophy; and Chinese studies. Programme delivery would be low-cost, with a small core academic and support staff and the use of visiting 'star' alumni lecturers to add pulling power and admin volunteers

III – Turning the Lampeter Campus into an enterprise hub for Mid-Wales, offering entrepreneurship undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes that promote sustainable economic development and the concept of the green campus

NB – We believe the above options work alongside and support the Welsh Government's ***Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015***; widening access to participation and developing a cohesive and strengthened local community and economy.

IV – Leasing out part of the Lampeter campus to an international or Russell Group university, that is looking for a rural campus and an alternative approach

**Lampeter's rural and community-oriented environment holds great advantages to non-traditional and neurodivergent students. Welsh universities are experiencing a quiet epidemic of student suicides; the University of South Wales alone had more than 10 suicides last year alone. The large university metropolis does not suit many young people; the mental health benefit of being able to study in a close knit friendly environment which Lampeter is uniquely able to offer cannot be underestimated.**