

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales

Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau/ Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

Gwerthu Cymru i'r Byd / Selling Wales to the World

Ymateb gan Cymdeithas Ddysgedig Cymru / Evidence from the Learned Society of Wales

1. The [Learned Society of Wales](#) (LSW) is an independent, all-Wales, self-governing, pan-discipline educational charity that was established in 2010. As Wales's first National Academy of science and letters, the Learned Society of Wales, like similar societies in Ireland and Scotland, brings together the most successful and talented Fellows connected with Wales, for the shared purpose and common good of advancing and promoting excellence in all scholarly discipline across Wales.
2. The Learned Society of Wales welcomes this opportunity to submit comments on how Wales is promoted nationally and internationally. The consultation is timely, as the Society has been working over the past two years to better promote the intellectual and innovative profile of Wales in a series of international publications designed to showcase the contribution of the higher education for research and innovation as well as Welsh culture more generally.
3. We have undertaken a campaign to promote Welsh Higher Education, research and innovation to a domestic and international audience. This campaign has included a feature article in one of the world's largest journals, [Science Magazine](#), commissioning a report by the King's College London Policy Unit on the [Impacts of Academic Research from Welsh Universities](#), and a pull-out brochure promoting the value and extent of Wales's academic and research connections internationally, which will be featured in *Times Higher Education* magazine on 14th September 2017, and on the THE website.
4. Promoting a strong Welsh brand for domestic and international audiences is important, both in terms of national confidence and in order to develop the Welsh economy. Within the UK, Scotland is a good example where a well cultivated HE brand and public support by the devolved government has been an important asset attracting of inward investment. In Scotland, the promotion of HE institutions and their innovative capabilities remains a key facet of the Scottish government's overall international brand promotion strategy and contribution to their National Indicator for improving Scotland's reputation. In the *Wales We Want Report* (2014) report, the theme of identity generated a great amount of discussion with many feeling that it was important to portray a "*far more positive, inclusive and forward-looking Wales*". Media was considered to play a key role in actively promoting and helping establish a new "*belief that 'Wales can be best in the world'*".
5. International students contribute significantly to Wales's economic and cultural prosperity. In 2014, universities generated £530 million of export earnings equivalent to 4% of all Welsh exports. In addition to individual universities, *Universities Wales* - the body that represents the collective interests of Welsh universities has joined together with the Welsh Government, British Council Wales and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to form the *Global Wales* partnership designed to promote Wales' world class higher education (HE) sector internationally.¹ *Universities Wales* has also developed two dedicated website designed to promote and inform international students.²

¹ <https://wales.britishcouncil.org/en/global-wales-welsh-higher-education-partnership>

² <http://studyinwales.ac.uk> ; <http://www.chronicle.com/academicDestination/Wales/73/>

6. This response will mainly consider how Wales is promoted by VisitBritain and Visit Wales, the Wales.com website.
7. Historically several reports including the 2012 Cardiff Business School published report “Selling Wales: the role of agencies in attracting inward investment”, the 2014 National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee report and the Welsh Affairs Committee 2014 have all highlighted the need to better co-ordinate and develop a stronger Wales’s brand. At present, Wales is promoted by a number of government agencies which appear to overlap.
8. VisitWales’s visual brand is strong, promoting the Welsh landscape and coastline. VisitBritain echoes this projection of Wales, but the lack of connectivity between the two sites remains an issue, as highlighted by the Welsh Affairs Committee 2014 on the International representation and promotion of Wales by UK bodies.³ Each of the VisitBritain.com pages for the four nations of the UK failed to link to the relevant local tourism agency – in Wales’s case, Visitwales.com. This seems a missed opportunity.
9. One useful and significant feature of the VisitBritain site, is its online shop, where tickets for tours in each of the UK nations can be purchased, and ideally should be something that visitwales.com could link to from its own site. Another opportunity relates to forthcoming events. Both discovernorthernireland.com and visitscotland.com websites feature directories of forthcoming cultural and heritage tours and events on their websites, along with booking information.⁴ Visitwales currently lists event by month, with no direct booking information, and the events are not listed on related pages within the site.
10. The development and promotion of cultural and literary tourism requires more attention in Wales. A review of the two recent literary tourism promotions (Dylan Thomas 100 and the Roald Dahl Centenary) should be undertaken, as the of the positives and negatives of both campaigns will provide important strategic lessons. Although the ‘Year of Legends’ was intended to promote Welsh culture and heritage,⁵ the focus seems to have largely focused on mythic aspects, rather than contemporary interpretations of Welsh history and lived experience, and Welsh culture. The attractive and informative ‘Land of Legends’ website (www.landoflegends.wales), funded by VisitWales and developed by Literature Wales and the Arts Council of Wales is not sufficiently highlighted on visitwales.com. The resource was created to enable visitors to plan their own tours based on Welsh literature and culture, but there seems to be only one link to the site on the VisitWales website (the main year of legends page), and it is not mentioned on the pages on Welsh literature and culture.
11. While the projection of a mythic Welsh past has its strengths, many of the ‘legendary’ experiences promoted seem to tie in more with last year’s Year of Adventure, and rely heavily on the Welsh landscape, or Wales providing a stage for events.⁶ 2017 is Scotland’s year of History, Heritage and Archaeology, which explores similar themes to the ‘Year of Legends’, but it is rooted in evidence and enquiry, which creates a better sense of confidence, and an opportunity to promote national achievements. Communities and culture create narratives of place. The Basque Country captures this

³ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmwelaf/337/337.pdf>

⁴ www.visitscotland.com/info/events/search-results?prodtypes=even&cat=cgyhha&loc=Scotland&locplace=&locprox=0&isostartdate=&isoenddate=&refine-date=on&name=

⁵ <http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/161116-strategy-review-en.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.visitwales.com/legends/legendary-experiences>

sense of a lived experience in its promotion of “100% Basque experiences” which reflect Basque culture and everyday life; these could offer a model for VisitWales to consider developing.⁷

12. The Welsh language is largely absent from the English (UK) visitwales.com front page. This is disappointing given that Wales is a bilingual nation; the VisitBritain’s Wales page mentions “the lilting rhythms of an ancient language” but provides no examples. There are pages dedicated to Cymraeg in the Traditions and History section of the VisitWales.com site which provide some examples (but no audio or video), and a useful FAQ section. However, given the Welsh government’s commitment to promoting and developing Cymraeg, tourism should be actively promoting it as a living, vibrant language. The Basque country’s promotion of the Basque language to tourists is a useful example of encouraging visitors to embrace and experience a minority language.⁸
13. Some of the materials provided by VisitWales for tourism businesses in Wales are inconsistent with the promotion of Cymraeg. Resources and guides for tourism sector sit within the businesswales.gov website. The 2016 guide to *The Wales Identity. A sense of place* fails to mention the word ‘cynefin’ – the unique Welsh concept of a sense of a place and the narratives that contribute to a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the Welsh language is presented in parenthesis in one of the section on Welsh identity: “(And don’t underestimate our ancient native tongue – a simple ‘croeso’ makes a delightfully distinctive first impression)”.⁹ There is a danger of reducing a living culture and language to a decorative function. The same guide also features two case studies of accommodation businesses, and explores how they use Cymraeg. One case study presents the use of the language in a confident manner, seeking to make their guests curious and encouraging them to give it a go. The second case study however, presents Cymraeg in more problematic terms; on one hand celebrating its history and its development, but also suggesting that guests may be intimidated by it. Guides like this provide the opportunity to cross-promote other government initiatives, and perhaps Welsh language courses, or courses such as the Open University in Wales’s short course ‘Discovering Wales and Welsh’ could be promoted to develop knowledge of Wales’s history, culture, language and distinctiveness amongst tourist industry professionals.
14. VisitScotland Welcome Schemes¹⁰ have been created to target niche tourist groups, and have been developed in consultation with experts in the field they represent. The criteria provide accreditation for a range of tourism businesses (accommodation, visitor attractions and restaurants and cafes) in recognition of special efforts made by businesses to provide for visitors, and guide the visitors with a range of interests to those businesses that pay particular attention to their varied needs. Such a scheme is something that VisitWales could develop for its own market, targeting for example, cyclists, walkers, those interested in ancestry, and those who are interested in Cymraeg.
15. The wales.com website is an admirable attempt to develop a national brand. However, its target audience(s) are unclear, as it seems to target potential visitors, students, businesses and staff, as well as providing authoritative facts and figures about Wales. Some of the pages seem to duplicate visitwales.com content, and linking to content may be a better use of resources. Attempting to promote so many aspects of Wales on one site appears overwhelming, and a more pared-back well signed posted website might lend a greater sense of interest and confidence.

⁷ https://tourism.euskadi.eus/100_basque_experiences/

⁸ https://tourism.euskadi.eus/try_out_your_basque/

⁹ https://businesswales.gov.wales/sites/business-wales/files/tourism/Sense_of_Place_Guidance_v2_EN.pdf

¹⁰ www.visitscotland.org/business_support/quality_assurance/welcome_schemes.aspx

16. Scotland.org, the Scottish government's equivalent website helpfully provides a range of 'international narratives' for organisations to use to communicate consistent and factually correct information about Scotland.¹¹ Developed with stakeholders, the narratives include ones on culture, the economy, energy, food and drink, and education, as well as a more generic 'Welcome to Scotland' guide. A similar development by the Welsh government would be welcome, to better facilitate the promotion of Welsh achievements and distinctiveness by organisations within Wales.
17. While we acknowledge that the range and diversity of promotion is impressive, and much good work is being done by individual agencies, the lack of a coordinated strategy and the disparate delivery of that strategy militates against achieving optimum impact. It is evident that agencies that are replicated across the United Kingdom have elements of good practice that may be used within Wales to more efficient effect in external promotion campaigns.

¹¹ <http://www.scotland.org/international-narratives1>