

C Dafis MP AM

The National Assembly for Wales

Cardiff Bay

CARDIFF

CF99 1NA 16 May 2001

Dear Cynog

I sent the enclosed paper "A New University Concept for Wales" to Jane Davidson and in it I note.

"At NEWI we wish to create a university in Wrexham that will be attractive to people, which will welcome them, even tempt them into study and which will be rapidly responsive to the job market. We want to create a university to which people can relate and in which they feel comfortable. It will be a socially-inclusive university. It will be a dynamic institution which cannot be fettered by middle-class preconceptions of what a university is. It will be a new type of university providing a focal point for the local community. It will be a university which brings people together rather than divides them through restrictive admission policies. It will be a university that offers a range of progressive courses and qualifications to ensure quality and standard whilst simultaneously building the confidence of its students to succeed."

Jane has replied to me asking if I have asked for this paper to be placed before the Committee and encouraging me to do so. So, I am writing to you to ask if you can arrange for members of the Committee to see it. I, of course, conclude the paper by saying."

"There is a significant place for traditional supply-led universities such as Cardiff or Bangor in Wales. There is, however, a desperate need for a new type of university in the north of Wales which will meet the needs of the people in its locality. NEWI can serve this purpose. It will work in partnership and alliance with supply-led colleges in the University of Wales but it will essentially be a market-led higher education institution working even closer with its partners in the FE sector and in business, commerce, the arts and sport. The vision could be realised within a diversified non-bureaucratic

National University of Wales or as an independent entity seeking university status on its own account."

I apologise for such a late request and look forward to seeing you on Thursday.

As ever.

Professor Michael Scott

Principal and Chief Executive

NEWI

NEWI

A NEW UNIVERSITY CONCEPT FOR WALES

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to set out ideas for a prototype socially-inclusive, market-led university in Wrexham which will serve a similar function in the north of Wales as Glamorgan has in the south. The concept is for Wales to take the lead in British university development rather than waiting for one of the English universities to set a standard.

Vision

At NEWI we wish to create a university in Wrexham that will be attractive to people, which will welcome them, even tempt them into study and which will be rapidly responsive to the job market. We want to create a university to which people can relate and in which they feel comfortable. It will be a socially-inclusive university. It will be a dynamic institution which cannot be fettered by middle-class preconceptions of what a university is. It will be a new type of university providing a focal point for the local community. It will be a university which brings people **together rather than divides them** through **restrictive admission policies**. It will be a university that offers a range of progressive courses and qualifications to ensure quality and standard whilst simultaneously building the confidence of its students to succeed.

In the 19th Century the Chapel brought people together. The decline of the Chapel has had serious social ramifications on communities. People identify with **locally owned and recognised centres of community**. The new university must serve this purpose since, without focal points for the community society becomes fragmented. A new type of university which is socially-inclusive and which brings together **Sport, Art, Shopping, Commerce and Education** in one area will engender local support, loyalty and pride.

Over the past two months, for example, NEWI has been involved in partnership discussions with Wrexham Football Club and with Plas Coch Hockey to extend the community sporting facilities on the NEWI site. Higher education and sport are working together for the people of Wrexham and North East Wales. NEWI has to be a fundamental agent for **maintaining social stability in a secular world**. It will be devoted moreover to **multi-vocational education** and the development of the **regional and national economy**.

The vision is based on successful models found in the USE, Europe, Australasia and the Far East though not greatly evident in the UK. It is unique in that it brings together **private endeavours, arts and sporting organisations in a partnership** with a **publicly funded educational institution** at the heart of an **urban population**.

It is unique in that it stretches out to **other educational institutions** in a sense of **partnership rather than aggression or competition**. It recognises the strengths of the educational institutions around it and uses them to help develop its social inclusivity. Its educational partnerships are no different in concept than its arts, sports or commercial partnerships.

It will create a new environment of higher learning for the 21st Century.

How does it Operate?

The new university stresses:

Accessibility

Flexibility

Quality

Accessibility

To be accessible the university has to **overcome fears, inhibitions and prejudices** about the kind of institution it is. It has to look and be attractive to the people of the locality. Wrexham is not a rugby town but a soccer one. The professional football club is adjacent to NEWI. A

dialogue is developing between club and institution which will be exploited in the region. If you can come to NEWI campus to **watch the football, why not have a look at the college** itself? Why not try a taster course? The same is true with the tennis centre and fitness centre adjacent to campus and the sports centre at its heart.

But, the university has also to go out into the communities as it is doing in Deeside to run courses at a distance from the main centre. It goes to the people themselves in order to overcome initial inhibitions. In other words, the university takes the responsibility for making itself amenable, for discovering its markets in business and society. It is not supply-led as is the case with traditional universities but market-led, responsive and accessible.

Flexibility

The "NEWI" university has, therefore, to be flexible in its course offerings. It is immoral to take students onto courses for which they are unprepared since they are bound to fail. The "NEWI" university has a range of flexible programmes leading to a variety of qualifications. Students are enrolled only on qualification pathways which their past record shows they can attain. Thus, there are tailor-made progression routes. In this the university works closely with its FE partners.

Similarly, the "NEWI" university is flexible in its timetabling so as to accommodate the demands of modern society without humiliating people.

It has to be flexible in its partnerships to ensure that they can endure. These include Bangor, Llandrillo, Coleg Menai, Yale and Deeside but also the new businesses which are developing in the area. Indeed NEWI has to be a catalyst to attract even more new businesses into the Wrexham and North East Wales area. It has to work with these businesses to develop its curriculum and be prepared rapidly to change its portfolio of courses in order to satisfy market demands. This implies that it requires a management culture and structure which can make decisions quickly and effectively as the market demands.

Quality

Quality of provision and of student care is paramount in what is naturally the student centred university we wish to create. As in all universities research has to underpin the curriculum but the emphasis is on applied research and technology transfer.

Careers potential has to be built into every course offered by the university. It has to be done correctly without patronising students but rather involving business and commercial partners. The proposed development of a Techniquest Science Discovery Centre on the NEWI campus is an immediate example of an external partnership necessary to attract students back to science, since the country depends on science for the development of its economy. This is a

partnership with a quality organisation which has a clear sense of mission and direction which can be matched by the new approach at NEWI.

Conclusion

There is a significant place for traditional supply-led universities such as Cardiff or Bangor in Wales. There is, however, a desperate need for a new type of university in the north of Wales which will meet the needs of the people in its locality. NEWI can serve this purpose. It will work in partnership and alliance with supply-led colleges in the University of Wales but it will essentially be a market-led higher education institution working even closer with its partners in the FE sector and in business, commerce, the arts and sport. The vision could be realised within a diversified non-bureaucratic National University of Wales or as an independent entity seeking university status on its own account.