

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UNIT'S PRESENTATION,  
UNIVERSITY OF WALES, BANGOR**

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**"From the excess of the analyst's hand  
who lets slip a world through his fingers."**

**1. Opening Remarks**

Thank you for the invitation to contribute remarks to the Local Government and Housing Committee on behalf of the Community Development Unit, School of Business and Regional Development, University of Wales, Bangor.

At the present stage of the review you are considering comments on increasing the capability of communities and agencies and the education of community regeneration workers. The comments we offer arise from our experience at a local, national and international level. We wish to put them in the context of your Committee's recommendations described in Appendix 6 of the Community Regeneration Policy Review published in September 2002 (pages 30-32).

## **2. The Development of Community Development**

The way in which community development has become prominent recently is most gratifying, and in this the Assembly has played a key role. The influence of the philosophy of community development is clearly visible in several areas, e.g. Communities First, Sustainable Wales, Community Planning, policies concerning children, youth, health, policing, EU development programmes, regional development, business and enterprise, language initiatives and so on.

There are now so many different strategies, policies, agencies, schemes and projects relevant to community development that it is difficult even for those interested in the field to keep abreast of all the changes in the pipeline. This is to be welcomed in one sense but it also suggests that the various developments require rationalisation and harmonisation. We will return to this theme which is reflected in the aforementioned Appendix 6.

## **3. Learning for Community Development**

We wish to bring to your attention several aspects on learning for community development arising from the experience of the Community Development Unit in Bangor.

### **a) Community Workers Forum**

For the last five years workers in the field of community development in north west Wales have been coming together occasionally in an effort to promote this field. Training and education have been a key aspect of the Forum's work, including inspiring a Postgraduate or Post-Experience Certificate course in Community Development verified by the University of Wales and provided by the Community Development Unit in Bangor. Courses were attended by staff from various agencies including local government, Mantell Gwynedd, housing associations, the Volunteer Bureau, charities, the Wales Cooperative Centre, Welsh Development Agency, Snowdonia National Park, language initiatives, the LEADER agency, Women's Aid, Cychwyn Cadarn, Antur Waunfawr, officers from Agenda 21, community regeneration and community planning as well as further workers from the areas of the economy, training, health, children, youth and culture. The statutory, voluntary and independent sectors were represented. Several lessons arise from the Forum experience, such as the importance of

networking, joint learning, combining theory, practice and skills, integrated and inter-disciplinary education, partnerships, supporting colleagues in the field, flexible provision, working together across departments and institutions and cooperating with colleges, institutions and individuals throughout Wales and Britain, Ireland and other parts of Europe and the world.

#### b) Higher Education Courses

In general, the same lessons as those noted above arose from our experience of planning and providing various higher education courses, including HNC, Foundation Degree, Certificate, Diploma and Honours Degree in community development as well as post-graduate Certificate, Diploma and MA. Cooperation and partnerships between colleges of higher and further education, agencies and practitioners are the key to these provisions.

#### c) Community Courses

We have had some experience of providing courses in the community, but are of the opinion that we are barely scratching the surface in Wales in terms of learning for community development. In this we have much to learn from Ireland's experience. We would like to draw to your attention the work done in the community by Galway University, specifically the relationship between learning and community development.

#### d) Community Development Cymru

From our experience in this part of Wales it was evident that cooperation on a national level was needed and the formation of Community Development Cymru, CCC, to represent workers and volunteers in the field of community development was an important step forward. This is a democratic body to represent the field, based on a set of agreed principles and values. CCC's work in the field of education is key to the development of training standards for community development. CCC was responsible, through a participatory process, for drawing up guidelines for the approval and accreditation of community development courses. Through membership of the Education and Training Standards (ETS) Committee for Youth and Community Work in Wales a system is being created for the approval of courses in this field, a system for education in the field of community development which will be based to a great extent on Community Development Work National Occupational Standards; standards which have just been agreed and published recently. In turn ETS recognition and following from that the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) provide the opportunity to create a system which will link recognised qualifications with terms and conditions of work and a career structure for community development workers.

#### e) Community Development Training Consortium

We would just mention the work of this Consortium, a partnership between providers across Wales. Justine Scorrer, who is based at the University of Glamorgan, and Rhian McCarthy, who is here in

Bangor, are researching the situation of learning for community development in Wales. Arrangements have been made for their report on their work to be submitted to this committee. This means there is no need for us to make more specific points about the terms of reference of the present stage of your review, as the information will be in Rhian and Justine's report. Rather, we are using this opportunity to look at the broader picture.

#### **4. Analysis of the System**

At its best community regeneration is an innovative effort to do things in a new and better way. It means joined up thinking and joined up action. The steps in this direction in Wales are to be welcomed, but we must also face the difficulties. It is not easy to develop a new way of thinking and acting in institutions which are used to operating in a hierarchical way, where there has been little cooperation between departments, where financial arrangements and the interests of individuals' careers are tied to the old way of doing things. I am sure you will hear evidence today of this kind of problem which faces practitioners in their day-to-day work. Workers being caught in the tension between the philosophy and methods of community development and the institutional mentality and system. The truth is that those working in the field of community development are trying to operate in a new way on the margins of systems which in essence have changed little. The evidence around us is that colleges, local government and agencies are adapting somewhat in reaction to the community development agenda and the emphasis on cooperation and partnerships. The worry is that the new words are being spoken but that the actions are changing very slowly.

In the last part of our introduction we offer an outline of a way to overcome the conservatism of our institutions.

#### **5. Ways Forward**

Implicit in the eighteen recommendations in Appendix 6 we believe that there is a way forward. Some of the recommendations (1, 9, 10, 16) relate to general ideas. Organisation as well as concept is dealt with. Some recommendations (2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 15) relate to finance, others to planning and proposals, (6), partnerships (13, 14), monitoring (18) and education (11, 12, 17).

As well as individual consideration of the recommendations a further step should be taken and they should all be considered in their entirety. In our opinion this leads us to the conclusion that a national body is needed to coordinate all aspects – finance, planning, partnerships, facilitation, monitoring and evaluation in addition to educational aspects. Obviously it is necessary to think and act on these aspects in conjunction with each other. The educational needs could be added to e.g. networking, dissemination of good practice, learning resources, arrangement of training, approval of training standards and so on.

These are matters which need to be arranged nationally, at least to a great extent.

At first glance it seems paradoxical to suggest a central body for community development and we are aware of the dangers. Despite this, we are in favour of a broad discussion on the need for a national body or agency solely to promote community development in Wales. At present CCC has started a participatory process of drawing up a Community Manifesto for Wales to be laid before a national conference on March 26<sup>th</sup>. This provides an opportunity to air the arguments for and against a Community Development Agency for Wales.

In our opinion it would be possible to create a democratic and participatory body which would be an effective force for turning concepts and ideals of community development into reality in our communities. Not a body on the quango pattern. A central hierarchical, bureaucratic body would be a retrograde step. There are plenty of different models of effective democratic bodies available throughout the world. Models which could be adapted to meet the needs of Wales' communities.

This is quite a challenge for this committee and for the Assembly. What will the Assembly Members' reaction be to the tension between the interests of the state and loyalty to the community? Do you have the vision and the determination to create a system and to sow the seeds of a new culture?

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