

Consultation on petition P-03-262 Wales Peace Institute
Response from the Welsh Centre for International Affairs
To the petitions committee of the National Assembly for Wales:

Following your request of 19 October, I would like to submit the following response to **Petition P-03-262** – considering the establishment of a **Peace Institute for Wales**. This is a formal response from the Welsh Centre for International Affairs (WCIA), provided in my capacity as Chief Executive.

The WCIA was one of a number of organisations that initially petitioned the National Assembly several years ago to establish such a Peace Institute, alongside Cynefin y Werin, Cymdeithas y Cymod, CND Cymru and individual AMs from all four main parties. This was accompanied by the delivery of a petition to the Assembly with many hundreds of signatures.

Do you feel that the action called for is reasonable and/or feasible?

The WCIA continues to believe that it is both reasonable and feasible to establish a Peace Institute. We believe that this could be an important development in Wales' long history of internationalism, as well as a fitting counterpart to the Assembly's own statutory duty to promote sustainable development. We believe it is self-evident that the pursuit of peace goes hand in hand with efforts to develop sustainable national and global communities.

If so, how important is it to have a peace institute in Wales?

A peace institute has the potential to be very important for Wales, as it could allow our nation to develop a substantial reputation and authoritative voice in peace research and development. As with the duty for sustainability, this could enable Wales to 'punch above its weight' and take a leading role in international thinking on the subject of peace.

How do you think a Wales Peace Institute should be constituted and what should its terms of reference be?

For a Peace Institute to be successful, it would need to accommodate a range of voices: in particular academic researchers (starting with existing centres of excellence, particularly in Aberystwyth and Cardiff), peace activist groups (including those which produced the original petition) and trainers/educators (delivering both peace-related education for schools/colleges and professional development opportunities in conflict resolution). The Institute would need to be independent of government, though the Welsh Government may be a part-funder of its work, or it may sit within a quasi-governmental structure. It would provide a platform and forum for the individuals and groups working through it, but it would need to remain neutral in its institutional views of peace development.

In terms of its topical remit, the WCIA believes that this should accommodate the full range of issues connected with peace and conflict studies: including aspects of international law and human rights, international relations and political challenges, the effects of conflict on war-torn societies, and the economic ramifications of peace and conflict.

What are the barriers to establishing a peace Institute in Wales?

I see the primary barriers as a current lack of funding, and unclear lines of remit/responsibility which would need to be discussed in greater detail at an early stage of

any serious proposal. In order to accommodate the academic/research angles which appear to be at the heart of most of the examples in the supporting document, there would need to be clear mechanisms for guaranteeing work of high quality, while accommodating the wish for peace activists to become involved in its work. There may be conflicts of interest if, for example, academic researchers based at the institute were considering nuclear weapons from an objective standpoint while disarmament campaigners were also clamouring to be heard. A similar role to that currently taken by the WCIA – where we are politically neutral as an organisation, but provide avenues for multiple voices to be heard on controversial issues – would seem to be appropriate. These are not insuperable barriers, but they do need serious consideration.

Regards,

Martin Pollard
Chief Executive

Welsh Centre for International Affairs