

Response to Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee Inquiry, 'Selling Wales to the World' by the British Council

Summary

1. Wales needs an **integrated international strategy** - a single vision for shaping our global future that aligns established tourism, trade and inward investment approaches with work being done to take forward the international ambitions of our educational and cultural sectors.

1.1. Education and the arts help build a stock of international trust and goodwill towards Wales and are the foundation of our soft power capital.

1.2 Our higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET) sectors are deeply connected internationally. Research collaborations and strategic partnerships link our universities to leading global institutions. International students make a significant contribution to Welsh life and build lasting economic and cultural connections between Wales and the world.

1.3 Our artists and arts companies are Wales' international 'calling card'¹. Whether it's Welsh National Opera leading a year of creative collaboration in Dubai², or the vibrant artistic conversations supported through the India-Wales programme³ – the arts help form an international view of Wales as a creative and outward-looking, modern nation.

1.4 Wales must do more to ensure that these significant soft power assets are recognised, nurtured and strategically deployed.

2. Wales' global future will also require the next generation of our young people to have the **internationalist outlook and intercultural skills** needed in a globalised world.

2.1 Work to embed the 'international perspective' across the new school curriculum in Wales (in line with the recommendations in *Successful Futures*⁴) is underway and will enhance current good practice in Welsh schools.

2.2 Welsh Government support for the Erasmus+ international mobility programme is welcome, particularly in the context of Brexit. It is now more important than ever that young people in Wales retain access to funded opportunities to live, study and work overseas.

2.3 An urgent policy review is needed to arrest the alarming decline in the learning of modern foreign languages (MFL) in Welsh schools.

About the British Council

3. The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries.

4. We have been promoting the best of Welsh culture and education internationally, through our programmes in education and the arts, since the 1940s. We help Welsh students, teachers, artists, researchers and institutions connect with their counterparts around the world⁵.

Soft power and Wales' global future

5. Soft power can be thought of as a stock of goodwill and trust towards a country and its people, traditionally seen as arising from attraction towards its culture and values⁶.

6. We know that people overseas who have interacted with the UK through its ‘cultural space’ – the arts, education, science and sport – have greater trust in people from the UK and tend to have increased interest in studying here, doing business with the UK and visiting as a tourist⁷. Recent research by the University of California and the Centre for Economic and Policy Research has shown a clear link between increases in soft power and the value of exports⁸.

7. Small nations can benefit disproportionately from their soft power capital. Denmark - a small global player in terms of military strength and political and economic influence - is 11th in the global Soft Power Index, which ranks countries by the impact of their culture, diplomacy, education, governance and innovation⁹. This is not just due to the ‘power of attraction’ of popular Danish TV series or Nordic noir literature. The ‘power of example’ is also encouraging cities and countries around the world to copy Denmark’s bicycle-friendly infrastructure, draw lessons from its socio-political model and seek to replicate its approach to cohesive and transparent governance.

8. As a small nation with its own significant educational, cultural, sporting and governance assets, Wales should take a close look at how other small nations recognise, nurture and strategically deploy their soft power capital.

9. With many of the international networks Wales currently has through the UK’s membership of the European Union (EU) now uncertain, the need to establish and renew international connections is more important than ever. Some commentators have called on the UK to ‘seize the soft power moment’ of Brexit¹⁰. Now is the time for Wales to get serious about soft power.

Wales’ soft power capital: HE and VET

10. Wales’ HE and VET institutions are key drivers of our economic prosperity and international engagement.

10.1. International students at our universities and colleges (more than 25,000 from 145 countries in 2013-14) make a significant contribution to Welsh life, creating more than 7,600 jobs and enriching our campuses and wider communities.

10.2. International alumni also create long-term cultural and economic links between Wales and the world, taking part in millions of positive conversations about Wales, its people, businesses and institutions. Such alumni and their networks are the future inward investors, trading partners, tourists and research collaborators Wales needs.

10.3. However, more needs to be done to co-ordinate efforts to harness the soft power potential and untapped economic value of our international alumni with tourism, trade and inward investment activity.

11. The research carried out at Welsh universities is highly regarded internationally and recognised as some of the most impactful in 2014’s Research Excellence Framework¹¹. Our universities collaborate with counterparts across the world and have established strategic partnerships with some of the world’s leading institutions.

12. Individual universities pursue their own international strategies, priority markets and modes of engagement. However, the whole of the HE sector also benefits from some important all-Wales initiatives.

12.1 The Global Wales programme is a partnership between the British Council, Universities Wales, Welsh Government and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, with the support of all nine Welsh universities. The three year programme aims to promote the Welsh sector initially in two key priority markets – the USA and Vietnam – through inward visits and

outward missions by senior government officials, university leaders and academics. It is based on the successful Connected Scotland initiative¹².

12.2 Global Wales incorporates a new Study in Wales brand, which is promoting Welsh universities at major international conferences and expos and through digital marketing. Wales.com has supported this work.

12.3 With partners and funding from across Welsh Government departments – including Trade and Invest, Visit Wales and the Office of the First Minister – Global Wales is modelling an integrated approach to selling Wales to the world that could be expanded.

13. At an institutional level, the VET sector has many international links, exchange arrangements and commercial partnerships - including those established through the British Council's International Skills Partnerships programme.

14. The British Council also supports the international ambitions of the sector as a whole.

14.1 We have supported two international visits by college leaders as part of our Welsh Government-funded International Professional Learning Communities programme.

14.2 We are also showcasing the best of Welsh VET through our Going Global international education conference and Global Skills Spotlight series. 25 senior international delegates will visit Wales in March 2018 as part of our spotlight on Welsh apprenticeships.

14.3 The VET sector in Wales has been very successful in accessing Erasmus+ funding for staff and student mobility and strategic partnerships.

15. However, it is not clear that the VET sector in Wales has the same opportunity to co-ordinate its international planning and activity with government-led tourism, trade and inward investment activity as its HE counterparts. There is no Global Wales-equivalent for the sector.

Wales' soft power capital: the arts

16. Wales has world-class individual artists and companies who are taking the best of contemporary Welsh culture around the world. The following selected examples demonstrate the scope of Wales' international artistic ambitions and how the sector is supporting Wales' broader international aims.

16.1 The *India Wales* programme, a joint initiative between the Arts Council of Wales / Wales Arts International and the British Council, has used the UK/India 2017 year of culture to create a rich portfolio of collaborative projects involving leading Welsh and Indian artists¹³. Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure Ken Skates has acknowledged the important role such artistic collaborations can play in building Wales' long term relationship with an emerging global power:

Wales has strong and long standing relations with India. The UK/India 2017 year of culture offers an important opportunity for Wales and India to refresh and strengthen these links, and also to create new dynamic connections and creative collaborations

16.2 British Council Wales and Arts Council Wales / Wales Arts International have supported Welsh performing arts companies to present their work at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the single biggest opportunity for UK theatre companies to introduce their work to international promoters. Similarly, we have supported musicians at Celtic Connections in Glasgow, one of the largest Celtic music festivals, as well as Welsh writers at the London Book Fair.

17. Unlike many small countries and regions, Wales does not benefit from hosting its own annual or biennial international culture platform. As such, our view is that an opportunity to showcase the best of Welsh culture and attract large numbers of international promoters, tourists and policy-makers to Wales is being missed.

18. There is a lot to be learned about the potential benefits of establishing a high profile international conference, expo or festival in Wales from decades of investment that has taken place in Scotland.

18.1 Edinburgh's festivals are a powerful international cultural brand for Scotland and the UK. Forging international partnerships gives Scotland a voice on the world stage and its cultural reputation supports its global positioning. The festivals are a major international tourism attractor with approximately 500,000 overnight visitors from outside Scotland each year¹⁴. In 2011, it was estimated that the festivals generated £261m of additional expenditure in the Scottish economy, a substantial return on £9m of public investment (in 2014/15).

18.2 The Edinburgh International Culture Summit – a biennial event - brings together culture ministers, artists, thinkers and arts leaders from around the world to share ideas, expertise and best practice, with a view to inspiring positive change in cultural policy and investment. Over 40 countries were represented at the 2016 summit.

19. While the festival market is becoming more competitive, we suggest that research is commissioned to identify different models that might support the development of an annual or biennial international showcasing event in Wales. Our view is that a recurring festival or expo is more likely to achieve sustainable returns on investment than one-off events.

Promoting internationalism at home

20. In order to sell itself to the world effectively, Wales must develop a generation of young people with the internationalist outlook and intercultural skills needed in a globalised world. This need is all the more pressing in the context of Brexit, which creates a new imperative for Wales to reach out to the rest of the world.

21. International thinking and global citizenship are already supported in Welsh schools through the International Education Programme (IEP). Funded by Welsh Government and delivered by the British Council, the IEP: provides individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute in a global community; increases awareness of and changes attitudes to global learning; and encourages sustained collaboration¹⁵.

22. Internationalism in schools will be further strengthened by the implementation of the recommendation by Professor Graham Donaldson, following his review of the curriculum in Wales that the 'international perspective' is embedded across all six of the proposed areas of learning.

23. Wales has engaged strongly with the EU's Erasmus+ programme in recent years, with more than 2,500 individuals taking the opportunity to live, work or study overseas in 2016 and attracting more than €8m of funding in each of the last two years. The long term status of Erasmus+ in the UK is uncertain following Brexit and we welcome the Welsh Government's strong support for the programme. The British Council, with Ecorys UK, is the National Agency for Erasmus+ in the UK.

24. The British Council has documented the alarming decline in the proportion of children studying MFLs to GCSE level in Wales in the last decade or so in our Language Trends Wales series¹⁶. The Welsh Government has introduced the five year Global Futures plan to promote language learning and the British Council is supporting that initiative¹⁷. However, it is important that an urgent policy review is undertaken to remove systemic barriers to MFL in secondary

schools and further investment is required in the primary sector to help the Welsh Government realise the policy ambition of ‘bilingual + 1’ from Year 5.

25. Wales needs young people with the intercultural and linguistic skills to do business with and positively influence the rest of the world. The continued decline of MFL in our schools will harm Wales’ ability to do that in the long term.

¹ Welsh Government (2016) *Light Springs through the Dark: A Vision for Culture in Wales*.

<http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2016-new/culture/?lang=en>

² UK/UAE 2017 Year of Creative Collaboration <https://www.britishcouncil.ae/en/uk-uae-2017>

³ India-Wales <https://wales.britishcouncil.org/en/arts/india-wales-building-relationships-through-art>

⁴ Professor Graham Donaldson CB (2015), Successful Futures Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales. <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150225-successful-futures-en.pdf>

⁵ British Council Wales <https://wales.britishcouncil.org/en>

⁶ Phillip Blond, James Noyes and Duncan Sim (2017) Britain’s Global Future: *Harnessing the soft power capital of UK institutions* <http://www.respublica.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Soft-Power-3.pdf>

⁷ Trust Pays: How international cultural relationships build trust in the UK and underpin the success of the UK economy (2012) <https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/policy-insight-research/research/trust-pays>

⁸ The research showed that an increase of 1% in soft power was linked to an increase of 0.8% in the value of exports. Rose, Andrew K (2016) Like Me, Buy Me: The Effect of Soft Power on Exports (July 2016). *Economics & Politics*, Vol.28, Issue 2, pp. 216-232. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2796366> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ecpo.12077>

⁹ Soft Power Index <https://softpower30.com/country/denmark/>

¹⁰ Phillip Blond, James Noyes and Duncan Sim (2017) Britain’s Global Future: *Harnessing the soft power capital of UK institutions* <http://www.respublica.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Soft-Power-3.pdf>

¹¹ Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 <http://www.ref.ac.uk/>

¹² Connected Scotland <http://connectedscotland.org/>

¹³ India-Wales <https://wales.britishcouncil.org/en/arts/india-wales-building-relationships-through-art>

¹⁴ Edinburgh Festival <http://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/about/documents/196-thundering-hooves>

¹⁵ International Education Programme <https://wales.britishcouncil.org/en/programmes/education/international-education-programme>

¹⁶ Language Trends Wales 2016/2017 <https://wales.britishcouncil.org/en/language-trends-wales>

¹⁷ Welsh Government (2015) Global Futures. A plan to improve and promote modern foreign languages in Wales 2015–2020 <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/151019-global-futures-en.pdf>