

# Innovation Advisory Council for Wales

1<sup>st</sup> November 2021, Virtual Meeting

## Minutes

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Present: David Notley (DN) (co-chair)  
Karen Cherrett (KC) (co-chair)  
Anna Nicholl (AN)  
Carol Cell (CB)  
Ian Brotherston (IB)  
Ieuan Wyn Jones (IWJ)  
James Lewis (JL)  
Kevin Morgan (KM)  
Michael Benfield (MB)  
Nadine Payne (NP)  
Nick Cook (NC)  
Rob Deaves (RD)  
Sion Charles (SC)  
Siwan Rees (SR)  
Stephanie Moran (SM)  
Yuhua Li (YL)

Apologies: Rhys Thomas (RT)  
James Yu (JY)

Secretariat: Abi Phillips (AP)  
Philippa Davies (PD)  
Duncan Hamer (DH)

Agenda item		Action
1	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>Duncan Hamer, Chief Operating Officer for Business in Welsh Government officially welcomed members to the inaugural refreshed IACW meeting.</p> <p>DN and KC, IACW co-Chairs, welcomed members and gave a brief overview of IACW which has been in existence since 2014. The decision was made over the summer to refresh and renew the IACW, so the Council is now a mixture of members old and new, following an extensive EOI process. The Council now represents members from all forms of innovation from both within and outside Wales.</p>	
2	<p><b>Introducing the new Council</b></p> <p>Members highlighted what they believed to be the biggest challenge that Wales faces in terms of innovation.</p> <p>DN believes there is not enough innovation in all its different forms in Wales. Considering the measures for all the different types of innovation, Wales lags behind many parts of the UK.</p>	

	<p>KC stated the biggest challenge is a cultural one. Need a balanced and evidence based approach as to why and how Wales can do more and better.</p> <p>AN would like to see more voluntary organisations involved in innovation, who believe innovation is often seen as a dirty word. It tends to be associated with change for the sake of change, rather than using innovation to benefit organisations. Collaboration is another challenge - being able to use the tools, techniques and approaches that can help organisations improve.</p> <p>IB believes the meaning and definition of innovation is a challenge. He also believes building the right clusters is important, and the need to be able to identify where the resource gaps are and what resources and skills are available. IB stated another issue is to be realistic with our expectations. Wales is not a large country, stop making unrealistic comparisons to other nations.</p> <p>IWJ believes it is important to have an innovation strategy that encompasses all parts of government in Wales. He also believes that innovation funding from all over WG should sit within one department bringing it all together under one Minister. The other challenge to address is the loss of EU funding and how that impacts on the innovation landscape in Wales.</p> <p>JL deems risk appetite is often said to be a challenge, which is linked to power differentials, so we need to empower people so they can unlock innovation. Wales is often referred to as the land of pilot projects because you can look innovative without actually risking any loss of power. JL also questioned whether evidence stifles innovation and whether the need for always having a full view of the evidence stops us innovating.</p> <p>KM believes Wales needs to build the ecosystems that can commercialise ideas and technology at scale. He also stated the need for cross government action so that innovation strategies are not the strategy of the Economy department, but the strategy of government as a whole.</p> <p>NP believes key actors have to work together, eg academia, business, and government. There seems to be a lack of data and knowledge sharing about what the strengths and capabilities of Wales are. NP feels Wales lacks a little bit of ambition, and lacks a high risk, high reward approach which is sometimes too safe. People only tend to want to back something they know is going to be successful – comes down to a change in culture.</p> <p>NC believes the challenges relate to there not being enough innovation and resource gaps. There are potentially three or four ecosystems in Wales in terms of South Wales, Mid Wales and North Wales, who all have very different needs. NC stated the other challenge is the need for more investment to try and de risk innovation in Wales.</p> <p>MB believes there is a lack of support for orders for products from small businesses. SMEs do not necessarily want a lot of financial</p>	
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	<p>support but support for orders of their products. As the majority of companies have under 10 to 15 employees, businesses need to realise that innovation does not have to happen on a grand scale.</p> <p>RD believes innovation is very broad in its scope from decarbonisation through to infrastructure. The biggest challenge is knowing where and what to target. RD queried how do we know what success is and looks like in Wales in terms of innovation?</p> <p>SC believes a change in behaviour is needed. How do we take things from 1 industry and exact them to another? How do we draw together health organisations with universities and businesses to deliver on innovation and use that to stimulate economic growth?</p> <p>SR believes there are challenges around talent and skills and the availability of knowledge and opportunity. SR queried what do businesses need to know in order to feel that they have got the right sort of ecosystem to harvest ideas to think big and to have confidence and trust. SR also believes the green agenda is a challenge and how innovation can play a core part in achieving some of the challenges that Wales faces in terms of sustainability.</p> <p>SM commented on the absorptive capacity of Welsh businesses to innovate and the cultural abilities to recognise and take advantage of information knowledge. SM also believes in the need to invest in SMEs to become more outward looking and not let cultural inhibitions hold them back. SM queried how the arts and culture industries can help, and what role they can play in terms of international trade and visibility.</p> <p>YL stated Wales has a strong research base and has some very good businesses. However, they tend to work in isolation. There is a need to encourage interaction between universities and businesses. Bringing them together can help develop a coherent and focused approach to addressing challenges in Wales. YL also believes we should increase the awareness and understanding of what we mean by innovation.</p>	
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Innovation Strategy Discussion</b></p> <p>AP presented an update on the new innovation strategy for Wales and highlighted the process and thinking to date.</p> <p>AP stated that Wales currently has an Innovation Strategy, Innovation Wales, which is now out of date.</p> <p>AP mentioned that the previous members of IACW commissioned some research, undertaken by Cardiff University and Amplyfi. Cardiff University examined the innovation landscape in Wales, past, present and future, and Amplyfi analysed global comparators. The IACW submitted their recommendations to WG in early May. Following on from the reports and recommendations, stakeholder engagement sessions were held with the public and private sectors. The recommendations from the commissioned</p>	

	<p>research and the stakeholder engagement sessions allowed us to present a number of options to the Ministers of Education, Economy, Health and Climate Change and the rationale for developing a new innovation strategy for Wales. Ministers agreed an integrated cross government strategy was the preferred approach. The aim is to publish the strategy next Spring.</p> <p>AP highlighted the possible structure of the strategy was to follow the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.</p> <p>AP presented the draft logic model that aims to set out the outcomes and what we want to achieve from the strategy, what are the problems we are trying to solve and how we will do this.</p> <p>AP stated that we have established an internal working group and an external stakeholder-working group to help guide our thinking. The external stakeholder group is meeting for the first time this week.</p> <p>AP to circulate names of the external stakeholder group.</p> <p>IWJ to send contact details of UKSPA representative to sit on external stakeholder group.</p>	<p><b>AP</b></p> <p><b>IWJ</b></p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Working Groups</b></p> <p>DN and KC highlighted IACW aim to establish working groups, which will have a thematic link and focus.</p> <p>KC and DN to circulate the topics that IACW aim to focus on and propose to establish. Please could all members indicate which working group you would like to join. Please let PC know if you wish to volunteer to lead the working group.</p> <p>Please send suggestions of potential working group topics to PC.</p>	<p><b>DN &amp; KC</b></p> <p><b>IACW</b></p> <p><b>IACW</b></p>
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>Council noted thanks to Claire Durkin who stepped down as previous co-chair in the summer.</p> <p>Date of the next meeting is 6 December 2021.</p>	