

**PET(4) WPI 16  
Petitions Committee**

**Consultation on petition P-03-262 Wales Peace Institute  
Response from Marc Pollentine**

**Submission to the Petitions Committee of the National Assembly for Wales from Marc Pollentine**

**Proposal for a 'Peace Institute for Wales'**

I am writing with regards to the proposal for a Peace Institute for Wales. It is important to note that I am writing in a purely personal capacity. For the record, I am currently completing a PhD at Cardiff University on the development of the 'responsibility to protect' norm. This research is based upon a number of elite-level interviews with key actors in this area of international politics. I am also a Board Member of the United Nations Association of the UK (UNA-UK), and a UNA-Wales Council Member.

As someone with a clear interest in international affairs I of course welcome any proposals which seek to strengthen Welsh engagement in international issues. As a small nation, it is vital that Wales is outward looking, projects a desire to understand complex – and sometimes rapid - global changes, and willing to embrace and influence that change for the benefit of Wales and the world more generally. Though my comments in this short submission are specifically influenced by the proposal being considered, they are necessarily far broader. Based on the information available to me, the current proposal raises more questions than answers, and lacks sufficient detail in terms of how the Institute would be constituted and mandated. Moreover, it is somewhat disingenuous to assume that any reservations will relate more to funding than to 'the principle involved'. A vague notion of principle is not the basis upon which one can seek government funding. The detail is absolutely vital to the principle not least because very few principles command common understanding of their practical meaning and application. Indeed, problematically for a proposal which I assume is seeking government funding, there are real questions to be asked about the actual agenda driving it; especially in relation to the seemingly politically laden conception of peace. Perhaps confirming this point, I am surprised that some of the more successful examples of Peace Institutes around the world are not referred to in more detail. Two of the better examples which should have more directly influenced the proposal include the Congress-funded US Institute for Peace (USIP), and the globally recognised Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Both are independent and non-partisan think tanks; both receive government funding. I urge the Committee to scan options, possible models, and best practice from around the world in order to arrive at a more solid judgement of what might work best for Wales.

The potential positive impact of independent think tanks/institutes on policy-making is increasingly well recognised by governments, and International Organizations alike. Over the past few decades there has been dramatic worldwide growth in their number. But rather than add to this growing list, if the Assembly wishes to pursue the establishment of an Institute

framed around the broad concept of peace, it should do with the ambition of joining the far smaller, more exclusive list of *globally recognised* think tanks. This would inevitably require a far broader, and more rigorously developed proposal than the one currently being considered.

The UK already has a number of think tanks globally recognised for their expertise and excellence. Two particularly relevant examples for the kind of ambitions we should have in Wales are Chatham House and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), both of which are based in London. Quite obviously these, like the USIP and SIPRI, are much more significant models than the proposed Peace Institute for Wales. But, in my view, these are more representative of what we in Wales should be seeking to develop, albeit it in a form and purpose that is identifiably and uniquely Welsh. On the one hand, a similar such Institute would be very much a bridge-building endeavour. Independent from government, but with an expertise government(s) and international organizations will want to draw upon. On the other, an Institute of this kind would also be about projecting Wales to the world. It would be a demonstration that small nations can punch above their weight through the power of intelligence and ideas, and can have a voice to influence and potentially catalyze policy change at the international level.

As it stands, the proposal for a Peace Institute for Wales lacks some of the most critical information necessary to evaluate its potential. It rightly argues that any such Institute should be independent, and not quasi-governmental. Indeed, it is absolutely essential that the Institute is truly independent, that it stands alone from those groups and activists currently sponsoring it, and that its remit or research programme is politically and ethically neutral. The best way to achieve this is to ensure that its remit is broadly defined; that its research programmes adhere to the highest standards of research ethics; and that the Institute's governance and management structures are legally defined and accountable. Unfortunately there is very little substance around these core issues and others such as how the institute will be constituted; what its work mandate might be; who will be responsible for conducting the research and how will it be evaluated. It also says very little about even the *essential* competences, experience and qualities of those individuals on which the Institute will depend – an omission which is particularly unfortunate. There is also a lack of definition relating to the possible arrangements necessary for realising government funding other than the recommendation it is not quasi-governmental. Therefore, with the present proposal very much in the embryonic stage, I believe it would be more beneficial to consider alternative options, but ones which share in common a much broader thematic remit. Two options immediately come to mind.

The first option is for the establishment of a “Wales International Peace Research Institute” or “WIPRI” for short. The addition of the word ‘research’ is particularly important. It is designed to state clearly and unambiguously that the Institute is primarily research-driven. Its research agenda will be broadly defined around peace and conflict leaving significant scope for the development of specific research strands within defined research agenda clusters. This model is very much based upon SIPRI, albeit scaled to a more appropriate size (SIPRI currently employs approximately 50-60 people). To give an idea about how research clusters for WIPRI might be defined, SIPRI currently organizes its research around four research programmes: 1) Regional

and Global Security; 2) Armed Conflict and Conflict Management; 3) Military Spending and armaments; 4) Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. In practise these four areas allow tremendous scope for more specific research strands. For instance, research programme 1 includes dedicated projects on: Africa security and governance; Arctic futures; China and global security; European security; Global health and security; International relations and security trends; Transport and Security. Across the four programmes SIPRI directs around twenty research projects. This is a very sensible approach, and though the Welsh Institute will be reduced in scale – at least during the early years of its existence – this broad research agenda would enable the Institute to track, to react and to pre-empt global changes. This flexibility is vital in the study of international relations, and necessary to ensure the expertise of the Institute remains relevant and well-positioned to challenge prevailing orthodoxy.

The second option would be for the establishment of an equivalent “Chatham House Wales” (this is used here as a working title). Like SIPRI, Chatham House is a research-driven organisation. The distinction is that the research agenda of Chatham House is far broader in scope. Its research is divided into three thematic areas: 1) Energy, Environment and Resource Governance; 2) International Economics; 3) Regional and Security Studies. Beneath this, it directs a number of research programmes based on individual topics and on a regional basis. With its ninety year history Chatham House has an established global reputation and a vast array of outputs consistent with a think tank of its size. It is a registered charity in the UK, and had an annual income in 2011 of over £8m. Unlike SPIRI which receives significant grant funding from the Swedish government, Chatham House does not receive any statutory funding. It derives its funding from a mix of research income, membership subscriptions, publications, investment returns, conferences, and fundraising etc. Quite obviously a Welsh equivalent would be on a significantly reduced scale, particularly in terms of its core funding, and its core activities. But this option could potentially offer a model for a more encompassing forum for bringing-together existing Welsh expertise within Higher Education and the third sector. Here the staffing structure of Chatham House offers an interesting approach for realising such a forum. Aside from its core directly employed staff, its research programmes are strengthened by a number Associate Fellows. This model could be applied to Chatham House Wales, with the appointment of core research staff and experts backed-up by the appointment of Welsh-based Associate Fellows<sup>1</sup>. In fact, both options presented here would seek to draw upon the expertise which currently exists within Wales. The extent of the relationships between either of the proposed models and HE institutions in Wales is a matter of debate, and would require considerable negotiation. But it would be unwise not to draw upon those which already have well-established expertise in some form of partnership arrangements (and I would extend partnership arrangements to include the third sector, the private sector, and the governmental sector so long as the independence of the organization is maintained).

Either of the two options briefly outlined have the potential to greatly benefit Wales. But having criticised the current proposal for a Peace Institute for Wales for lacking sufficient detail

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<sup>1</sup> These would not be exclusively Welsh based, but this is a way of showing how Welsh expertise currently employed by Welsh HE institutions could be brought into the activities of Chatham House Wales.

in terms of its constitution, it would be remiss to do the same here. The institutional framework for either of the two options is absolutely vital to the viability, development and overall strategic vision of any proposal. Rather than refer to the current arrangements of SIPRI and Chatham House on an individual basis, before proposing models for WIPRI and Chatham House Wales respectively, I propose that either option could be governed by a broadly similar structure. Before suggesting a loose organizational structure for either option it needs to be clearly stated that any proposal – including the proposed Peace Institute for Wales you are considering – would require significant start-up funding. This is clearly an obstacle to any proposal getting off the ground. But to be viable, and in order to unlock potential match-funding from other public and private sources, the Welsh government would at the very least have to provide start-up funding. Additionally, it is likely that any new institute would require a further commitment for an annual government grant (either on a long-term or set-term basis). The funding model would not, however, be purely government-dependent. Like Chatham House, it would seek to diversify its income through corporate, institutional and individual membership, through research-funding, private support and other forms of fundraising activities. But to ensure long-term viability and sustainability, the Welsh model would have to be balanced more towards the SIPRI model of an annual government grant. In terms of structures, either model would require dynamic, prominent individual leadership through an Executive Office comprising a (Executive) Director and a Deputy (Executive) Director. These individuals should have established international reputations, experience in research and institutional management and well-established international links. It would be the responsibility of the WAG to conduct a global executive search for their appointment. The (Executive) Director would be appointed first and would be involved in the appointment of his/her Deputy. The organizations principal decision making body would be a high-quality Board of Directors composed of approximately 15-20 individuals. Finally, governance structures would be completed by an Expert/International Advisory Board consisting of prominent individuals from all sectors but with a majority weighted towards those individuals with direct experience of international politics at the highest-level. Without wishing to name any individuals, it is worth consulting the current membership of Chatham House's 'Panel of Senior Advisors' to get a sense of the profile of the individuals any Welsh Institute would wish to attract. Not only would these individuals help define and assess the work programmes of the Institute but would also enhance its profile and international presence. In turn, this would positively impact upon the profile and reputation of Wales. The aim would be that all of the structures of the Institute would be defined by international diversity and excellence. This would also apply to the core research experts appointed. These would need to be of a number significant enough for the Institute to claim a critical mass of specific academic and real-world/practitioner expertise. These research experts would be complemented by Associate Fellows, drawing on existing strengths within Wales, and by internship and Visiting Fellow programmes.

One challenge for any proposal is that it would need a physical location. Any Institute should be based in Cardiff as the Capital City of Wales. The Temple of Peace is an obvious option, but other options should not be ruled out, including perhaps locating the Institute within an existing University Campus. This may alter some of the arrangements for how the Institute is constituted, but it would be of great potential benefit to a research intensive institution to

pursue some kind of formal relationship with such an Institute, albeit without altering the independence of either. Depending upon arrangements this could also potentially involve joint submissions to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment. Indeed, an alternative option not specifically explored here would be for the establishment of a University-based Research Institute, perhaps similar to the Centre for Peace Studies at Bradford University but on a bigger, more ambitious scale. In any case, the issue of the institutional support should be seen as central to realising any proposal outlined here, including the one currently being considered. Negotiating agreements would inevitably be a complex endeavour, but in the current financial climate may provide a positive route for enhancing the research strength of Welsh Universities whilst offering Wales a uniquely beneficial new research Institute which aspires to be globally recognised for the quality of its output and impact.

Finally, it is worth briefly considering the kind of activities any new Institute should pursue. Aside from a well-developed research agenda, any Institute should have a clear outreach role. It would aim to become the 'go to' voice for international issues in Wales, and over the longer-term, to become one of the 'go to' Institutes on a more global basis. It would play a key role in organizing events, attracting high-quality speakers and conferences to Wales and through partnerships with Civil Society and national and international organizations would help to strengthen domestic and international policy-making processes. All of this would be backed up by a publication and informational resource strategy which would be pursued across all publishing platforms. Examples might include reports, expert analysis, responding to media requests, educational resources for use by public-sector and private sector organizations, and the use of social media. It would also aim to develop practitioner led training programmes consistent with the Institute's research agenda. Across all activities the Institute would be unashamedly outward-looking.

Because the current proposal for a Peace Institute for Wales offers limited explanatory information, my comments here have been far broader in nature. In raising the possibility of alternative options I have tried to maintain the positive spirit behind the existing proposal. It is certainly appropriate that in an increasingly interconnected and complex international climate the Welsh Assembly should be considering proposals which would enhance its international voice, and strengthen domestic policy-making processes. As presently conceived there are many questions left unanswered. The vacuum this creates undermines the proposal, and raises more fundamental questions about the underlying motivation behind this specific proposal. Resultantly, I have sought to use this consultation period as an opportunity to show how we in Wales could be more ambitious in our outlook. A new world-class think tank, which commands the strong backing of the Welsh Government - and indeed all leading Welsh political parties - would speak volumes about the kind of nation we want, and can be. Thus, I hope you accept my comments in good faith.

**Marc Pollentine**, 21 November 2011

*Relevant links:*

Chatham House: <http://www.chathamhouse.org/>

United States Institute of Peace: <http://www.usip.org/>

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute: <http://www.sipri.org/>

International Institute for Strategic Studies: <http://www.iiss.org/>