



MINUTES OF THE SIXTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF ADDYSG OEDOLION CYMRU | ADULT LEARNING WALES

**Held virtually by Zoom Webinar on Friday 8 April 2022
at multiple locations**

Present:

Officers - Nia Parry (President), Kathryn Robson (Chief Executive), John Graystone (Chair), Stephen Thomas (Company Secretary/Clerk) (4).

Individual Members - Elaine Bannister, Marion Burke, Rachel Burton, Clair Charalambous, Anthony Cope, Caroline Davies, Cath Dawkes, Victory Ezeofor, Salamatu Fada, Christopher Franks, Tamara Garnault, Cath Hicks, Jayne Ireland, Jenni Jones-Annetts, Michelle Kerswell, Dona Lewis, Kristian Losztyn, Stephen Nicholls, Siôn Aled Owen, Tim Palazon, Graham Price, Martyn Reed, Susan Roberts, Jan Tiley, Judith Wilding, Crian Williams (26).

Individual Members & Branch representatives - Cathy Clark (Oakdale & Blackwood), Bill Griffiths (Llanelli), Sonia Reynolds (Upper Amman & Twrch Valley), Marilyn Thomas (Caerphilly) (4).

Individual Member & Affiliated and Partner Organisation representative - David Smith (Co-operatives and Mutuals Wales) (1).

Affiliated and Partner Organisation representatives - Martin King-Sheard (Play Wales / Chwarae Cymru), Rowena Lee (Bridgend CBC) (2).

Speakers, Supporters & Staff in attendance - Anthony Phillips & Richard Knoyle (Auditors, Baker Knoyle Chartered Accountants Ltd.); Iola Llwyd & Steffan Wiliam (simultaneous interpreters); Sarah K Jones, Florence Walkey, Rhydian Williams (staff technical team); Sarah Ansell, Jane Hawkshaw, Ann Herbert, Jayne Murphy (staff attendees); Dr. Nilu Ahmed, Rachel Clarke, Prof. Diana Laurillard, Angharad Tomos, Cerys Furlong (guest speakers) (16).

Apologies:

Leanne Andreadis, Mark Baines, Maggi Dawson, Amanda Doyle, Judith Evans, Christina Gallagher, Jeremy Gass, David Girdler, Wendy Lewis, Matthew Lloyd, David MacManus, Betty Mason, Kalpana Natarajan, Tim Owen, Patrick Robson, Ceri Williams (16).

Item	<p align="center">ADDYSG OEDOLION CYMRU ADULT LEARNING WALES ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022 AND 'INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN IN EDUCATION' EVENT</p>
1.	<p>Introduction to the Annual General Meeting (AGM)</p> <p>Nia Parry welcomed all to the meeting, held virtually in Zoom Webinar format for a second successive year. She explained the options available for simultaneous interpretation as two interpreters were being used, and how to pose questions or make points during the meeting. Participation in votes would be run through live on-screen voting, with indicative results projected straight away on screen. The proxy voting provision in the constitution meant the Company Secretary had received 11 valid votes in advance. These would be cast accordingly and final voting tallies recorded in the meeting's minutes.</p>
2.	<p>Approval of minutes of the previous AGM and update on achievements in relation to resolutions passed there</p> <p>The draft minutes of Addysg Oedolion Cymru Adult Learning Wales's (AOC ALW's) fifth AGM, held virtually on 30 March 2021, were approved as a correct record (41 in favour, with 6 abstentions).</p> <p>In terms of the four resolutions passed there, a document setting out follow-up actions had been circulated with the AGM's papers. The written updates regarding developments to express gratitude to staff for their work during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the constitutional change to include branch members as members of the national organisation, were noted. Kathryn Robson elaborated verbally on the other two resolutions. On European links, AOC ALW had been appointed as one of the co-ordinating bodies for the International Learning and Exchange Programme named 'Taith', funded by the Welsh Government. In partnership with the Learning and Work Institute, the Organisation would be leading on the adult education component of those travelling overseas and those coming to Wales as part of the exchanges. As for asylum seekers, AOC ALW had consistently raised the need for financial help for them with the Minister for Education and through a question at a Senedd plenary session, while also establishing a £10,000 education fund of its own to assist asylum seekers overcome some of the barriers they faced in accessing courses, notably travel support.</p>
3.	<p>Presentation of Addysg Oedolion Cymru Adult Learning Wales's Annual Report and Financial Statements 2020/21</p> <p>Stephen Nicholls (Chair of the Resources Committee) referred to the brief financial information circulated with the AGM papers. The full audited Report and Financial Statements, approved by the Council, was available on the Organisation's web site. A small surplus on the year's overall educational activities had once more been converted into a balance sheet deficit by the nominal losses applying to the Local Government Pension Scheme. It was however a much smaller deficit than that of the previous year. Educational delivery provision fell just short of the 65% target agreed with the Welsh Government for the year. Figures thus far in the 2021/22 year</p>

	<p>augured well financially and in terms of the diversified provision that was available post-Covid-19: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses in particular were thriving. Prospective sales of certain remaining assets in Harlech were also being pursued.</p> <p>Anthony Phillips on behalf of auditors Baker Knogle Chartered Accountants Ltd. confirmed that their report (pp. 22-24 within the full document) was unqualified (i.e. positive) once more. The deficit figure of £471,000 on the income and expenditure statement included a potential clawing back of funds by the Welsh Government: that represented a worst-case scenario which might be ameliorated in the following year's outcome. He acknowledged the assistance of the Organisation's Finance Team in the auditing process.</p> <p>The President proposed that the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2021 be received. This was approved, with 46 votes in favour and 2 abstentions.</p>
4.	<p>Re-appointment of Baker Knogle Chartered Accountants Ltd. as auditors for the 2021/22 financial year</p> <p>As Audit Committee's Chair, Chris Franks stated that it was content with the performance of Baker Knogle Chartered Accountants Ltd. as external auditors. He therefore proposed the auditors' re-appointment for the current year's exercise. This proposal was approved, with 57 votes in favour and 1 abstention.</p> <p>He also mentioned other aspects of the Committee's duties: the recent re-appointment of TIAA as internal auditors for the Organisation; the regular review of a comprehensive Risk Register, which now needed to reflect the implications of cost of living increases for the Organisation as well as its learners; and the monitoring in a few months' time of the Organisation's Welsh medium provision and environmental impact assessment.</p>
5.	<p>Reports from our representatives on four University Courts</p> <p>This agenda item informed members of developments resulting from the formal status that the Organisation had on the Courts of Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff and Swansea universities. The two written reports previously circulated (Aberystwyth and Bangor) were from differing years; and because of disruption in Court meetings caused by the pandemic, there were updates but no meeting reports from Cardiff and Swansea universities. The AGM accepted the document as submitted.</p>
6.	<p>Chief Executive's Overview of the year's work, 2021/22</p> <p>Kathryn Robson spoke of the year as one where there was much to celebrate as she commended the commitment shown by colleagues (tutors, support staff and partners) to adapt quickly to the ever-evolving landscape brought on by Covid-19. AOC ALW was in a strong position because of such responsiveness - its improved digital capabilities had proved transformative for many and had led to it being a lead</p>

	<p>provider in many fields. As a result the Organisation was on track to increase the number of its learners this year. Strong collaboration with branches and with organisations such as Y Ganolfan Dysgu Cymraeg and National Museum Wales meant both a continuing range of well-established courses plus exciting expansion in Welsh medium provision and in work with refugees. Curriculum developments were worth noting in the fields of youth and play work, trade union courses and workplace learning.</p> <p>As for challenges, there was a continuing problem with staff shortages, that was not unique to AOC ALW; employers generally were finding difficulties in recruitment. Our strategic approach meant that we were well-placed as the largest provider of adult community learning (ACL) to ensure that the Tertiary Education and Research Bill going through the Senedd fairly reflected ACL's status within the post-16 educational sector. We were also playing our part in promoting an anti-racist Wales, with aims to develop a more ethnically diverse workforce. And work was in train on a new marketing plan and providing an ameliorated membership scheme as a linked development.</p> <p>In comments and questions, AOC ALW's positive work in youth, community and playwork was praised; and the continuing commitment to our voluntary movement was stressed, including efforts to involve those associated with the Organisation in engaging with the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales.</p> <p>The Chief Executive's report was formally received by the meeting.</p>
7.	<p>Chair's Report on the past year</p> <p>John Graystone expressed his gratitude to Council members, staff, learners and volunteers associated with the Organisation for their dedication. He mused over some new phrases that had arisen from the pandemic. AOC ALW was certainly not an 'astroturfing' body (purporting to be something that it was not), nor did it advocate 'doom scrolling' (as we had a positive mind set to challenges). It could however claim to be a 'long-hauler' - committed to being in the business of education for a long time, building on a distinguished history.</p> <p>AOC ALW was fully aware that Covid-19 had most adversely affected the poor in society, and was well placed to respond to such people's current and future needs, as well as to the educational requirements of recent influxes of people from Afghanistan and Ukraine amongst others. It was important to ensure we were not a junior partner in the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research that would emerge from the Bill of that name. With Kathryn Robson currently serving on appropriate relevant groups we were ideally situated to project ourselves as the natural body to take on responsibilities that would soon become available in the field.</p> <p>The Chair's report was formally received by the meeting.</p>

8.	<p>Resolution for Debate</p> <p><u>Resolution 1: Defibrillators</u> <i>This Annual General Meeting believes that AOC/ALW should install in all the premises it owns or leases as office bases a defibrillator (if not already present on the premises), for use in the early stages of cardiac arrest.</i></p> <p><i>This would be of benefit to all staff, learners and visitors. It has been shown that if a defibrillator is used within one minute of a cardiac arrest, survival rates can be as high as 90%; if it is used within the first 3-5 minutes, the likelihood of survival is roughly 74%. This shows that having a defibrillator close by really makes a difference.</i></p> <p>Proposed: Marilyn Thomas Seconded: Caerphilly Branch</p> <p><u>Amendment A</u> <i>AOC/ALW will also ensure that those members of staff who are already First Aid qualified will receive familiarisation/training courses for the defibrillators.</i></p> <p>Proposed: Cath Hicks Seconded: Mark Baines</p> <p>The resolution was introduced by Marilyn Thomas (tutor and chair of Caerphilly branch) who believed the proposal would benefit all who frequented the Organisation's offices. She recounted a personal experience relating to her husband, which showed the efficacy of a defibrillator's presence; John Graystone too told of the sudden death of his brother the previous summer at a location which had no defibrillator available. Both were in favour of the motion as strengthened by Amendment A. Cath Hicks briefly explained the nature of that additional clause.</p> <p>The resolution, as amended by Amendment A, was carried as follows:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">In Favour: 54 Against: 0 Abstention: 1</p>
9.	<p>Inspirational Women in Education – presentations and panel discussion</p> <p>The second part of proceedings began with a pre-recorded segment from Dr. Nilu Ahmed (University of Bristol) extolling the importance of education for well-being in relation to women, even though it was seen as a 'dangerous' pastime in certain parts of the world. She related her personal story of the benefits for her own health of a sewing class she attended at the time of her father's terminal illness. As a psychologist, she was keenly aware that the desire to learn throughout life was fundamental to well-being and a key facet of empowerment for women in particular. That was something that Nia Parry, as an adult educator in Welsh language classes, endorsed.</p>

Rachel Clarke, a deputy head-teacher in London, then spoke of the work and achievements of her grandmother Betty Campbell. Always strong on her Welsh heritage, she had fulfilled her dream of being an educator in her adult life despite being told when she was young that that would not be possible because of her colour. She had overcome many barriers during her life, and been ahead of her time in holding certain values central to her beliefs well before they became official Welsh Government initiatives - such as anti-racism, and inclusion of black people's history in the school curriculum. Full of resilience, she had shown in exemplary fashion how leaders had a duty of care for and nurturing of others, through treating everyone as of equal value. She believed an important achievement for AOC|ALW would be ensuring diversity around decision-making tables at the Organisation, not only in terms of race but also by including the voices of all marginalised people.

Prof. Diana Laurillard (University College London) talked about the importance of digital technology in a post-pandemic world, with the aid of a slide presentation. Improvements in the quality of use of this field were really down to teachers and the technical evolution of their roles, and her work emphasised assisting pedagogical innovations by teachers at all levels. She demonstrated the 'Learning Designer' programme - a collaborative on-line method, improved by peer review. She talked of international links in her work, the inspiration that Jennie Lee (wife of Aneurin Bevan) had provided for her career, and the fundamental importance of 'trusting the teachers' in sharing their exciting developments in this realm.

In another pre-recorded piece, Angharad Tomos set out the background to the roles of the married couple Silyn and Mary Roberts, co-founders of WEA North Wales in the first half of the twentieth century. While he had a romantic streak, reflected in his bardic leanings, Mary his wife was by nature an expert organiser and manager. She was the only woman on the stage at Coleg Harlech's opening in 1927, and her international connections (in particular with Denmark) and 15 years as head of WEA North Wales after her husband's death showed how much of an innovator she was. She led the movement through the profound challenges of the 1930s and 1940s and was a trailblazer in terms of senior roles undertaken by women. The archive of those years which existed in Bangor, soon to be passed to the National Library of Wales, showed how she set her stamp on everything and the importance of her legacy.

A final input was provided by Cerys Furlong, chief executive of gender equality organisation Chwarae Teg, who talked of women's achievements in education. The body's latest 'state of the nation' report on the position of women in Wales showed that the gender pay gap was 12% on average (though as high as 25% in certain sectors). This was based on greater part-time working and higher likelihood of economic inactivity for women because of their primacy in childcare roles. There was analysis of women in the political sphere, as leaders and managers in their workplaces, their safety in public places, and data on domestic abuse and poverty: 55% of Universal Credit claimants were women. While it was true that the majority of adult learners and of teaching staff in the sector were women, leaders in the field stubbornly remained predominantly male.

	<p>In a concluding panel session and in response to questions, Diana Laurillard believed that providing teachers/tutors with the power to combat certain of these negative societal trends would be a positive thing for AOC ALW to do. While not needing to act as 'gender police', greater empowerment of female tutors within adult education would be an encouraging achievement. Teachers/tutors were the ones who instinctively knew from experience what was needed in the rebuilding of educational structures after Covid-19. Yet the preponderance of male managers - especially at universities - meant they were the ones taking key decisions currently on rebuilding. The overall message was that AOC ALW's role as a broad movement within lifelong learning in Wales would flourish best not by excluding males in any way, but from unity among the genders in its work.</p>
10.	<p>Thanks and Closing Comments</p> <p>Nia Parry thanked everyone for their input to the morning - as speakers, presenters and in terms of the technical arrangements. She looked forward to the opportunity to meet people in person soon in her capacity as the Organisation's President.</p>