

Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee inquiry into Research and Development: evidence supplied by UK Research and Innovation

We are grateful to the Committee for the invitation to give evidence on 30 November 2023. This document outlines our response to additional questions, as set out by the Committee below, regarding the Welsh Government's strategies.

What's your overall view on Welsh Government's Innovation Strategy and the recently published Delivery Plan? Are there any obvious gaps or changes that you would like to see?

Does the Innovation Strategy and Delivery Plan provide a sufficient framework for universities and industry choosing where to conduct research and innovation?

We welcome the Innovation Strategy and Delivery Plan and the emphasis the Welsh Government has placed on collaboration with Innovate UK and topics such as Net Zero and healthcare, which complement UKRI's strategic priority areas. The commitment between Welsh Government alongside Innovate UK to increase the Knowledge Transfer Partnership budget for Wales and align this support alongside SMART partnerships is one of the tangible ways that we will improve university-industry engagement. It is crucial that a clear signal of intent and direction of travel is provided, which the sector can coalesce around, and we are confident that the strategy and plan helps achieve that. It is also important to note the wider complementarity to flagship policies involving the whole of the UK, such as the UK Science and Technology Framework.

As covered in our oral evidence in November, the recently published Collaborative Innovation Plan for Wales¹ that Innovate UK developed with Welsh Government builds upon already existing Innovate UK and UKRI strategies and seeks to align these strategies with Welsh Government priorities to support innovation in Wales. We are currently looking at how we can collaboratively develop new programmes through our co-operation with Welsh Government and also how we can amplify existing sectoral funding opportunities, which we hope will increase the uptake of UKRI, including Innovate UK, funding in Wales. We would like to reiterate that the Collaborative Innovation Plan is a dynamic, working document which we will be revisiting periodically to identify achievements and impacts, which will in turn inform our ambitions for the years ahead.

What is the main recommendation you would like to see us make to the Welsh Governments or at a UK level?

UKRI has developed numerous high-level and operational links with the Welsh Government, including regular senior-level meetings with Government officials, the Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales and with HEFCW. These relationships are key to enabling UKRI to further support the devolved aspects of research and innovation

¹ https://iuk.ktn-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FINAL-Welsh-DPS_Wales-Action-Plan.pdf (Welsh); <https://iuk.ktn-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FINAL-English-DPS-Wales-Action-Plan.pdf> (English)

funding, as appropriate, and to ensure sector-wide benefits are realised across the UK.

We continue to engage through fora including the UKRI-convened Science and Innovation Strategy Forum and the HEFCW Research Wales Committee, and we look forward to continuing this deep partnership with the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, once it is fully operational. Further, we welcome the opportunity to continue dialogue with Welsh Government to extend our collaborative relationships through MoUs, building on the progress of the IUK and ESRC agreements already in place.

As outlined above, we will also continue to engage with Welsh Government as activities around the Innovation Strategy and Delivery Plan are carried out, and we are committed to reiterate on this work to benefit the wider research and innovation community in Wales and the UK. We would like to reemphasise the importance of stimulating demand from and building the innovation capacity of the Welsh business community. In line with this, we are looking to increase our joint support to Welsh innovators to enable them to be more competitive in our UK-wide programmes.

About UKRI

Launched in 2018, UKRI is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and the largest public funder of research and innovation in the UK. UKRI is nine councils working individually and collectively across all disciplines and sectors. Together we connect discovery to prosperity and public good, enriching lives and enabling high productivity economic growth, job creation and high-quality public services across the UK.

UKRI invests in people, teams, places and infrastructure, strengthening the skills, organisations, and collaborations needed to explore and develop game-changing ideas within and across disciplines. We build and tune a portfolio of investments with aligned incentives to capture the benefits of research and innovation for the UK, tackling challenges from climate change to healthy aging, and harnessing the opportunities from new technologies from AI to engineering biology. UKRI works with our many partners and stakeholders to shape a dynamic, diverse and inclusive research and innovation system that gives everyone the opportunity to participate and to benefit.

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