

**\*\*Letter head paper\*\***

**\*\*Date\*\***

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I write to confirm the work of the Wales Governance Centre, in particular Richard Wyn Jones, with the Commission on Devolution in Wales between 2011 and 2014.

The Commission was set up on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2011 by the UK Government. We had two specific responsibilities, first ~~ly~~ to look at financial accountability and secondly to look at the powers of the National Assembly for Wales. The Commission was comprised of the nominees of the four political parties that were at the time represented in the Assembly, and four non-party representatives including myself as the Chair. We produced two reports, one in November 2012 (Financial Powers to Strengthen Wales) and the second in March 2014 (Legislative Powers to Strengthen Wales).

The Committee took evidence from a number of experts to inform its<sup>2</sup> conclusions. We also undertook an extensive programme of public engagement; to ensure our findings and resulting conclusions were based on wide consultation~~had popular approval~~. We invited experts from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, as well as travelling around the country to hold public meetings, and to interact with stakeholders and key opinion formers.

The Wales Governance Centre were important in providing both formal and informal advice throughout the work of the Commission. Every member of the Commission was aware of the Wales Governance Centre prior to commencing their roles. The Centre's~~ir~~ expertise was well known and it was obvious that they were people with whom ~~we should have a dialogue~~ would be of great benefit to us.

The Commission incorporated advice and evidence from academics, Universities, and departments across the UK. However, the contribution of the WGC was particularly important as they had a unique breadth and depth of expertise on how Wales was governed, founded on their~~and~~ engagement across civil society in Wales. We valued their contribution as objective academics with relevant research, who could help us in the work we were doing. For example, their role ~~as objective academics~~ was important in providing further evidence in favour of a reserved powers model of devolution. The 'conferred powers' model was widely regarded as flawed, but their research, and in particular the conclusions of the UKCU project, was important in solidifying the argument for the reserved powers model and making the argument irrefutable.

I regarded Wales Governance Centre as unpaid academic specialist advisors to the Commission. They gave evidence at formal sessions for both reports, but~~however~~ it was their informal advice that was probably most valuable. They were always there in the background, and I spoke frequently with Richard during the course of the enquiries. For example, they helped the Commission to identify a range of experts across Wales and the UK on a number of specialist areas. The one-to-one engagement with Richard was particularly helpful for me as Chair, and our dialogues helped me to test out and get feedback on the Commission's ideas and emerging conclusions as they were developing. I wanted to ensure the conclusions reached a consensus between all the cross-party representatives on the

Commission and having an expert I could speak with confidentially about this was very helpful in getting feedback during this process.

The Commission's recommendations led to a change in public policy, and a change in legislation. This meant changes in powers for the UK and Welsh Governments. Both the 2012 and 2013 reports led to Acts of Parliament: ~~respectively~~; the Financial Powers to Strengthen Wales report (November 2012) led to the Wales Act 2014, which gave taxation powers to Wales. The second ~~report~~, Legislative Powers to Strengthen Wales (March 2014), led to the Wales Act 2017 which extended the remit of devolution and moved from a conferred powers model to a reserved powers model.

The reports were an important step in the ongoing journey of devolution. Not all of the recommendations made by the Commission were taken up in the legislation, but ~~most~~ <sup>many</sup> of the key conclusions of the reports were included. ~~For example, in the second report the recommendation to move to a reserved powers model was taken up and enacted in the Wales Act 2017.~~ Both the political context, and UK political support for the Commission, was important in meaning that the reports were taken up into legislation. However, the quality of the evidence and advice we received, ~~pre-eminently from the Wales Governance Centre~~, was also important, as it meant we were able to ~~construct a well-founded~~ <sup>provide a sensible</sup> argument that ~~achieved cross-party~~ <sup>reached</sup> consensus ~~from the cross-Party representatives~~.

Kind regards,

**\*\*Signature\*\***

Sir Paul Silk

Chair of the Commission on Devolution in Wales, 2011-2014