

Proposal for a Peace Institute for Wales

Peace Institutes exist in many countries – several for decades. Some are quasi-government institutions, others are completely independent - but most have elements of both. This brief outline illustrates the wide spectrum of constitutions and activities.

Flanders

The **Flemish Peace Institute** conducts scientific research on peace issues and on the basis of this research, advises the Flemish Parliament and the Flemish Government. Although independent, it is hosted by the Flemish Parliament – which is constitutionally obliged to consider any advice given to it by the Peace Institute. It has a full-time research staff of 4-5 and, if appropriate, may commission research projects from other institutions (including some in the UK).

Catalunya

The **International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP)** was created in 2007 as a public, institutional body within a Government department responsible for peace! ICIP is dedicated to peace research, to training, to the observation, mediation and transformation of conflicts, its aim being to promote the culture of peace in Catalan society and internationally and to ensure that Catalonia itself is actively promoting peace.

Norway

The **International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)** is an independent and international institute that conducts academic research relevant to the promotion of a more peaceful world. It has over 60 full-time staff, over 80% of whom are researchers. Unlike the Flemish Peace Institute, it has no statutory duties in respect to government policies or actions and relies entirely on external funding.

Finland

The **Åland Islands Peace Institute** also conducts research on peace and conflict issues, but focuses on security, autonomy and minorities, demilitarisation and conflict management. It was founded in 1992 as an independent charitable foundation and has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC.

Ireland

The **Irish Peace Institute (IPI)** is an educational based organisation promoting peace through training and grass-roots capacity building initiatives within Ireland and internationally, having a track record of practical assistance on these activities. It has government backing for its prestigious seminars and other activities and appears to rely on the income from these events and individual donations for its funding.

Germany – Frankfurt

The **Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF)** was created in 1970 by the government of the German state of Hesse as an independent foundation. Its work focuses on the causes of violent international and internal conflicts; researching and promoting the conditions for peace. The constitution of the institute guarantees its academic freedom and, with more than 60 staff, it is both the largest and the oldest peace research institute in Germany.

Germany – Bonn

The **Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC)**, founded with the support of the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, is 'dedicated to promoting and facilitating peace and development'. The research at BICC is less academic than at others and is more utilitarian in respect to arms conversion and other issues. The centre is funded by companies with a broad interest in arms conversion and the alleviation of poverty, agencies and other international institutions.

Beyond Europe

There are several Peace Institutes within the USA – California, Washington, Oregon and others. Most appear to be foundations that initially depended on wealthy individuals. All share concerns in respect to education and resources for peace and non-violent conflict resolution in individual, community, national, global and environmental contexts. There are also Peace Institutes in Asia and elsewhere with a similar range of interests and concerns.

Common features

Almost every Peace Institute conducts research in peace and various related topics. Depending on the ratio of academic to commissioned research, the topics may deal with anything from conflict resolution through to arms conversion – plus, along the way, a great many variations (some maybe of only marginal relevance to Wales).

Most Peace Institutes were created by 'state governments' (comparable with our National Assembly) or, as in the USA, initiated by a rich benefactor, but the majority have since become self-financing (relying mainly on commissioned research). They all now enjoy academic independence that is valued and guaranteed by the bodies that provide the Peace Institutes with financial support.

The structures vary remarkable little – all having some sort of Advisory Board or Trustees or some sort of collation of 'the great and the good and the academic' that oversee an Executive of 'doers'. A few have a membership-based partly-democratic structure but most have a top-down appointed management.

Their influence and standing relies on the quality of research – which may or may not correlate with the income received from such work. As some research can be helpful for business as well as to peace activists, the motivation may be as much for the commercial return as to assist peace and conflict resolution.

Whilst the Flemish Peace Institute is alone in having a statutory obligation to comment on government actions, notably in respect to the manufacture and sales of dual-purpose and military products, all the Peace Institutes have some input in respect to education and training and lay legitimate claim to helping to shape public opinion and influencing government decisions.

Wales

Although our culture and history suggests that a Peace Institute would quickly find a niche, we do not have one in Wales at present. Although neither 'peace' nor 'conflict resolution' (unlike 'sustainability') is listed as a statutory objective of our National Assembly, the concept has universal support and is presumed by many to be already one of the many existing yet unstated objectives of our National Assembly.

This harmonious ambience is why we hope the National Assembly will agree to help create a Peace Institute – a decision akin to and consistent with its creation of Cynnal Cymru for sustainability but, in this case, to help focus our attention on peace. However, as it needs to be independent and non-partisan, we do not recommend that our Welsh Peace Institute should become a quasi-governmental organisation (as elsewhere).

We anticipate that any reservations about a Peace Institute will relate more to its funding than to the principle involved but, rather than be prescriptive at this early stage, we suggest this is a detail for discussion after the principle is established.

References (to a selection of Peace Institutes elsewhere)

Flanders: www.flemishpeaceinstitute.eu
Catalonia: www.gencat.cat/index_eng.htm
Norway, Oslo: www.prio.no
Finland, Åland: www.peace.ax/index.php?lang=en
Ireland: www.irishpeaceinstitute.org
Germany, Frankfurt: www.prif.org
Germany, Bonn: www.bicc.de
USA, Oregon: www.orpeace.us
USA, California: www.praxispeace.org
USA, Washington: www.fundforpeace.org
USA, IN: www.indianapolispeaceinstitute.org
Sweden, Stockholm: www.sipri.org
Sweden (Christian): www.life-peace.org
Finland, Tampere: www.uta.fi/tapri/eindex.html
Slovenia: www2.mirovni-institut.sie.index.htm
Bradford, England: www.brad.ac.uk/acad/peace/
Canada: <http://www.peace.ca>
USA, Einstein: www.aeinstein.org
USA, Institute of Peace: www.usip.org
Japan, Toda Institute: www.toda.org
Hiroshima: <http://serv.peace.hiroshima-cu.ac.jp>
India, Peace & Conflict Studies: www.ipcs.org
International (UN): www.ipacademy.org



OUTLINE PROPOSALS – for a Peace Institute for Wales

- ✓ A relationship with the National Assembly to provide independent evaluation of the potential effects of its actions and decisions in respect to upholding peace and human rights.
- ✓ Examination of the impact on Wales of UK defence and foreign policy decisions – for example, the training of foreign military who might be involved in human rights abuse.
- ✓ A reference point and resource for people and organisations providing information about peace, disarmament, conflict resolution and human rights issues with channels to allow enquiry into the arms trade, human rights, nuclear disarmament, upholding the NPT, etc.
- ✓ Direct relationships with NGOs, UN Agencies, other Peace Institutes and networks with similar organisations that contribute to international knowledge of and activity for and the promotion of peace.
- ✓ Academic freedom will be essential to the independent functioning of the Institute as a non-partisan authority on peace issues.
- ✓ Educational provision in respect to peace studies, conflict resolution through non-violence, awareness of human rights; building international relations through cultural contact, cooperative deals etc. Consultation status in respect to the national curriculum of Wales.
- ✓ Freedom to seek independent financing through commissioned research and to utilise funds and resources in the area of peace-building.

Sponsors include: the Welsh Centre for International Affairs, Cynefin Y Werin, Cymdeithas Y Cymod, CND Cymru, Christine Chapman AM, Michael German AM, Bethan Jenkins AM, Nick Ramsay AM.

To add your support, contact AHC/WPI, c/o Y Morlan, Morfa Mawr, Aberystwyth SY23 2HH.