



President of Welsh Tribunals First Annual Report

31st March 2019



Tribiwnlysoedd Cymru
Welsh Tribunals

Llywydd / President

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
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1. Introduction

The Office of President of Welsh Tribunals was created by section 60 of the Wales Act 2017. I was appointed to that office by the Lord Chief Justice of Wales and England (following consultation with the First Minister and the Lord Chancellor of Wales and England) and my appointment will subsist until 13 August 2021. Prior to my appointment, I assisted the Lord Chief Justice in evaluating the need for a President and for some months prior to my official appointment under the Act I performed the role of President at his invitation and with the agreement of the First Minister on a “non-statutory basis”.

By virtue of Schedule 5 paragraph 14 of the Wales Act 2017 the President of Welsh Tribunals is required to take the oath of allegiance and judicial oath in the presence of the Lord Chief Justice or such other person as may be nominated by the Lord Chief Justice to administer the oath. I took my oaths at a ceremony which took place at the Cardiff Crown Court on 14 December 2017 in the presence of the Lord Chief Justice.

One of my statutory duties is to represent the views of members of the Welsh Tribunals to the Welsh Ministers and to other members of the National Assembly for Wales. At a meeting with the First Minister and Counsel General which took place on 1st February 2018 it was agreed that I would discharge that duty by presenting an Annual Report to the First Minister and the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly. This is my first such report which covers the period from about July 2017 (when I took up the role of President on a non-statutory basis) to date. Henceforth I will provide reports at the conclusion of each financial year.

2. The Office of President of Welsh Tribunals

Some of the core duties and powers of the of the President of Welsh Tribunals are to be found in sections 60, 61, 62 and 63 of the Wales Act 2017. The duties include obligations to ensure that Welsh Tribunals are accessible, that their proceedings are fair, that proceedings in each Tribunal are conducted speedily and efficiently and that members of each Tribunal receive appropriate training. An example of the powers conferred upon the President is the power to issue directions as to procedures and practices to be adopted by the Tribunals.

The Wales Act 2017 does not purport to define, exhaustively, the duties and powers of the President. It is commonly understood and accepted that the President is the most senior judge within the devolved tribunal system and, accordingly, that he has a supervisory role over each of the Welsh Tribunals which is complementary to the duties specifically referred to in the Act. I have exercised that role, in relation to the very small number of complaints which have been received about decision-making in individual cases. In each case reported to me, I have taken appropriate steps to ascertain whether such complaints were investigated reasonably and proportionately in accordance with the complaints’ procedure applicable and, in each case, I satisfied myself that the investigation had been carried out in accordance with complaints’ procedure and that the investigation was fair and reasonable.

Although the Act is silent upon the point, it seems clear that, as a senior judge, the President is entitled to sit as the legal chair of each of the Welsh Tribunals. That said, my view is that the President should sit as a legal chair of a Tribunal only if the Judicial Lead of that Tribunal and the President agree that the circumstances prevailing in a given case make it inappropriate for the Judicial Lead to sit.

It should be noted that the President of Welsh Tribunals is not responsible for a number of non-devolved tribunals which function within Wales. Tribunals which adjudicate upon employment cases, asylum and immigration cases and social security and child support cases are operated by Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service Wales ("HMCTS Wales"). In the main, tribunal judges who sit in these tribunals are appointed by the Senior President of Tribunals for England and Wales, who is the senior judge having overall responsibility for the judiciary in these non-devolved tribunals.

There are other tribunals operating within Wales which are independent of both the President of Welsh Tribunals and the Senior President of the Tribunals for England and Wales. These include the Valuation Tribunal for Wales which has its own legal and administrative structure and the tribunals which determine contested issues about school admissions and exclusions which are administered by the local education authority responsible for the school in question. So far as I am aware these local authority administered tribunals have no defined legal structure or judicial lead.

One of the important functions of the President is to liaise between the Welsh Tribunals Unit ("WTU") (the civil servants who support the Welsh Tribunals), civil servants within the Justice Policy team of the Welsh Government and the judicial leads of the Tribunals. Quarterly meetings are held, chaired by the President of Welsh Tribunals, which are attended by the judicial leads or, if necessary, their deputies, the head of WTU and other members of WTU and a representative of the Justice Policy team. These meetings are valuable business meetings at which issues of concern to all the Tribunals can be discussed.

The President of Welsh Tribunals is a member of the Tribunal Judiciary Executive Board. This is a UK wide body chaired by the Senior President of Tribunals for England and Wales. The Board has members from all the constituent countries of the UK and it provides an invaluable forum for discussing good practice and sharing ideas for the administration of justice within tribunals throughout the whole of the UK.

The President of Welsh Tribunals is also a member of the Welsh Committee of the Judges' Council ("JCCW"). The Judges' Council comprises judges of all levels of seniority and has the role of advising the Lord Chief Justice on important matters which relate to the judiciary and the administration of justice. Senior civil servants also attend meetings. The Welsh Committee of the Council is also attended by judges of all levels of seniority together with senior members of HMCTS (Wales). The Committee meets quarterly and my main function at meetings is to update the Lord Chief Justice and other Committee members upon the administration and functioning of the Welsh Tribunals.

3. Welsh Tribunals under the Wales Act 2017

Section 59 of the Wales Act 2017 defines the phrase ‘Welsh Tribunal’ to mean:

- (a) the Agricultural Land Tribunal for Wales/Tribiwnlys Tir Amaethyddol Cymru (“ALTW”);
- (b) the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales (“MHRTW”);
- (c) a rent assessment committee constituted in accordance with Schedule 10 to the Rent Act 1977 (including a leasehold valuation tribunal and a residential property tribunal) (“RPTW”);
- (d) the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales/Tribiwnlys Anghenion Addysgol Arbennig Cymru (“ SENTW”);
- (e) a tribunal constituted in accordance with Schedule 3 to the Education Act 2005 (registration of inspectors in Wales: tribunals hearing appeals under section 27);
- (f) a tribunal drawn from the Adjudication Panel for Wales/Panel Dyfarnu Cymru (“APW”);
- (g) the Welsh Language Tribunal/Tribiwnlys y Gymraeg (“WLT”).

The Act also makes provision for the removal and/or substitution of those tribunals as well as additions to the list.

No tribunal has been constituted, specifically, to hear appeals under section 27 of the Education Act 2005 (the tribunal listed at sub-paragraph (e) above). Certainly, it has no judicial lead appointed by any formal process. However, tribunal members from SENTW are eligible to deal with any cases which arise. During the financial year 2017-2018 there were no appeals to that tribunal and there have been no such appeals since April 2018.

Each of the other tribunals listed above have duly appointed judicial leads. The lead judge of ALTW is Dr Christopher McNall, the lead judge of MHRTW is Ms Carolyn Kirby OBE, the lead judge of RPTW is Mr Richard Payne, the lead judge of SENTW is Ms Rhiannon Walker, the lead judge of APW is Ms Claire Sharp and the lead judge of WLT is Professor Keith Bush QC. I have developed close and effective working relations with each of them.

The most recent information about number of applications received by each tribunal is set out in the table below.

Table 1: Number of applications per tribunals with percentage increase/decrease

Tribunal	Financial Year 2016-2017	Financial Year 2017-2018	Financial Year 2018-2019	% increase/decrease
ALTW	17	17	29	+71
MHRTW	2034	2028	2046	+1
RPT	130	101	176	+74
SENTW	132	131	139	+6
APW	3	3	2	-33
WLT	9	4	3	-25

Each of the tribunals identified in the table above produces its own annual report. Further information about the nature of the work undertaken by each tribunal and information about the membership of each tribunal is detailed in these reports and on the website of each Tribunal.

4. Appointment to Welsh Tribunals

All new members of the Welsh Tribunals are appointed following a selection process undertaken on behalf of the appointing authority by the Judicial Appointments Commission for England and Wales (“JAC”).

Under the statutory provisions currently in force, the Lord Chancellor makes all appointments to ALTW and MHRTW (except that legal members of the restricted patient panel are made by the Lord Chief Justice after consultation with the Lord Chancellor). The Lord Chancellor also appoints the legal members of SENTW and the legal members (although not the Judicial Lead) of RPTW.

The Lord Chief Justice has exercised the power of delegation given to him by the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 in that he has delegated to the President of Welsh Tribunals the power to appoint legal members of the restricted patient panel of MHRTW. That power of appointment was delegated to the President on 27 February 2018. The delegation will subsist until varied or revoked by the Lord Chief Justice.

The Welsh Ministers appoint the Judicial Lead of RPTW and the non-legal members of RPTW and SENTW. They are also responsible for appointing all the members of APW and the WLT. They are able to avail themselves of the services of JAC in arranging and administering competitions for these posts by reason of section 83 Government of Wales Act 2006 which permits the Ministers/Welsh Government to enter into formal contractual arrangements with agencies such as JAC.

Many consider it anomalous that there are different appointing authorities as described above and that a large number of appointments to tribunals which function exclusively in Wales are not made by a person or body exclusive to Wales. It is likely that the process of making appointments to the Welsh Tribunals will be the subject of a comprehensive review by the Law Commission of England and Wales when it begins work on a project concerning the Welsh Tribunals – as to which see section 12 below.

During the course of the year I have corresponded and met with Professor Noel Lloyd, the Commissioner within JAC who is responsible for Welsh matters and therefore most involved with appointments to Welsh Tribunals and all other judicial posts in Wales. Professor Lloyd is chair of the Welsh Matters Committee. On 12 July 2018 I attended the Committee so that I could air some concerns which had been expressed to me by judicial leads about the process of appointment to their tribunals. Following the meeting and exchanges of correspondence those concerns were resolved amicably.

Under section 62 of the Wales Act 2017 the President of Welsh Tribunals is empowered to appoint existing members of a particular Welsh Tribunal to serve as a member of other Welsh Tribunals (so-called “cross-ticketing”). ‘It is clear that one of the primary aims of this provision is to create a cohort of Welsh Tribunal judges who are capable of exercising their judicial skills in a variety of case types thereby promoting significant flexibility and efficiency in the system.

Persons appointed by the President of Welsh Tribunals pursuant to this provision do not undergo a selection exercise undertaken by the JAC. Rather, candidates for appointment are asked to express an interest by completing an appropriately worded form whereupon their suitability for appointment is assessed against well understood criteria which closely follow some of the criteria adopted by the JAC. Selection following “expressions of interest” has been used successfully in the court and tribunal system of England and Wales for some years and I am confident that this process of appointment can be used successfully in the Welsh Tribunals. It should be stressed, however, that it is anticipated that for the foreseeable future most appointments to the Welsh Tribunals will continue to be made following a selection process organised by the JAC.

Under section 63 of the Wales Act 2017 members of the tribunals of England and Wales, i.e. the non-devolved tribunals, and other judges serving in England and Wales may be appointed to serve as members of Welsh Tribunals. Such persons may be appointed by the President of Welsh Tribunals provided the prior consent of the Senior President of Tribunals of England and Wales or the Lord Chief Justice (as the case may be) has been obtained. As yet no process for appointments to the Welsh Tribunals under this statutory provision has been devised although some legal members of RPTW have been appointed to the equivalent tribunal in England.

5. Recruitment to the Welsh Tribunals

Following the tragic death of Mr Andrew Morris, the President of RPTW, a recruitment exercise to find a successor was undertaken by JAC. Following the selection process Mr Richard Payne was appointed President. A similar process was undertaken to find a successor to Mr James Buxton upon his retirement as Chair of ALTW. Dr Christopher McNall was the successful candidate.

Since July 2017 the following appointments have also been made:

- ALTW Land Drainage.
- RPTW Professional Members.
- RPTW Vice President.
- MHRTW Medical Members.
- SENTW legal members.
- APW Legal Members.

Each of these appointments were made following a selection exercise organised by the JAC. All the exercises prompted applications from well qualified people. All the vacancies identified by each individual tribunal were filled.

Following consultations with the judicial leads of each tribunal I decided that I would begin the process of “cross ticketing”. Expressions of interest were invited from legal members of the Welsh Tribunals for appointments to ALTW, SENTW, and APW. In each case the number of vacancies advertised was filled. I was extremely heartened by the response to the exercise. All the applications received were meritorious.

6. Welsh Language Standards and Use of Welsh within the Welsh Tribunals

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework under which duties were imposed upon public organisations to comply with specified standards of conduct relating to the Welsh language.

The Tribunals (excluding APW) have the following classes of standards imposed upon them:

- Service delivery standards.
- Policy making standards.
- Record keeping standards.

In September 2016 the Welsh Language Commissioner issued compliance notices in respect of standards to be adopted by ALTW, RPTW, MHRTW and SENTW. Each Tribunal was required to comply with the standards specified in the notices by March 2017. At that time (September 2016) APW was not subject to the standards although it is likely that it will be made subject to the standards in the near future.

Each Tribunal served with compliance notices challenged a number of the standards specified in the compliance notices on the basis that they were either unreasonable or disproportionate. Following a number of submissions and meetings with the Welsh Language Commissioner, the compliance notices were varied and the final versions with which the Tribunals must comply are published on each Tribunal's website.

All the Tribunals have members (lay and legal) who are capable of conducting proceedings in Welsh. Consequently, if a party to any proceedings in any Tribunal wishes to use Welsh for written communications with the Tribunal or for oral communications during the course of a hearing a suitably qualified panel can be constituted.

However, reports from the judicial leads of each Tribunal (apart from WLT) are to the effect that Welsh is used very infrequently. I am informed that the records kept by WTU demonstrate that during 2018-19 Welsh was used in 5 cases across all the Tribunals apart from WLT.

7. The Welsh Tribunals Unit

a. Its structure and principal function

WTU comprises of a team of 34 staff who are employed by the Welsh Government. The team is split across Wales as follows: Cathay's Park Cardiff (22), Southgate House, Cardiff (3), Llandrindod Wells (8) and Llandudno Junction (1).

The head of WTU is Ms Rhian Davies-Rees.

Many of the persons employed in WTU are dedicated to particular tribunals. MHRTW is the largest tribunal by a very large margin so the majority of the members of staff are deployed to providing support for that Tribunal.

As is clear from Table 1 the work of the tribunals is growing. During the course of the year there have been suggestions from the judicial leads of some of the Tribunals that there are staff pressures/shortages and I have had discussions with the head of WTU about staff issues.

It is acknowledged by the Head of WTU that the reduced staffing levels have been extremely challenging during the last year. However, staff levels within the unit have improved, and I am informed they are now at a sustainable level.

The principal function of WTU is to provide all necessary support systems so as to ensure that the work of Welsh Tribunals is conducted speedily and efficiently and in accordance with the overall objective of disposing of cases justly.

I am pleased to report that Ms Davies-Rees and her team have responded to all my requests for support in effecting necessary changes with enthusiasm and efficiency. By way of examples, during 2017 while I was acting in a “non-statutory” capacity, WTU took all necessary steps to arrange for all legal and lay members of the Welsh Tribunals to have an email account on the secure system known as ejudiciary. This allowed all members of Welsh Tribunals, for the first time, to communicate with each other electronically by secure means. In 2018, WTU provided all the administrative support necessary to ensure that the first cross-ticketing selection exercise was a success. In 2017-18 WTU provided necessary expertise and support to judicial leads of the Tribunals so as to ensure compliance with new Welsh Language Standards and it is currently actively involved in seeking to ensure that the Welsh Tribunals comply with new extensive legal provisions relating to data protection (GDPR).

At the beginning of 2018 a number of priorities were set in conjunction with WTU and the Justice Policy Unit. They were to devise and distribute guidance on data protection, agree comprehensive and uniform procedures, where possible, for complaints made by users of the Tribunals, develop and implement procedures for cross-ticketing recruitment and to establish forums for collaborative working in relation to Tribunals. Very good progress has been made in relation to these priorities.

The issue of data protection is, however, a difficult one and the law is complex. There has been a need to obtain legal advice. To date this advice has been provided by a lawyer employed by Welsh Government but who has no dedicated role in respect of Welsh Tribunals.

In my meeting with the First Minister and Counsel General in February 2018 I raised the possibility with them of there being a lawyer with a dedicated role in respect of Welsh Tribunals and I followed it up in correspondence with the First Minister in April 2018. There was no opposition to my proposal from either the First Minister or Counsel General during the course of the meeting and there was no suggestion in the First Minister’s response to my correspondence that he had any objection in principle to a lawyer being appointed with a dedicated role in relation to Welsh Tribunals. To date, however, no appointment has been made. While I fully understand the budgetary and work pressures which exist, I would hope that an appointment can be made in the near future.

b. Its status

HMCTS Wales is part of a larger organisation (HMCTS) which is an executive agency. As such it does not have its own legal identity separate from the Ministry of Justice but it operates under powers delegated to it by the Minister and Ministry. From my own experience as presiding judge for Wales, I know that HMCTS and HMCTS Wales operate with a degree of independence from the Ministry of Justice although they are both answerable to the Minister and funded, ultimately, by the Treasury.

I raised with the First Minister and Counsel General the need for WTU to have a similar status. This was not ruled out but the response I received was that this issue should be considered as part of a reform programme relating to many aspects of Welsh Tribunals which it was then anticipated would be undertaken by the Law Commission.

I am strongly of the view that WTU should enjoy a similar status to that of HMCTS Wales and that steps should be taken as soon as is reasonably practicable to achieve that goal. In my judgment we should not wait for the work of the Law Commission to be undertaken since the reform is obviously desirable.

As well as providing substantial advantages for the operation of the Welsh Tribunal system in terms of efficiency and direction, the conferring of executive agency status on WTU would provide an element of independence from Welsh Government which can only assist in reinforcing the constant need for the Welsh Tribunal system to be and to be seen to be independent of Welsh Government. Judicial independence is a cornerstone of our democratic system and there is always a need to be vigilant to ensure that it is maintained and seen to be maintained.

8. The Welsh Tribunals' Budget

The budget for WTU is set by Welsh Government. In the financial year 2017-2018 the allocation to WTU was £4,068k. The allocation for the financial year 2018-2019 is £4,068k though an over spend is anticipated.

I understand that this increased spend is due mainly to the increase in caseload identified in Table 1 above.

The budget makes provision for both tribunal and administrative running costs.

In December 2018 a review of the Mental Health Legislation was completed. The potential impact of that review is as yet unknown. However early indications are that there will be a requirement for additional judicial and administrative resource to deal with the additional hearings.

9. The Welsh Tribunals' Estate

There is no dedicated hearing centre for the exclusive use of all Welsh Tribunals.

MHRTW conducts its hearing at hospitals; those legal members who deal with applications on paper and do not need to attend a hospital do not have dedicated office facilities but carry out their work from home or at offices occupied by them by virtue of their profession. The great majority of the administrative staff that support MHRTW are based at Cathays Park.

SENTW, ALTW and APW are based at office premises in Llandrindod Wells which are owned by Welsh Government. Those premises contain a room which is suitable for some types of hearings but it is common for those tribunals to use other spaces, such as rooms within hotels and courtrooms which are part of the court estate administered by HMCTS Wales.

RPTW and WLT are based at premises rented by Welsh Government at Southgate House, Cardiff. Those premises have a room which can be used for hearings but RPTW, in particular, also uses other facilities especially when the dispute before the Tribunal relates to premises which are a significant distance from Cardiff.

During the course of 2018 Welsh Government indicated that it would not renew the lease on Southgate House when it expired in 2019. Alternative suitable premises have been identified on the outskirts of Newport.

The Welsh Government has also indicated that it is considering giving up its premises in Llandrindod Wells. One of the proposals for alternative premises is to utilise space available at the offices of Powys County Council which are also located in Llandrindod Wells. With suitable adaptations, there is no reason in principle why staff of WTU cannot be located at office premises within a building owned and or occupied by Powys County Council. However, it would not be appropriate to hold tribunal hearings in such a building. In my view, it would be extremely difficult to maintain the necessary appearance of impartiality in cases involving local authorities if hearings were to be conducted in a building in which (presumably) payment for hearing facilities is being made from the budget of the Welsh Tribunals to a local authority.

Local authorities are nearly always a party in cases before SENTW; councillors are brought before APW. Accordingly, the re-location to the offices of Powys CC will have the unfortunate consequence that all hearings of ALTW, SENTW and APW will have to take place at hotels, at courts operated by HMCTS Wales, or other facilities outside the control of the WTU. This will have cost implications for Welsh Tribunals and additional funding will need to be secured going forward.

10. Access to Justice

As I have already explained, one of the duties imposed upon me under the Wales Act 2017 is to ensure that Welsh Tribunals are accessible. I take this responsibility very seriously. It is crucial that the Welsh Tribunals are able to operate flexibly and in a manner which permits the Tribunal users to present their cases in their best light. It is also very important that users are able to appear at Tribunals with as low a level of inconvenience and disruption to their everyday lives as possible. All hearings are arranged with that very much in mind.

Legal aid is available extensively in MHRTW and, as I have said, hearings take place, invariably, in the hospitals in which the patient is detained. Legal Aid may (depending upon a number of factors) also be available in SENTW. Invariably, hearings are conducted in locations which are convenient to the parties and, in particular, convenient to the parents of the child/children under consideration in a particular case.

Legal Aid is not available in the other Welsh Tribunals. As with SENTW, every effort is made to ensure that hearings are located conveniently for the parties.

The legal members of all Tribunals have developed the necessary skills to chair hearings in which there are litigants in person. I am assured by the judicial leads of each Tribunal (and I have no reason to doubt) that procedures are adopted at hearings which seek to ensure that a litigant in person is able to present his/her case in its best light.

I recognise that notwithstanding the best endeavours of Tribunal members and the support staff of WTU it is necessary for me to be vigilant in ensuring that access to the Tribunals is maintained and enhanced. To that end Ms Davies-Rees has regular meetings with senior civil servants in HMCTS (Wales) so as to share ideas for good practice and so that WTU is updated upon reform initiatives in HMCTS and, as I have said, I am member of the Tribunal Judiciary Executive Board where discussion of issues relating to access to justice is always high on the agenda.

11. Fees Paid to Members of the Tribunals

All legal and lay members of Welsh Tribunals are fee paid with the exception of the President of MHRTW who is paid a salary. Historically, the fees payable to members of each Tribunal were set by the Policy Division of Welsh Government responsible for the particular Tribunal. The result was that significant inconsistencies grew up across the Tribunals. These inconsistencies persist.

During my tenure these inconsistencies have been brought to my attention by judicial leads on their own behalf and on behalf of their members. The plain fact is that these inconsistencies are not justified and, if they continue they are likely to impact adversely upon the morale of those whose fee rate is too low. The implementation of cross ticketing across the tribunals will serve to highlight the inconsistencies. I have no doubt that there is an urgent need to appraise the current fee structure critically with a view to creating a fee structure which is fair and equitable.

As it happens the Senior Salaries Review Body (“SSRB”) has recently published a review into judicial salaries in the UK. As a consequence of that review, the Welsh Ministers authorised an increase in fees by 2%. However, the SSRB review also contains recommendations about the fee levels of legal members in the Welsh Tribunals. In my view that review provides at least a starting point upon which a fee structure which is fair and equitable to all legal members of Welsh Tribunals can be based.

My understanding is that WTU is already involved in work to ensure that a fair and equitable fee structure is put in place. I appreciate that it might be tempting for Welsh Government to await the reactions to the SSRB review of the UK government, the Scottish Government and the Northern Irish Government. In my view, however, that would be a mistake since the inconsistencies which are prevalent in Wales are by no means as acute in other jurisdictions.

The SSRB review does not deal with non-legal members. Nonetheless, it should prove possible to review inconsistencies in the fees paid to lay members and devise an appropriate structure.

12. Reform of the Welsh Tribunals

The Welsh Government and the Law Commission have agreed that the Commission will undertake a comprehensive review of the Tribunals and their support systems. The project will inevitably be wide ranging. Originally it was anticipated that work would begin in early 2019. Unfortunately, it is now clear that work on the project will not commence before autumn 2019.

I have no doubt that the work of the Law Commission will prove to be crucial in many respects and that, potentially, it will lay the ground for a devolved tribunal system of which Wales can be proud. However, I do not consider that incremental sensible reforms which does not require legislation to underpin it (such as the streamlining of practice and procedure, the implementation of procedures for cross-deployment between the English and Welsh Tribunals and the transformation of WTU into an executive agency) should be held up to await the outcome of the Commission’s work. If that were to occur it would be some years, in all likelihood, before meaningful reform begins. Indeed, it may very well be that pressing ahead with some reform in early course will assist the Law Commission in its work.

13. Conclusion

From the moment I became involved in Welsh Tribunals I have received the wholehearted support of the Judicial Leads of each Tribunal, the head and staff of WTU and various members of the Justice Policy team of Welsh Government with whom I have been in contact. When the need has arisen, I have received legal advice from Welsh Government lawyers upon which I have been happy to rely. I wish to record my thanks to all those persons.

We are at the commencement of a journey towards providing for Wales a tribunal system which is modern, flexible, capable of responding to the reasonable needs of all tribunal users and, most important of all, capable of delivering just decisions speedily and economically. Some of the essential building blocks are in place but, inevitably, there will be challenges ahead, especially if, as seems likely, the work of most of the Tribunals continues to grow.



Sir Wyn Williams
President of Welsh Tribunals