

P-03-307 Design for Innovation in Wales: Design Wales Response to the Petitions Committee

Design¹ is gaining recognition around the world as a driver of innovation in industry, services and society. Design is a problem-solving process. It is an approach to innovation that is user-centred, creative and viable.

The European Commission strategy Innovation Union identifies design as a key discipline for innovation in the private sector for bringing products and services to market, in the public sector for making public services better correspond to citizens needs as well as for addressing social challenges:

‘Our strengths in design and creativity must be better exploited. We must champion social innovation. We must develop a better understanding of public sector innovation. Design is of particular importance as a key discipline to bring ideas to the market, transforming them into user-friendly and appealing products.’²

To raise awareness and understanding of this strategic role for design among politicians, policy-makers and the public in Wales, in October 2010, Design Wales launched a Manifesto and Petition. The Petition gained 369 signatures and called for the National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Government to consider the role of design in future policies and programmes for innovation, public services and social enterprise. The Manifesto recommendations were met with overwhelming support when on 5 October 2010 Assembly Members unanimously passed an amendment to the strategy Economic Renewal to ‘harness the power of design for innovation in industry, services and society’. In response to the Petitions Committee request to provide insight into where further action can be taken, Design Wales has identified how design can play a strategic role in contributing to the Welsh Government’s policy priorities:

- Creative industries
- Manufacturing and service industries
- Public services
- Education
- Social enterprise

¹ ‘Design is a tool for the realisation of innovation. It is the activity of conceiving and developing a plan for a new or significantly improved product, service or system that ensures the best interface with user needs, aspirations and abilities, and allows for aspects of economic, social and environmental sustainability to be taken into account.’ Definition proposed in the European Commission consultation ‘Design as a driver of user-centred innovation’, DG Enterprise and Industry, April 2009. This definition was endorsed by 78% of respondents to the public consultation.

² European Commission. (2010) ‘Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union’ SEC(2010)1161, Brussels pp. 3 & 18.

Creative industries

In 2008, the Creative and Cultural Skills (Sector Skills Council) published the economic 'footprint' of the creative industries revealing that the professional design sector in Wales accounts for the greatest proportion (22%) of Wales' creative industries. In addition, the creative industries contribute £465M to the Welsh economy, of which 36% is generated by design.³ However, the strategic contribution of design to the creative industries was overlooked in the 'Heart of Digital Wales' review in favour of music and broadcasting. Since the Economic Renewal programme identifies the creative industries as a priority sector of strategic importance for the Welsh economy and as design constitutes a significant driver of competitiveness, design merits better representation in policy discussions. **Design Wales calls for design to have a representative on both the Digital Wales Board and the Economic Renewal Creative Industries Sector Panel to champion the role of design within the creative industries in Wales to support the development of this important professional sector.**

Manufacturing and service industries

In Economic Renewal, the Welsh Government encourages businesses, particularly the advanced manufacturing sector, to invest in design to develop new products⁴. While this commitment represents a significant step, the interpretation of design is limited to product development; this does not reflect the broader strategic role attributed to design in Innovation Union where design is also a driver of innovation in services. Service innovation has been identified by the European Commission as an area of increasing importance in the coming decade⁵. Those products proving most successful in competitive markets are those integrated into an advanced customer experience with intelligent services adding value to the product itself. The Welsh Government is already supporting the Service Design Programme delivered to the advanced manufacturing sector and could play a role in raising demand for innovation in services across Wales. **Design Wales calls for the Welsh Government to examine the role of design in service innovation and attribute a more strategic role to design in the Economic Renewal Programme.**

Public services

Design is proving itself as a process for delivering more efficient public services since it involves both the service provider and the service user (citizens) in an engaging process of identifying inefficiencies and proposing solutions that are creative, user-centred and viable. The Welsh Government is examining more effective public service delivery as part of the New Models of Service Delivery Work Stream. However, since design has not been articulated as a priority by the Welsh Government, design is not one of the models under consideration. **Design Wales calls for the New Models of Service Delivery Work Stream to consider the role of design in delivering more citizen-focused public services.**

³ Creative and Cultural Skills. (2008) 'Creative and Cultural Industries Economic and Demographic Footprint'.

⁴ Welsh Government. (2010) 'Economic Renewal', p. 35 & 38.

⁵ Europe Innova. (2010) 'Meeting the Challenge of Europe 2020: The Transformative Power of Service Innovation', Brussels.

Education

The Dyson report identifies design as a bridge between the STEM subjects. 'To a large extent, the STEM agenda has also ignored the silent D (design). Used as a tool to make products a reality, design links engineering to business and the end-user. At school level, design and technology should receive the same priority status as science and maths'⁶ as design is the subject that combines analytical and practical skills. **Design Wales calls for the Welsh Government to recognise design as the link between the STEM subjects and integrate design into the STEM curriculum.**

Social enterprise

As a dynamic tool, design is a process for addressing social challenges. Social enterprises should be citizen-centred and the Welsh Government has made a commitment to further this agenda in the Social Enterprise Action Plan for Wales⁷. By involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders in creative processes, design can enable citizens to come up with their own solutions for social enterprises. **Design Wales calls for design to play a role in Social Enterprise Action Plan programmes.**

In order to make these ambitions for design a reality, Design Wales is supporting four Assembly Members in establishing a Cross-Party Group for Design and Innovation. The aim of the Design and Innovation Cross-Party Group is to raise and maintain awareness at a policy and programme level of the role of design in realising innovation within industry (for competitive advantage), public services (for greater efficiency and citizen focus) and social innovation (for greater public participation).

Design Wales are currently active in communicating the role of design in innovation policy by leading a European network of 11 organisations since 2008 called SEE. Speaking at the SEE project's Policy, Innovation and Design Conference in the Flemish Parliament in March 2011, Peter Dröll, Head of Unit the Commission's Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry stated that "Our vision would be that in 2020, design is a fully acknowledged, well-known, well-recognised element of innovation policy across Europe, at the European level, at the national level and at regional level".

Wales has the opportunity to be regional forerunners in championing the design for innovation agenda and Design Wales is committed to enabling the Welsh Government make this happen. **Design Wales calls for design to be recognised both horizontally across Welsh Government policies as well as vertically at policy, programme and project levels. Design Wales calls for the Welsh Government to develop a vision for design in Wales as has been articulated by the Danish Government⁸.**

⁶ Dyson, J. (2010) 'Ingenious Britain. Making the UK the leading high tech exporter in Europe', p. 19.

⁷ <http://www.ourfutureplanet.org/newsletters/resources/Welsh%20Assembly%20Government%20The%20Social%20Enterprise%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Wales%202009.pdf>

⁸ http://www.ebst.dk/publikationer/ER/The_Vision_of_the_Danish_Design_2020_Committee/index.htm