



**GLOBAL WELLNESS  
INSTITUTE™**  
EMPOWERING WELLNESS WORLDWIDE

## **2015 ROUNDTABLE REPORT**

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# **Building a Well Wales**

**at the Institute of Life Sciences at  
Swansea University Medical School**

**JULY 14, WALES**

**Swansea University Medical School  
Ysgol Feddygaeth Prifysgol Abertawe**



**Swansea University  
Prifysgol Abertawe**

# 2015 ROUNDTABLE REPORT

## Building a Well Wales - at the Institute of Life Sciences at Swansea University Medical School

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### **Authors:**

Global Wellness Institute Research Team, and:

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Dr. Franz Linser, Director, Linser Hospitality; Board Member, Global Wellness Summit

### **What:**

The Global Wellness Institute™ (GWI), an international think tank that brings together leaders from the private and public sector to positively impact the future of the wellness industry, held its sixth roundtable (and second in Europe) at The Institute of Life Science at Swansea University's Medical School. The organization's roundtables are unique for bringing experts together for honest debates about the best ways to move a national/regional wellness market, or global wellness issue, forward. This roundtable was organized by Terry Stevens, PhD, international tourism consultant, in partnership with the Institute of Life Science at Swansea University's Medical School.

### **When:**

July 14, 2015

## **The Topic:**

The agenda included research presentations on Wales' opportunities in the £2.2 trillion (\$3.4 trll.)\* multi-sector global wellness industry (now three times larger than the worldwide pharmaceutical industry)—and its especially powerful potential within the fast-growing £281.6 billion (\$494bn) global wellness tourism market, as the modern traveler increasingly seeks raw nature, peace and cultural authenticity. The 37 high-level government, academic and private sector leaders that gathered then engaged in an open discussion about how to make Wales a wellness leader among small nations—and create a healthier Welsh citizenry.

## **Roundtable Participants**

**Professor Steve Bain**, Asst. Medical Director for R & D, ABM University Health Board

**Andrew Campbell**, Head of Tourism, University of Wales, Trinity Saint David

**Cllr Mark Child**, Cabinet Member for Wellbeing & Healthy City, City & County Of Swansea

**Professor Marc Clement**, Vice President, Swansea University & Executive Chair, Institute of Life Science

**Jayne Daniels**, Scientia Research Group, Swansea University

**Professor Andrew Davies**, Chair, ABM University Health Board

**Huw Davies**, Visit Wales, Welsh Government

**Kathryn Davies**, Executive Director of Planning & Integration, Therapies & Health Science, Hywel Dda University Health Board

**Daniel Doneddu**, Scientia Research Group, Swansea University

**Andrew Evans**, Owner, St. Brides Hotel & Spa

**Dr. Ashley Frawley**, Author and Specialist in Happiness, Swansea University

**Cllr. Meryl Gravel**, Carmarthenshir County Council & Vice Chair, Swansea Bay City Region Board

**Sian Harrop-Griffiths**, Strategy Director, ABM University Health Board

**Nerys Howell**, Howell Food Consultancy

**Stephen Herrievan**, Director of Business & Innovation, College of Human and Health Sciences, Swansea University

**Dr. Ruth Hussey OBE**, Chief Medical Officer for Wales

**Lowri Jones**, Head of Llangrannog, Urdd Gobaith Cymru

**Dr. Phil Kloer**, Medical Director & Director of Primary Care, Hywel Dda University Health Board

**Hamish Laing**, Medical Director, ABM University Health Board

**Dr. Franz Linser**, Director, Linser Hospitality & Board Member, Global Wellness Summit

**Juliet Luporini**, Commissioner, Bevan Commission & Member of the Swansea Bay City Region Board

**Peter Mannion**, Strategic Planning & Commissioning Manager, ABM University Health Board

**William McNamara**, Chief Executive Officer, Bluestone National Park Resort

**Tracy McNulty**, Head of Cultural Services, City & County of Swansea

**Syd Morgan**, Scientia Research Group & Fellow of the European Institute of Identities, Swansea University

**Professor Ceri Phillips**, Head of College of Human and Health Sciences, Swansea University

**Ken Poole**, Leader, Cardiff City Council

**Mal Pope**, Musician, Actor, Producer & Broadcaster

**Bronwen Price**, Head of Development, Literature Wales

**Bjorn Rodde**, Institute of Life Science, Swansea University

**Dr. Alan Sandry**, Scientia Research Group & Fellow of the European Institute of Identities, Swansea University

**Katie Southgate**, Leisure Media

**Professor Terry Stevens**, Managing Director, Stevens & Associates

**Liz Terry**, Director, Leisure Media

**Sian Elen Thomas**, Institute of Life Science, Swansea University

**Professor Rod Thomas**, Scientia Research Group, Swansea University

**Nia Williams**, Head of Learning, Museum Wales

# Report from the Roundtable

The GWI's first roundtable in the small, but innovative, nation of Wales attracted medical, policy and business professors and researchers from Swansea University and ABM and Hywel Dda University health boards; national and local government dignitaries across health, social services, culture and tourism; and private- and third-sector leaders from fields as diverse as science, nutrition, hospitality and the performing arts.

In the open debate about how to build a more “Well Wales”—with thinkers like Dr. Ruth Hussey, the country's chief medical officer (representing the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, Mrs. Hart) and Professor Marc Clement, vice president of Swansea University and chair of its Institute of Life Science—several “best ways forward” emerged: from training a new generation of life scientists in Wales refocused on proactive wellness and prevention, to driving intergovernmental collaborations around wellness the way a small nation can, to the Welsh government considering the appointment of a “bring-it-all-together” Minister of Wellness.

Keynote speaker Dr. Franz Linser (director, Linser Hospitality, Austria; board member, Global Wellness Summit) noted why these regional, nation-focused gatherings are so important: “Every country needs to understand just how fast the wellness, and wellness tourism, industries, are growing. And this roundtable put doctors, policymakers, government agencies and private businesses at the same table to discuss how the nation of Wales could take concrete steps to create a healthier population and tourism industry, both nationally and locally.” Professor Terry Stevens agreed, “This is the first time that such a wide range of sectors, disciplines and interests came together to discuss wellness in Wales.”

## Wales: Quietly Innovating in Wellness

Wales may be a small country of 3.1 million people, but recent and proposed legislation shows what a big innovator in health and wellbeing it already is. For instance, in April the country passed the “Well-being of Future Generations Act”, the first law in the world to mandate that the economic, social, cultural, environmental and physical wellbeing of future generations must be considered in every decision that all national and local governments make—whether issues of climate change, the natural environment, wealth and health inequalities, or the needs of an aging population. In March the country passed a landmark bill on Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence—the only European nation to do so. Bills recently introduced (and expected to pass) include the Environment Bill, giving Welsh Ministers new powers to set statutory emission reduction targets, and the Historic Environment Bill, which would better protect ancient monuments and castles, listed buildings and historic gardens/parks.

Dr. Hussey explained how the relationship between “health and wealth” is now of huge importance to Wales, and how the nation is “aspiring to higher goals—striving for a stronger economy with healthier people”.

*But as Professor Clement noted, “There is much work still to be done.”*

## Interventions to Make Wales a Wellness Leader

### 1. Put Bigger Focus on Prevention and Train New Generation of Life Scientists in Wellness

The cry globally, as healthcare costs spiral out of control, is for a more intense focus on the proactive prevention of illness. And the roundtable concurred that given the galloping costs of the NHS in Wales and spiking chronic disease (half of Welsh adults are under treatment for long-term conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes and arthritis, and 22 percent are obese\*\*), that the country has an especially critical need to stop putting so much emphasis on treating disease and start focusing on lifestyle change.

Wellness, roundtable participants agreed, is of paramount political and economic importance to the nation. Wales needs to put a much stronger emphasis on training a whole new generation of life scientists in evidence-based wellness approaches. Dr. Hussey noted this “more wellness” concept aligns with the principles of Prudent Healthcare. She argued Wales “needs to re-think the healthcare system and change the nature of medical professionals from being less like ‘fixers’ and more like ‘coaches.’”

### 2. Create Intergovernmental and Public-Private Collaborations

A large nation, with its vast, siloed policy departments, can't be as nimble or collaborative as a small country like Wales. Professor Clement noted that for Wales, the way to more health AND wellness “not only necessitates a collaborative approach between the public, private and voluntary sectors; it requires a real understanding of the impact that wellness has on disciplines such as medicine, youth work, sport, hospitality and community and public health.”

For Wales, intergovernmental and cross-sector collaborations are uniquely realizable...and a unique opportunity. Professor Clement added that it's a new range of intergovernmental collaborations and research projects that are already successfully enabling the re-training of life scientists focused on wellness. These collaborations reach beyond “innovation” and “open-innovation”—and are now realizing “embedded innovation.”

### **3. Embrace the Most Comprehensive Concept of Wellness**

Many public health initiatives focus narrowly on physical wellness, but Wales is already taking a more comprehensive approach with its groundbreaking Wellbeing for Future Generations Act, ensuring that government considers everything from environmental to financial health for future generations. The roundtable agreed that to succeed in creating a truly “well” population means reaching beyond the definitions provided by the World Health Organization and the medical establishment.

Dr. Hussey outlined the “five ways to wellness: connecting with others, being physically active, ongoing learning, mindfulness and giving”—stating that these wide-ranging wellness principles need to be “operationalized” in Wales, with initiatives that “keep it real.” For this largely rural and fast-aging nation (where roughly one in five people are over the age of 65), community and social health initiatives that can tackle the problems of loneliness and isolation need to be put front and center.

### **4. Develop Wellness Tourism for a World That Increasingly Craves What Wales Offers**

Globally, wellness tourism represents one in seven of all travel revenues, and is growing roughly twice as fast as tourism overall.\* Given that the two most powerful tourism trends are people seeking 1.) uniquely authentic and indigenous experiences, and 2.) healthy-for-me-and-the-planet experiences, Wales has powerful, relevant natural wellness tourism “resources” that appeal to the current and future traveler. These resources include its incredible, diverse “outstanding natural beauty” and undeveloped space for hiking, cycling and adventure and its distinct Celtic culture and language.

As Dr. Linser put it, given an increasingly stressed, urban and homogenized world, “the luxuries of the future will be invisible: time, silence and space.” These are powerful Welsh wellness tourism assets, and the country needs to protect, develop and promote them, not only developing more unique wellness resorts but promoting everything from its “silence” to its sustainability to its surf.

## **5. Bring Life Science and Tourism Together (with New Medical-Wellness Resorts)**

The roundtable discussed how Wales has an opportunity to develop a new type of hybrid medical-wellness resort, which would be a comprehensive, wellness-focused hospitality destination adjacent to hospitals. This model's benefits would be myriad, from immersing those that need medical procedures/treatments in a more healing, wellness-immersive environment, to establishing new public/private wellness "communities" with a sharp focus on inciting and supporting lifestyle change, both for Welsh citizens and international medical and wellness tourists. Such a hospital-hospitality resort is already developing as a concept in Swansea.

Because privately run hospitals in the U.S. have been able to bring in so many wellness approaches (from positive psychology for patients to massage), the roundtable agreed the public health system in Wales needs to do more on this front.

## **6. Focus Interventions on Everyday "Settings"**

The experts agreed that to really impact people's wellness every day, policy-makers need new ideas and campaigns that transform where they spend the vast majority of their time: at work, in cities/towns and in schools.

For example, Councillor Meryl Gravell, of Carmarthenshire County Council, argued Wales could innovate "wellness schools," where the focus is on every kind of health for children: from organic, nutritious food — to meditation breaks/training (proven to increase mental concentration) — to green buildings — to more physical fitness (the latter key, given that over 25 percent of Welsh 4- to 5-year-olds are overweight or obese.\*\*

## 7. Appoint a Dedicated Minister of Wellness

A key discussion point was that if Wales wants to make wellbeing a priority, it should consider creating a Minister of Wellness that would work alongside, and collaborate with, the Health Minister and Minister for Economy, Science and Transport. This new position would accelerate more comprehensive, coordinated wellness initiatives at the national and local level, from health policy to tourism campaigns.

**About the Institute of Life Science (ILS):** The ILS is the research, enterprise and innovation arm of Swansea University's Medical School. Valued at £100 million, the ILS is Wales' premier purpose-built medical research facility and is a collaboration between Swansea University, the Welsh Government, Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University (ABMU) Health Board, and industry and business partners. It is the single largest investment ever made by the Welsh Government on any university campus. The ILS advances medical science through multi- and inter-disciplinary research and innovation for the benefit of human health, and links those benefits to the economy by encouraging interaction with other organisations in a spirit of Open Innovation.

**To learn more** about this GWI roundtable, contact the Institute of Life Science team: [ilsinnovation@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:ilsinnovation@swansea.ac.uk)

\*Global Wellness Institute, "Global Spa & Wellness Economy Monitor," 2014

\*\* Chief Medical Officer Dr. Hussey's annual report, cited BBC, 10/2014



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