

Conference Report

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Notes from Presentations

NB. These notes are intended to capture the main points of each of the presentations, rather than provide the full text.

Andrew Davies, Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery

Keynote speech

- **How to embed lessons learned from redress and complaints?** This question is key to improving public services.
- **Focus on citizens**- involving citizens in the design, delivery and monitoring of public services is essential but difficult to achieve.
- Public services are not like companies; the risk is not that of going out of business, but citizens' participation is at the heart of **legitimacy and democracy**.
- In a **recession** this is even more important. Forecasts suggest that public services in the future in Wales will be very constrained compared to first 10 years of devolution.
- There is a pressing need to be much **smarter** and improve value for money. The traditional response to budget constraints is to retreat into organisational silos and retrench services to a statutory minimum. However, what is needed is a different, collaborative approach and citizen centred services are crucial.
- **Quality** is top of the agenda. There is a need to get away from the old tick box mentality that hinges on the idea that if the boxes are ticked nobody can be blamed for not following due process, and that regards complaints as a sign of failure.
- The Welsh Assembly Government have been looking at **innovation and best practice** across local government, in the voluntary sector etc. Invariably the best services are those where the users are involved and the providers are always looking out for the needs of users.
- Too often it is the citizen's responsibility to find his/her way through the maze of public bodies. Rather than forcing citizens to fit into the system, we need to **adapt** the system to suit them and what they want.
- A citizen focus can lead to both **efficiency and savings**. Front line staff feel valued and empowered.
- The Welsh Assembly Government has been learning from initiatives in other parts of the world, for example, the Kafka brigade project in the Netherlands¹.
- **Leadership and management training** is essential and a leadership academy is about to be launched.
- **Inspection and audit** work is important, particularly in bringing regulatory bodies together in a common citizen centred governance framework.
- Working with Peter Tyndall on **coherent complaints system**, based on common principles and a coherent approach.

Peter Tyndall, Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

Administrative Justice in Wales: Exploring the Landscape

[The full text of this presentation is available separately]

- Looking at AJ landscape in Wales from the citizen's perspective the picture is **complex and challenging**.
- Even in the best run services **mistakes** will be made: opportunities for mistakes need to be minimised; leadership and management need to respond to mistakes

¹ The Kafka Brigade is an independent, non-profit action research team that assesses red tape from a citizen's perspective. See <http://www.kafkabrigade.org/home/en> for further details.

in ways that allow these to be corrected and rectified and that enhance learning. How can we **spread learning** across public services in Wales?

- Devolution caused the Welsh to focus on the rights of the citizen. Benefits have been won, but the AJ landscape has **not kept pace** with changes in public services.
- In an ideal world **first-tier decision-making** would be of a quality that redress was unnecessary.
- **Internal complaints procedures** should be straightforward- this is not always the case. They are too bureaucratic; there are too many stages. Citizens have to bring separate complaints to multiple bodies. There should be a single process. There is a lack of joined up working between public bodies. Complaints should be solved at the first point so that they don't escalate through the system.
- How can complaint procedures be delivered in **partnership**? Key redress mechanisms must reflect partnership working by public bodies.
- There is WAG support for a **streamlined complaints procedure** led by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The idea is to base this on a similar system to the Code of Conduct for Councillors (variations allowed but not encouraged).
- A streamlined complaints system will be more resource efficient and help achieve the **early resolution of complaints**.
- Where there is more than one body the legislation empowers Ombudsmen to **collaborate**- increasingly the PSO for Wales is linking up with the PHSO etc to join up services for the citizen.
- At the heart of ombudsman schemes is the identification of **systemic lessons** derived from investigations and efforts to ensure that these are taken on board. Recommendations are made both for redress and change.
- There has been improved access to AJ for citizens in Wales as a result of now having services in **Welsh and English**.
- Unanticipated consequences: **devolution** impacts on AJ in non-foreseeable ways. Many **transfers of power** have occurred/ occur as a result of changes to English legislation- how to keep track of these and respond effectively?
- In England powers will be transferred to the LGO concerning individuals in private sector care homes and schools complaints. In Wales it is only the latter. We should not miss **opportunities** as they arise even if we don't want to do the same thing as in England.
- There is a lot of work to be done to make the complaints process easier for citizens e.g. with **signposting**. There should be emphasis is on a **single point of contact**- clear advice, helping hand, simpler AJ landscape and clear access routes through.

Mr Justice Lloyd Jones, Presiding Judge for Wales

The Administrative Court in Wales

- On **21 April 2009** the new Administrative Court (AC) in Wales started operations. The AC is not entirely new- there were arrangements for the AC to sit in Wales from 2000.
- It is expected that a **greater volume of cases** will be commenced in Wales or transferred to Wales.
- **Cardiff Civil Justice Centre** provides the seat of administration and management and a more efficient, speedier service than in London.
- Last 25 years **judicial review** has seen enormous growth largely due to number of Asylum and Immigration Tribunal and judicial review asylum cases. This created problems for the AC.

- Main objective/rationale of decentralisation of the AC is to **improve access to justice** (and to ease the number of pending cases in London).
- In Wales the AC can sit in any venue (four courts have been identified as suitable). The parties must indicate on their claim form which **hearing centre** they would like. In exceptional cases, such as terrorism, there is no choice but London (as outlined in the Practice Direction).
- There is no shortage of judicial manpower. Forms have been translated into Welsh and are available.
- First signs are that the AC in Wales has got off to a good start. So far there are **40 pending cases** across a huge range of areas from education to disciplinary bodies to asylum and immigration.
- A **court users group** has been set up to suggest improvements in proceedings.
- The AC is an important **national resource for Wales** and has a vital contribution to make to AJ and public service performance in Wales.

Mr Justice Warren, President of the Upper Tribunal (Tax and Finance Chamber)
The Upper Tribunal in Wales

- Rationale behind new unified tribunal structure: **consistency** of process and procedure across the disparate tribunals (as far as possible); **transparency** and removing the tribunals from their sponsoring departments; transparency in the selection and appointment of tribunal judges and members and better judicial deployment.
- This approach has not been approved in Wales, which has resulted in Welsh tribunals remaining outside the new structure. Even so, devolved tribunals should respect the principles of **independence** and **judicial expertise**.
- The Upper Tribunal is primarily appellate and has jurisdiction over the whole UK. Under section 15 of the Tribunals, Court and Enforcement Act, it can also have judicial review cases transferred to it.
- Judges of the Upper tribunals are Judges of the Court of Appeal, High Court Judges, or other Judges agreed by the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals. The benefits of this practice are: **cross fertilisation**, **cross assignment** and getting the right person for the job.
- There is a Welsh office of the Upper Tribunal in **Cardiff**, which share facilities with the Administrative Court. The caseload in Wales is expected to be quite low.
- Tribunals are becoming more **legalistic** and courts are becoming more flexible like tribunals. Both systems are tending towards mediation. How long the 2 systems will continue to coexist is an **important debate**. This is something the AJTC should consider over the next few years.
- The issues of costs and fees are likely to be important. All tribunals are fee free at present. There will no doubt be pressure from some quarters to introduce fees, especially in tax cases. However, it hardly makes sense to charge fees in benefit cases where many parties would attract fee remission. But, the Competition Appeal Tribunal needs to be remembered as a fee free jurisdiction where the parties usually include large commercial concerns.
- Mr Justice Warren has been charged with interpreting the Jackson review report in terms of its implications for tribunals.

Question & Answer session with morning panel members
Including Ann Abraham, UK Parliamentary Ombudsman

What is the interface between Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) and the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman (PHSO)?

- Multi-faceted complexity (geography, ombudsman, way services delivered) – and it is a huge job to bring about coherence. The challenge is how different administrative justice domains can potentially work together.
- PHSO signposts people to different parts of the AJ system. Individual cases often involve an original decision-maker, a tribunal and the ombudsman. Therefore, we need to understand each other's jurisdiction and dispute resolution systems better.

How will the Administrative Court determine the location of hearings in Wales?

- This depends on workload, where the tribunal is, where lawyers and specialists are located.

If parties differ in their choice of where an Administrative Court case should be heard, how is this decided?

- The Practice Direction allows the Claimant to choose between London and the 4 regional centres. Thereafter it is a matter of judicial determination. Factors to consider include: where the Defendant and his/her representative are based, extent/nature of media interest etc. Also it is sometimes desirable for cases to be heard together if they raise similar issues.

Should the Traffic Commissioner for Wales and W. Midlands have a formal office and separate role in Wales?

- This is an issue of service and redress.

The parallel system of courts and tribunals- would a combined service be more efficient for users? & The distinction between the courts and tribunals has served to make justice more accessible. Is the distinction becoming increasingly less valid?

- This is a hot topic with the Ministry of Justice at present.
- The debate is an important one, and it is important for everyone to think about administrative justice in a wider context. What sorts of judicial remedy do we want to provide citizens? Otherwise reform will be on the statute book before we know it.
- Unsure about whether tribunals have developed in the best interests of the citizen because of their increasing formality etc.
- Differences across tribunals need to be recognised. For e.g. all MHRT hearings take place where the patient is located and this is not possible in other jurisdictions.
- Informality in the Employment Tribunal is disappearing and if a case succeeds the party may have to go to the County Court to enforce redress.
- This is an issue that the AJTC should address. The AJTC has a specific overview role regarding AJ. We need to think about interfaces and connections and how to deliver justice across the piece. **How can we work most effectively?**
- If we had a blank piece of paper: what would our vision for administrative justice be? The AJTC ought to be thinking about this.
- Blank sheets of paper are dangerous!

How do we move towards an ideal world where quality first instance decision-making is secured in the first place?

- The challenge is large; the fundamental questions concern leadership and a focus on individuals who must be at the heart of how we do our jobs. It is a cultural issue and a question of learning from mistakes.

- Allow front line decision-makers to act on the facts in front of them- empower them to deliver the services the public need. Even if services have to be rationed it is possible to focus on the user.
- Improving the quality of first instance decision-making is a key issue for us all. If we could crack this nut there would be a massive saving. For e.g. there are plenty of claims that should never have got to an ombudsman or tribunal. They should have been resolved through the complaint process. However, parties often find it easier for a case to go to a tribunal than to have an internal review. A first-tier mandatory review process would improve the system enormously.

Is it likely that the development of the Administrative Court and tribunals in Wales will lead to the further devolution of justice in Wales?

- Access to justice is the driving force behind the latest changes to the Administrative Court and the decentralisation of public law work.

Dame Gillian Morgan, Permanent Secretary, Welsh Assembly Government
Citizen-Centred Services for Wales

- Citizen-centred service is the key. The presentation centred on a story of an individual's experiences in hospital. It highlighted:
 - the fundamental importance of AJ
 - the precedence of provider over person/patient throughout hospital experience
 - that sometimes people are not given any information, they are "batch processed"
 - the personalisation of care has been lost
 - providers do not join up their services and loose track of focusing on the individual
 - power differentials can dominate- when questions are raised, people get a technocratic response
 - legitimate challenges are taken as criticisms to defend not to celebrate as a means of learning
 - unequal power relations and complexity mean there is no redress: either complain or shut up, and the latter easier if person wants continuing, specialist care
 - No one person in this individual case did anything wrong, but the panoply meant that the experience was very negative for the individual concerned.
- Need to change basic human values about respect, rights etc. In Wales we have to own the problem. If we want active redress we must build on bad for good in the future. The person is at the heart of the story - not bureaucratic words.

Questions for Dame Gillian Morgan

How can we best work together with AJTC?

- This has already started. The AJTC brings an important challenge function especially to the question of complaints. We need to change rigid adherence to established protocols, empower front line service providers to make the right decisions and to give balanced judgements based on common sense.

With tribunals a stumbling block is education and cost for users; is the convergence of the courts and tribunals making things more difficult?

- We need to go back to navigation, look more at the role of voluntary groups etc. A "core script" would help citizens find their way through the AJ system.

Communications are crucial, including the need to agree common points/messages, use simpler, deconstructed language. Policy-makers could do with using professional communicators.

Having observed tribunal hearings, it is clear that often people don't need to have got there. What role can feedback play?

- Ombudsmen are different because they are engaged, they do not simply report.
- There is a need to work at joining things up. While government can listen when things go wrong, the majority of people don't complain. It is necessary to go out and talk with people and explore their experiences.
- Critical incident analysis can be helpful.

We are asking decision-makers to think about customers' needs. How do we ensure that they do this when career prospects and the culture of litigation mitigate against this?

- Protocols are not intended to cover every case. It all depends on judgement, being able to spot the 15% of different cases/ situations that do not fit into the protocols. Individuals make mistakes and they should not be vilified. We need to look at how to improve the system.
- There are multiple pressures on front line decision-makers. When they take time to listen to people their decisions may more often be right, but targets and pressure mitigate against their listening.

Professor Sir Adrian Webb, Chair of the Welsh Committee of the AJTC
Review of Tribunals in Wales

- In November 2007, shortly after the establishment of the AJTC Welsh Committee in June 2007, the Committee decided to initiate a review of tribunals operating in Wales, as it had already seen three main issues:
 - **complexity** (devolved, central government business, local government business, non-devolved, in/out of Tribunals Service, large/small volume cases etc);
 - **lack of independence**: from government departments/body being appealed against, lack of transparency in appointments;
 - **lack of coherence**: no single locus for policy development across tribunals, for training tribunal members, information for users.
- The review will **map** tribunals in Wales describing the above three issues. It will also consider principles and standards (CoT 2006 standards and recent AJTC work on "developing AJTC Principles of administrative justice") and how tribunals measure up to these principles and standards. Finally, the review will consider options for the future.

Summary of Breakout Group Discussions

The final part of the conference was a breakout session. This session aimed to provide delegates with an opportunity to reflect on and discuss the issues raised by the speakers throughout the day.

A number of the questions specifically focused on tribunal reform, and the points raised during these discussions will be considered as part of the AJTC Welsh Committee's Review of Tribunals Operating in Wales.

Questions for discussion:

Administrative Justice in Wales

1. Given the complexities of devolution, is it possible to have a coherent administrative justice system in Wales?
2. What opportunities are there to develop a uniquely Welsh administrative justice system?

User focus

3. How can the administrative justice system in Wales better focus on the needs of users?
4. How might the system best be structured to promote support for, and access by, vulnerable groups such as children?
5. How can administrative justice system in Wales link to and support the 'Beecham' agenda for citizen-centred services?

Tribunals Operating in Wales

6. What are the main issues affecting both devolved and non-devolved tribunals in Wales?
7. What are the most urgent issues that any tribunal reform process in Wales should address?
8. What aspects of tribunals in Wales should not be lost in any reform process? What opportunities are there for uniquely Welsh arrangements for devolved tribunals?

Many of the groups discussed ways in which the administrative justice system in Wales can better focus on the **needs of users**. The following is a summary of their ideas:

- **Sign-posting** - to help citizens identify the right route through the administrative justice system. This could include a central area to consider a complaint, whatever its nature, and advise the person concerned which path or options are available to them in taking their complaint forward. Any such service would take time to become established and to permeate into the consciousness of the public. Hence, it would be important that there is 'one door and that that door then remains there'.
- **Advocacy service** - which would stay with the complainant to the end of the journey. Reforms to the SENTW jurisdiction to allow children the right of appeal with the help on an independent advocate is a 'micro-model' of what is possible.
- **Sharing best practice** - processes to ensure that best practice is shared and implemented across the administrative justice system.

- **Feedback to decision-makers** – on a case by case basis when appropriate but especially on an aggregate basis at intervals and at a level within the organisation which engages people of the right seniority. This could also involve tribunals taking a wider view about the role tribunals can play in promoting improvement - not just as adjudicators but part of the system of good administration (whilst still preserving independence).
- **Empowerment of front-line staff** - to make decisions inconsistent with protocols when appropriate (this requires good leadership).
- **Local resolution** – of complaints and appeals as close to the source as possible. This might involve a greater willingness on the part of tribunals to refer back cases to initial decision-makers and promote other forms of dispute resolution closer to the point of original decision making.

The discussions of the breakout groups in relation to **tribunal reform** in Wales are summarised below:

- **Independence**
 - Independence, and the perception of independence is vital.
 - Tribunals could come under one specific (separate) department of the Assembly Government.
 - Tribunals could be independently monitored and evaluated for example, by an Inspectorate. Peer review across tribunals could be an alternative.
 - AJTC could provide support functions eg. training and accommodation.
- **A Welsh Tribunal Service?**
 - One 'Service' would enable cross ticketing – better use of time, resources, expertise etc. Joined up training could be available – with proper training schemes. It would also enable a consistent customer focus to all tribunals in Wales.
 - Some tribunals' share each other's hearing centres which enhances economies of scale etc but this is ad hoc. There needs to be more systematic co-ordination of administration. There could be one location for tribunal services to reduce administration costs and to improve access.
 - Multi-regional networking for events such as training could be developed.
 - A single policy and administration unit for 'devolved' tribunals could facilitate close working with the UK Tribunals Service.
 - There is a need for an administrative justice and tribunal focal point in WAG.
 - Could be core characteristics for all tribunals, with scope for individual characteristics where necessary.
 - Need to maintain specialist support staff for each tribunal. We also need to recognise where support processes can work together across tribunals.
 - Changes should only be made where a clear benefit results.
 - Tribunals constitute a broad church- one shoe does not fit all. There is a real need to share best practice. The JSB provides generic training, but given the mix of tribunals there is a need to discover common ground in terms of values. AJTC could help to facilitate sharing and learning.
 - There are tensions between large volume tribunals (social security, employment etc) which are being absorbed into the tribunal service system so as to be cost-effective, and smaller ones. Special educational needs and mental health, for example, are very different.

➤ **Member appointments**

- There is a need to ensure the recruitment of tribunal members is open and transparent, for example, by using the Judicial Appointments Commission.
- The appointment of lay or 'non-legal' members to tribunals is essential, bearing in mind the complexity of issues and skills, qualifications and experience of the lay members.
- Expertise should not be lost in open recruitment of tribunal members.

➤ **Hearing venues**

- There is a lack of suitable buildings/accommodation to hold hearings, specifically in North Wales.
- Currently, some hearings are held in a variety of places – for example hotels, which are not always suitable depending upon the nature of the hearing.
- Sticking rigidly to Welsh geographical boundaries is neither practical nor realistic. It is important to ask users where it is most convenient for them to go for a hearing.

➤ **Training**

- It might be possible to share generic training costs.
- Training is something that needs rationalising across both devolved and non-devolved tribunals.

➤ **Advice/accessibility**

- Effective, fast contact is vital. People need clear information so that their problems can be resolved before they turn into complaints or appeals. They often want problems resolved rather than getting involved in complaints/tribunals.
- Users are frustrated about their lack of access to tribunals, especially the lack of advice. Some do not know where to go, have poor access to public transport to travel to tribunals, lack literacy skills, have little access to computers etc.
- The provision of legal aid for individuals to redress the balance where organisations employ legal services should be considered.
- People need support in appearing before tribunals without representation.

➤ **User Focus**

- It is important to ask people how they want to be treated - we need to be guided by what citizens want.
- Everything nowadays is being driven by cost and functionalism; the concepts of process and the individual have gone. Costs should not be a driving factor to the extent that it causes real detriment to the service provided to the citizen.
- Sign-posting is crucial. People need to be enabled to use the process and made aware of their right to appeal to a tribunal.
- It is important for people to know what they can expect when they attend a hearing.
- We need to remind ourselves of what the original model of tribunals set out to achieve - informality and accessibility. The approach was completely different to that of the courts. To improve the experience of users, there is a need to review the formality of tribunals.
- Plain, simple information for users in Welsh and English is necessary as is other communication, for example radio.

➤ **Welsh Issues**

- Decisions are made by **city** based individuals with totally different perceptions to the majority of Welsh people living in **rural** areas. Access to justice for rural people in Wales is worse than it was a century ago!

- It is important to use of local people on panels.
 - Take advantage of more modest scale to promote better communication and service partnership.
 - The Welsh Local Government Association might have a role in promoting joined up thinking and action.
- Difference of scale in Wales gives us opportunities to do things that bring policy nearer to citizens.

➤ **Welsh Language**

- The use of Welsh language remains a challenge in tribunals. People may lack confidence, even where facilities and Welsh speaking staff exist.
- Need for training for tribunal members to help them use Welsh during hearings. There are financial implications to this. Welsh speakers are increasingly choosing to communicate with public bodies through the medium of the Welsh language. After promoting the service, it is important to be in a situation to provide it.

➤ **Scottish options?**

- The Scottish legal system is different, so the option they decide may not be relevant to Wales.
- Different Scottish system is due to different legal system. The needs in Wales are different also due to language and culture.

Conference Feedback

After the conference, delegates were sent feedback forms to determine what they felt worked well and what aspects can be improved for any future conferences.

Approximately 80 delegates attended the conference, and 35 returned feedback forms. The identified themselves as belonging to the following stakeholder groups:

Judiciary	10
Tribunal support staff	6
Government	13
Advice & Representation Providers	1
Ombudsmen and complaint handlers	1
Academic & research sector	1
Other	2
Not indicated	1

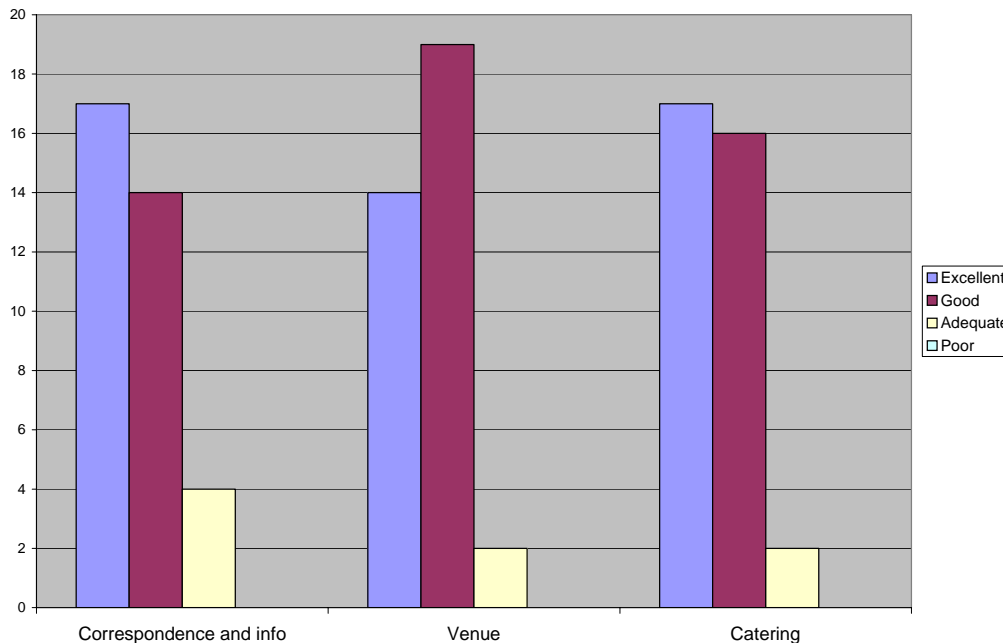
Conference Organisation

Delegates were asked to rate the following aspects of the conference organisation:

- correspondence and information prior to the conference
- venue
- catering

The results are presented in Chart 1 below. A high proportion of respondents indicated that all these aspects of the conference were either 'good' or 'excellent'.

Chart 1: Conference Organisation



Respondents were given the option of providing written comments for this section, which included the following:

'The room was a bit crowded so rather warm. Probably the result of a better than expected turn-out'

'The venue adjacent to the railway station was excellent'

'Personal preference would have been for slightly more reading material before the event, but I accept that others might not feel the same! Pre-reading (particularly if provocative) sometimes energises audiences to participate/engage more fully throughout the subsequent event'

'The tables in the main room were a little cramped'

'I was sitting at the back of the room and there was some noise from outside the room when cups etc. were being cleared after coffee which was slightly distracting – but overall a good venue'

'Preferred previous venue but this was ok'

Lessons Learnt:

Overall, the conference organisation ranked highly with respondents. The Marriott Hotel was chosen as it represented good value for money compared to similar venues, and is in a central location.

The conference room was slightly cramped, and next time it might be advisable to book an additional 10% of places above those expected to cope with late acceptances.

Content

Respondents were asked to rank from 1 to 5 the areas explored at the conference which they found of most interest and relevance:

- Administrative Justice System in Wales
- Administrative Court in Wales
- Upper Tribunal in Wales
- Citizen-Centred Services
- Review of Tribunals Operating in Wales

Due to unclear drafting of the feedback form – the form did not indicate whether 1 – 5 was from lowest or highest ranking - the results of this section are unclear.

Respondents were given the option of providing written comments for this section, which included the following:

'If given the opportunity I would mark all highly'

'As a representative from a body with jurisdiction over England & Wales, it would have been useful to see local issues discussed without consideration of national borders – some problems might have solutions equally applicable in rural parts of Wales and England, whereas Cardiff and Bristol might also have similar needs. I accept that the Welsh Committee should focus on Wales – but query whether a one size fits all approach across the country is a sensible focus, any more than it would be in England'

'All speakers were excellent and so ranking them is difficult'

'The mix of speakers was well thought out and impressive'

'Very little new or interesting was imparted'

'Each of the High Court Judges gave extremely informative and well thought out talks which were of great value'

'Hoped for more information regarding the Review of Tribunals Operating in Wales'

'It was all interesting but the sheer number of speakers left little time for constructive breakout discussion. The overriding impression was of a tension between national identity and finding a way of recognising the different structural requirements of the various judicial and tribunal types'

'Some very interesting presentations'

Lessons Learnt:

Careful drafting of feedback questions is required to ensure that feedback is useful and meaningful.

It was challenging to arrange a conference programme that had topics of interest and relevance to a diverse group of stakeholders. It was felt that the first conference should have ‘something for everyone’, but in future it might be possible to focus on particular topical issues. However, the benefit of a broad range of speakers is that it promotes learning across the administrative justice landscape.

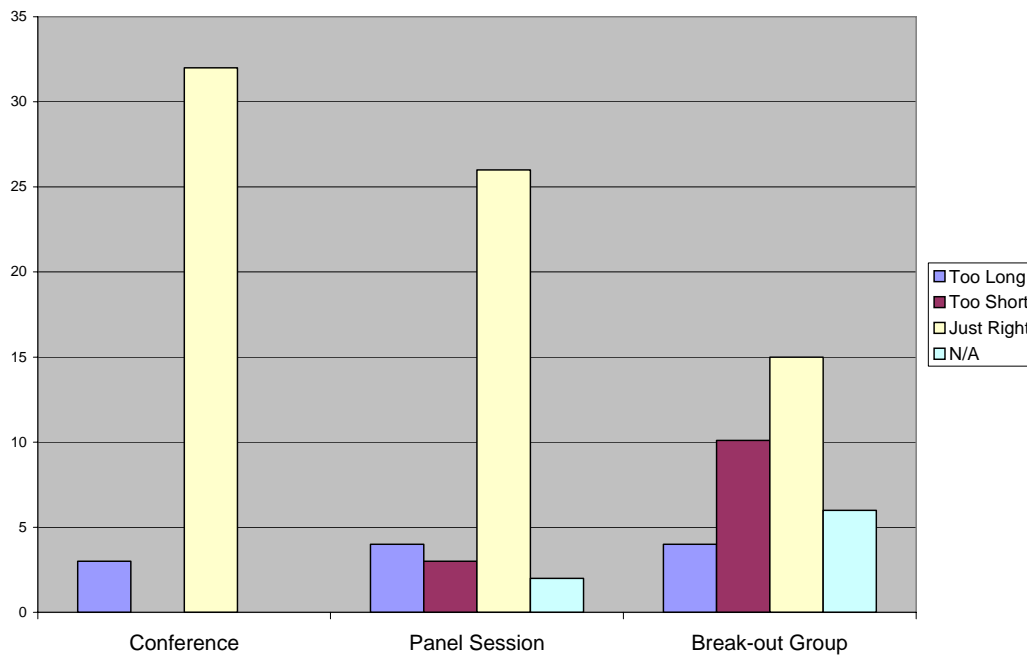
Timing

Respondents were asked about the length of the:

- Conference
- Panel session
- Break-out groups

The results are presented in Chart 2 below. Nearly all of the respondents indicated that the conference was an appropriate length. Most respondents felt that the panel session was an appropriate length, but there was concern among some of the respondents that the break-out session was not long enough. A number of respondents were unable to comment on the length of the break-out groups (indicated as N/A in the chart below) as they were unable to stay until the end of the conference.

Chart 2 - Timing



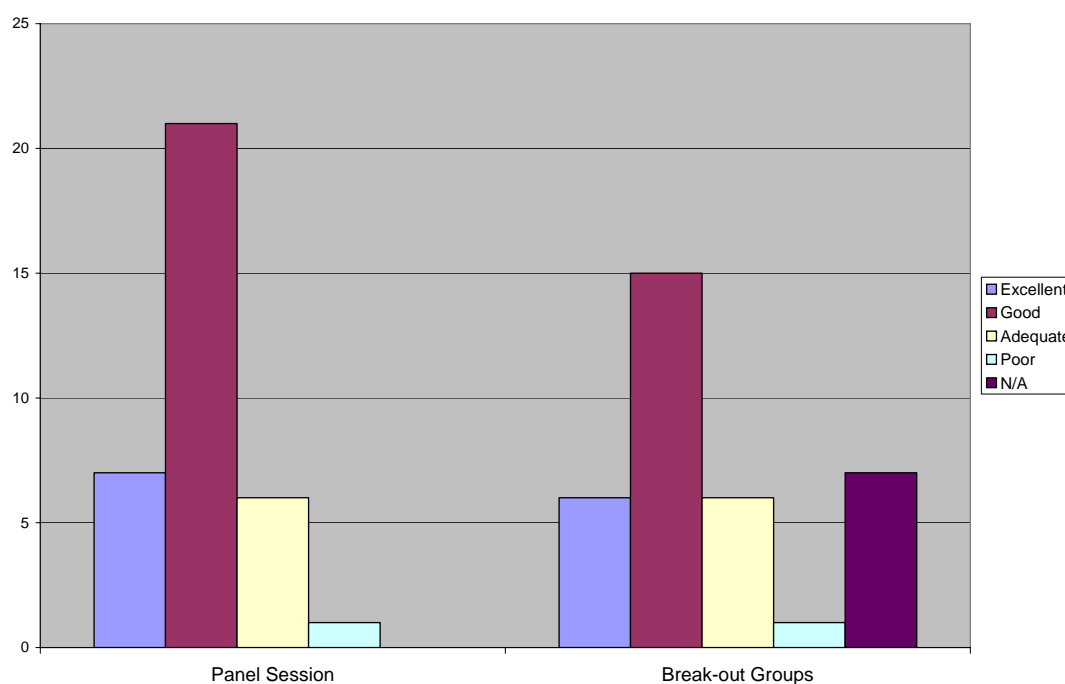
Lessons Learnt:

A better balance might have been fewer speakers and more time for breakout groups.

Opportunities for Participation

Respondents were asked about opportunities for participation in the panel sessions and breakout groups. Most respondents felt that the opportunities for participation in the panel session and breakout groups were either 'good' or 'excellent'. As above, a number of respondents were unable to comment on the break-out groups (indicated as N/A in the chart below) as they were unable to stay until the end of the conference.

Chart 3 - Participation



Respondents were given the option of providing written comments for this section, which included the following:

'Breakout Group was so good we overran, when we returned the conference had finished'

'The culture was one whereby all were free to participate fully; in large part this is down to the speakers'

'The audience was somewhat quiet! As a member of it, I apologise! There was some active facilitation to encourage debate – and I thought that the Panel and Sir Adrian did very well indeed...'

'The facilitator had a difficult task getting members of the group to make meaningful and relevant contributions'

'Judging by my group people did want to talk about tribunals, however, unsurprisingly they talk about their own experience and are (very) cautious about change, they do not have an overall view. There were too many topics even if the time had been increased to 75 minutes. Possible future strategy would be to allocate 3-4 questions to groups. Unlikely that many would think about particular issues in advance if asked to do so as preparation for the conference'

'Breakout groups are a really good opportunity for networking and topical discussion and would have benefited from more time'

'Need more opportunities to work rather than just listen'

'Limited networking time'

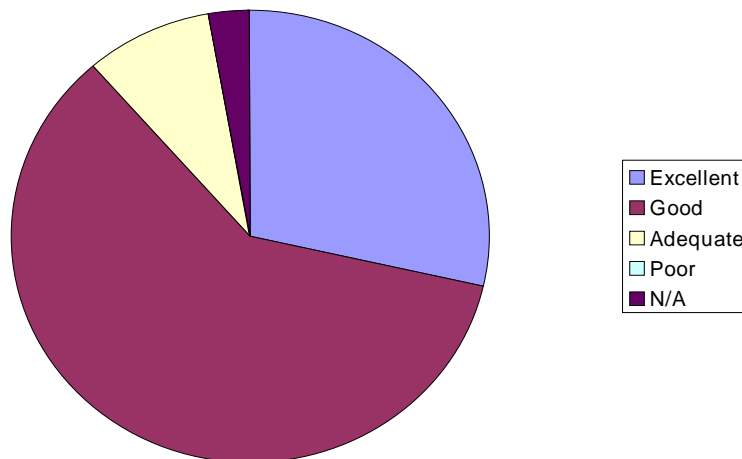
Lessons Learnt:

The break-out groups were scheduled for the end of the day to allow for discussion of all the issues raised by the speakers. However, a number of respondents had to leave the conference early, for example, to catch trains. In future, it might be useful to schedule the break-out groups earlier in the day and allow them more time. Other strategies for increasing delegate engagement should also be explored.

Overall

Respondents were asked to give the conference an overall rating, the results of which are presented below at Chart 4. Eighty-eight percent of respondents rated the conference as 'good' or 'excellent'. It was rated 'adequate' by three respondents, however it was not felt to be 'poor' by any of the respondents. One of the respondents did not complete this section, and is represented by N/A in the chart below.

Chart 4 - Overall Rating



Respondents were given the option of providing written comments for this section, which included the following:

'A good range of speakers'

'I am very grateful for the invitation. It was an excellent learning experience for me. If invited to any follow up session, I would be delighted to attend'

'An enjoyable event with a good range of speakers. Focus for future events could be aimed at energising the audience and so getting the most out of us...'

'... I felt the day lacked focus'

'My personal interest in the topics is peripheral, but I'm sure it covered the needs of those more directly involved in AJ in Wales'

'Might have been better to finish with a short wash up/what next session. As it was it felt a little like we were finishing before the end'

'I would hope that a bit of awareness raising occurred. That perhaps is one of the main tasks of the Committee, to help break-down the silos as only the AJTC has the system wide perspective. I think the tribunal people understand that they are part of 'putting it right' but not 'getting it right'. I think they were probably moved by Dame Gillian but not quite sure of its relevance to their work...'

'As this was the first conference and was a scoping exercise one cannot possibly (justifiably) criticise the day. For me it was excellent'.

'The conference was very well organised and a credit to those involved (both organisers and speakers)'

'It was a useful day that I consider should certainly be repeated'

'A 'good' because it was the first shot at this'

'A very good and informative day'

'Very useful in understanding administrative justice and some of the challenges moving forward'

Lessons Learnt:

Overall, feedback from the conference was very positive. As indicated in one of the feedback responses, the end of the conference could have been better managed, with a 'short wash up/what next' session. Respondents seemed to find the day a valuable learning and networking opportunity. As stated above, for future events there should be further consideration about how to engage the audience and 'get them working'.

Future Conference Topics

Respondents were asked to suggest topics and/or speakers for future event. The suggestions included:

'Maybe ask a President/Chair of an individual Tribunal to give an overview of their work'

'Discussion on options for shared use of resources and facilities – and sharing knowledge of the same'

'Rules of procedure...'

'Better Welsh language provision (with AJTC input)...'

'I'm very interested in the 'access to justice' agenda and how bodies with responsibilities for improving access across the jurisdiction can work in the various parts of the jurisdiction'

'It would be good to hear about the conclusions of the AJTC's tribunal review and how the Assembly Government intends to taken them forward'

'PDR [Proportionate Dispute Resolution]'

'For the future there should be a speaker representing the 'redress users' experience'

'I would like North Wales to have the opportunity of holding an AJTC conference'

'Possibly someone to give a brief overview of how things are done in Scotland'

'More practical aspects are required – less theoretical and 'higher court' sessions'

'More information re Tribunals Operating in Wales and what the future holds'

'A senior government spokesperson to explain WAG strategic pathway for tribunals in Wales'

'Sharing good practice between diverse judicial and decision making bodies'

The responses above, to a large extent focus on tribunals, which are only one aspect of the administrative justice landscape. It is important that the conference not repeat or cover ground that is or should be covered in tribunal member training or other conferences.

The feedback indicates that respondents benefited from learning about other parts of the administrative justice landscape and this should be carried forward to future conferences. The idea of 'sharing good practice between diverse judicial and decision making bodies' seems to be a good one. One possibility is a conference focusing on examples of innovative and successful initiatives across the administrative justice landscape that are having a positive impact on the experiences of users of the system. This would be particularly successful if delegates were able to leave the conference with some practical ideas or concepts that they were able to implement in their own sector to improve the user experience.