

A photograph of the Tower Bridge in London, showing its two massive stone towers and the suspension cables. The bridge is set against a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The River Thames is visible in the foreground. A dark green rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text 'A CASE FOR LONDON' in white, uppercase letters. The text is enclosed in a white bracket on the left side of the box.

# A CASE FOR LONDON



The Thames

## A case for London

Words by Robert John, Chairman of Wales in London



Robert John

**With financial services under unprecedented stress and with a widespread perception that the gilt is coming off the London “success model” is now the time to be urging Welsh Government and Welsh businesses to “up their game” in London and the South East? Is it a time to celebrate the Welsh diaspora or not?**

**At Wales in London we have a simple response to that - ignore London and the South East at your peril. And that is where we fit in.**

The opening statement in our website [www.walesinlondon.com](http://www.walesinlondon.com) states: “Whatever your links to Wales or involvement with Wales we are the forum in London where you can contribute to the national discussion on social, economic, sporting, creative and business issues”. The website is relatively new, but the organisation has been in existence since 1994 when it was created through the merger of the London Branch of the Institute of Welsh Affairs and

The London Welsh Publicity Society and, over the past 14 years, it has “persuaded” a legion of eminent speakers to address issues at dinners with members. In a normal year we will organise about ten events and will also provide members with information on other “Wales related” events which might be of interest.

Our remit has been informed by our members and has three strands. Events: there is no doubt that dinners with good speakers and good company is an

important draw. Networking: many members see benefits of networking both on a personal and business level. Contributing: critically there is a wish, a desire “to do a bit” for Wales and it is this which is now an important element of our programme and an element which should be of increasing importance when Wales, like all areas, faces difficult and challenging times.

How do we achieve this? We are investing time and energy in building up

links with individuals, organisations and institutions in Wales. We are jointly promoting dinner events in London which help foster better communication and are delighted that both ‘sides’ recognise the benefits—events linked with Cardiff University and the National Museum of Wales are examples and we have plans to do further events with Aberystwyth, UWIC, Swansea and others.

We continue to work closely with the Welsh Assembly Government especially their inward investment arm International Business Wales. Both on an individual and corporate level we are improving our contacts with members of the Welsh Assembly Government and members in Westminster and, as part of our programme, we regularly have leading politicians speak at our events. Boris Johnson was our guest on the night he officially launched his campaign to be Mayor of London whilst in 2009 we have started to explore the relationship between Westminster and Cardiff in a series of dinners with representatives of the four main political parties.

What is our vision? To be more relevant to the Welsh diaspora in London and to contribute more to the issues/challenges facing Wales.

We have a broad definition of the diaspora – anyone who is Welsh or has an affinity with Wales, be that through birth, marriage, education, employment or even home ownership. We are keen to build our membership base from the existing core of 1500 to embrace this

wider cross section – alumnae from Welsh universities working in London are an obvious target.

We are keen to attract and are attracting younger members – the institution of early evening events on specific topics (such as private equity and social ownership) are aimed at those who find it difficult to commit regularly to dinner events. We are expanding the scope of our events with the Arts now “on the menu” and we are exploring ways of working with authors, poets and other artists.

The core of our activity will however remain focused on the business, political and sports axis which has historically served us well – a journey into past speakers on our web page will illustrate that – and our events will still be organised predominantly in London.

There is another important objective. As Wales asserts itself as a brand of quality we hope to play our part by assisting and promoting business opportunities in and for Wales and in raising awareness of Welsh products and services to Wales in London.

We continue to promote the concept of an annual Welsh Week in London to celebrate the best of all that is Welsh, be it culture, food, education, business or tourism with leading politicians in Wales. It would command attention in the press; emphasise all those qualities we know are embedded in Wales; support our efforts to “sell Wales” in a market-place where many of the decision makers on “inward investment” are based (foreign head offices generally follow the

recommendation of their most senior UK/European management most of whom are based in London and the South East) and energise the Welsh diaspora in London to become more involved with Wales.

We are pleased to be working with International Business Wales and participating in various promotions, music and literary events, lectures and publications. To do this we have to work closely with associated Welsh organisations in London and to that end we are delighted to be associated with Cymmodorian; The London Welsh Centre, London Welsh Rugby and others.

We are ambitious for our organisation, our members and Wales and are looking to build from our successful base. To join us please fill in the application form on our webpage [www.walesinlondon.com](http://www.walesinlondon.com).

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# Welsh players on a world stage

Glyn Mon Hughes

When the phrase credit crunch first appeared in newspaper headlines, many thought it was a tabloid tease which would fade away as quickly as it burst on the scene. Few, though, could have realised just how savagely the chill winds of recession would howl around the world, battering banks and financial institutions. At the centre of much of the economic uncertainty has been London, often called the financial capital of the world. Central to any business deal is a dependable legal service and one of the major legal players in The City is the Welsh law firm, Hugh James.



Head of the London operation and head of the firm's commercial team is Philip Rees. "I qualified in London 28 years ago and worked in The City," Phillip said, "moving to Cardiff to run the company's commercial team. It was Citigroup who asked me to go back to London where I also worked for some major US law firms. But I'd always intended to get my roots back in Wales as I'd always kept in touch and kept my contacts."

Hugh James has created what Rees says is a 'fresh approach' to legal work.

"We use our Canary Wharf base as our 'front office'," he explained, "and we work for some of the biggest financial institutions in the world, such as Fortis, Citigroup and Wells Fargo. Our 'back office' is in Cardiff where we have a team of highly experienced lawyers. We've operated this way for 18 months and it's working very well. Indeed, I like to think that we are 'assisting' with the development of Welsh business interaction by being a Welsh firm working for some of the world's biggest players in the largest financial centre in the world."

Rees noted that, at a time when companies are rationalising their legal requirements, the new Hugh James model is proving highly attractive.

"From the outset, we are dual focused," he said. "We utilise the experience of a team we've put together from major law firms to provide innovative legal services for international corporates. We also provide potential inward investors looking at basing themselves in Wales with a platform in London, not to mention those Welsh companies looking to do business in other parts of the world. And the great thing is that we are the only international Welsh law firm in London."

"There's been a great deal of interest from public sector organisations as well as companies and organisations looking for

links with the Welsh Assembly Government. I work regularly in places such as New York, Los Angeles or Hong Kong on behalf of our clients and I see our role as partly ambassadorial, representing Wales on the international stage.

"Inward investment agencies have become extremely sophisticated and the Welsh economy has grown hugely, particularly in the scientific and technological sectors. Skills in research and development are also extremely powerful and these companies need the skills of a highly experienced legal firm to back them up.

"The fact our corporate and property partners can move seamlessly between bases in London and Cardiff is something our competitors cannot match."



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