

Text of letter from Professor Ralph O'Connor, Professor in the Literature and Culture of Britain, Ireland and Iceland, from the University of Aberdeen,

From: the international field of Celtic Studies, represented by 161 academics in 18 countries

To: Professor Paddy Nixon
Vice-Principal, Ulster University
Cromore Road
Coleraine BT52 1SA
Northern Ireland

Cc: Professor Alastair Adair CBE (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
Professor Hugh McKenna (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research)
Professor Jan Jedrzejewski (Dean of the Faculty of Arts)

24 August 2016

Dear Professor Nixon,

We are writing to express our deep concern about recent news of planned compulsory redundancies within the School of Irish Language and Literature. We understand that the individuals who stand to lose their jobs include:

- Iwan Wmffre, the author of nine monographs and numerous book-chapters who has the unusual distinction in our field of possessing research expertise in all the modern Celtic languages (he is the only member of the School who can claim this), and who has won international acclaim as a theoretical linguist as well as a Celticist
- Academic 2, an internationally respected scholar of mediaeval and modern Irish and translations between Irish and Continental European languages, who also plays important roles as panellist and advisor on two of Ireland's most important administrative bodies relating to Irish-language policy (COGG and Foras na Gaeilge)
- Iain Mac a'Phearsain, a film-maker, writer and lecturer with expertise in Scottish Gaelic and French, whose superb documentary work for BBC Alba and research on Scottish and Canadian Gaelic communities are respected on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as across the Irish Sea where his is one of the best-known voices on Scottish Gaelic radio; he is the only member of staff at the School who teaches Scottish Gaelic (on both campuses)

These three staff are at very different career stages, but all three are important and much-valued contributors to the international field of Celtic studies. The University of Ulster has

long been recognized as a world leader in this field, and all three of these scholars contributed to your excellent performance in Celtic Studies in the latest UK government research assessment (REF 2014), which you have rightly been celebrating (<http://arts.ulster.ac.uk/icsri/>). After such a ringing endorsement of your Celtic unit, it beggars belief that you would seek to make three of its staff redundant. One feature which was singled out in the REF report was your university's status as a powerhouse for internationalizing the discipline of Celtic studies: all three staff mentioned above have played their part in this by bridging the divide between Celtic studies and the wider world of modern language studies. The REF report also singled out the 'research environment' in Celtic studies for special praise, with 90% deemed 'internationally excellent or world-leading'. Losing three of your staff would reduce the diversity and quality of that research environment, especially as these staff include the only one who focuses primarily on Scottish Gaelic and the only one who has a wide comparative knowledge of all the Celtic languages. Your 'student experience' and your university's commitment to cultural diversity will also be damaged if you lose the one member of staff who teaches Scottish Gaelic from a unit whose identity and reputation have partly been built on maintaining links across the Celtic world and with Scotland in particular.

Finally, rightly or wrongly, your choice of targets is bound to raise ethical concerns in the outside world. Losing the only female member of staff in the School will raise questions about your university's adherence to the principle of equality and diversity, and losing two staff who come from outside Ireland will raise suspicions of protectionism, as well as reducing the international profile of the department.

We are writing as supporters of your university and especially of its continuing contributions to Celtic studies. Whatever the financial calculations behind this exercise may be, it would greatly damage your international reputation for both research and teaching if you were seen to have 'let go' three capable and versatile staff from a world-leading unit. Coming so soon after your success in Celtic in REF 2014, such a move will seem tragically counter-productive, and its repercussions would be unlikely to be restricted to our own field. It is also hard to imagine a more potent disincentive for your own staff in other units to perform their best for the next REF. We urge you in the strongest terms to reconsider.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Ralph O'Connor, Celtic & Anglo-Saxon Studies, University of Aberdeen, signing on behalf of the following further signatories based in Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Russia, Scotland, the USA and Wales:

Professor Anders Ahlqvist, Celtic Studies, University of Sydney

Dr Stefan Schumacher, Institute of Linguistics and Indo-European Studies, University of Vienna

Professor Dorothy Ann Bray, Dept. of English, McGill University, Montreal

Professor Ann Dooley, Celtic Studies and Center for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto
Professor Joanne Findon, English Literature, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario
Dr Jessica Hemming, Dept. of English, Corpus Christi College, British Columbia
Dr Michael Linkletter, Sister Saint Veronica Chair in Gaelic Studies and Head of Celtic Studies, St Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia
Professor Brent Miles, Center for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto
Professor Ranke de Vries, Ben Alder Chair in Celtic Studies, St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia

Associate Professor Morten Warmind, Dept. of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen

Associate Professor Alderik H. Blom, Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages, Oxford University

Dr Clare Downham, Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool
Professor Helen Fulton, Chair in Medieval Literature, University of Bristol
Mr Stephen Hewitt (MA Cantab, Diploma of Linguistics, Cantab), Editor of Records (retired), UNESCO
Dr Jon Mills, Centre for English and World Languages, University of Kent
Professor Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, Dept. of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, University of Cambridge
Professor Paul Russell, Dept. of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, University of Cambridge
Dr Charlotte Selleck, English Studies, University of Worcester
Professor Joanna E. Story, Director of the Medieval Research Centre, University of Leicester
Dr Mark Williams, Tutorial Fellow in English, Lincoln College, Oxford

Dr Alexandra Bergholm, Department of World Cultures / Study of Religions, University of Helsinki

Dr Katja Ritari, Deputy Director of Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, University of Helsinki

Dr Loic Cheveau, Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, Université de Rennes 2
Dr James Costa Wilson, Dept. of Linguistics, Université Sorbonne Paris Cité, Paris
Dr Gaël Hily, Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, Université de Rennes 2
Professor Askold Ivantchik, CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research) and Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow
Dr Anna Matheson, Faculty of Law, Université de Rennes 1

Professor Dr Bernhard Maier, Professor of Religious Studies and European History of Religions, Tübingen University

Dr Elena Parina, Dept. of Celtic Studies and Comparative Linguistics, Philipps-Universität Marburg / Dept. of Anatolian and Celtic Languages, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

Professor Dr Erich Poppe, Professor of Celtic, Philipps-Universität Marburg

Dr Elizabeth Boyle, Head of Early Irish, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Dr Jacopo Bisagni, Dept. of Classics, National University of Ireland, Galway
Dr Damian Bracken, School of History, University College Cork
Professor Liam Breatnach, School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
Professor John Carey, Dept. of Early and Medieval Irish, University College Cork
Professor Michael Clarke, Dept. of Classics, National University of Ireland, Galway
Professor Mary Clayton, University College Dublin
Dr Mary Condren, Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, Trinity College Dublin
Dr Charles Doherty, School of History (retired), University College Dublin
Dr Dewi Evans, Head of Welsh, School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore, University College Dublin
Professor Elizabeth FitzPatrick, Dept. of Archaeology, National University of Ireland, Galway
Dr Hugh Fogarty, formerly of School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore, University College Dublin
Dr Deborah Hayden, Dept. of Early Irish, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Professor Máire Herbert, Head of School of Irish Learning, University College Cork
Dr Barbara Hillers, School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore, University College Dublin
Dr Colin Ireland, The College of Global Studies (Emeritus), Arcadia University, Dublin
Dr Elva Johnston, School of History, University College Dublin
Professor Patricia Kelly, School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore, University College Dublin
Professor Barry Lewis, School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
Dr. Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, Director of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin
Dr Uáitéar Mac Gearailt, Head of Irish, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra
Professor Damian McManus, Professor of Early Irish, Trinity College Dublin
Dr Bernard Meehan, Head of Research Collections, Trinity College Library Dublin
Dr Pádraic Moran, Dept. of Classics, National University of Ireland, Galway
Dr Kevin Murray, Department of Early and Medieval Irish, University College Cork
Professor Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, Dept. of Old & Middle Irish and Celtic Studies, National University of Ireland, Galway
Dr Síle Ní Mhurchú, Dept. of Modern Irish, University College Cork
Associate Professor Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore, University College Dublin
Professor Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, Professor of History, National University of Ireland, Galway
Dr Caitríona Ó Dochartaigh, Department of Early and Medieval Irish, University College Cork
Professor Ruairí Ó hUiginn, Professor of Modern Irish, National University of Ireland, Maynooth (and incumbent Head of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies)
Dr. Lillis Ó Laoire, Acting Head of Irish, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, National University of Ireland, Galway
Professor Emeritus Pádraig Ó Ríain, Department of Early and Medieval Irish, University College Cork

Professor Jean-Michel Picard, School of Languages and Literatures, University College
Dublin

Dr Jenny Rowland, School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics, University
College Dublin

Dr Jürgen Uhlich, Dept. of Irish and Celtic Languages, Trinity College Dublin

Professor Diego Poli, Dept. of Humanities, University of Macerata

Professor Dr Jacqueline Borsje, Dept. of European Studies and Religious Studies, University
of Amsterdam

Emeritus Professor Doris Edel, former Chair in Celtic, University of Utrecht

Dr Norval Smith, Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication, University of
Amsterdam

Professor Mícheál Ó Mainnín, Irish & Celtic Studies, Queen's University Belfast

Professor Gregory Toner, Professor of Irish, Queen's University Belfast

Dr Immo Warntjes, School of History and Anthropology, Queen's University Belfast

Dr Bjørg Nesje Nybø, Norwegian Language Council, Oslo

Dr Eystein Dahl, Head of Dept. of Language and Culture, The Arctic University of Norway,
Tromsø

Dr Cathinka Dahl Hambro, Dept. of Language and Culture, The Arctic University of Norway,
Tromsø

Dr Ruben Moi, Associate Professor, Dept. of Language and Culture, The Arctic University of
Norway, Tromsø

Professor Michael Hornsby, Visiting Professor, Centre for Celtic Studies, Adam Mickiewicz
University in Poznan

Dr Alexander Falileyev, Institute of Linguistic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, St.
Petersburg

Professor Tatyana A. Mikhailova, Department of Germanic and Celtic Studies, Moscow State
University

Professor Dr. habil. Andrey N. Sobolev, St. Petersburg State University and Russian
Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg

Professor Meg Bateman, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, University of the Highlands and Islands

Ms Abigail Burnyeat MPhil, Dept. of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh

Dr Michel Byrne, Celtic & Gaelic, University of Glasgow

Professor Thomas Owen Clancy, Professor of Celtic, University of Glasgow

Professor Patrick Crotty, Dept. of English, University of Aberdeen

Dr Stuart Dunmore, Dept. of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh

Dr Katherine Forsyth, Celtic & Gaelic, University of Glasgow

Professor Emeritus William Gillies, Dept. of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of
Edinburgh

Dr Anja Gunderloch, Dept. of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh

Dr Sìm Innes, Celtic & Gaelic, University of Glasgow
Dr Pavel Iosad, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences, University of
Edinburgh
Dr Sheila Kidd, Celtic & Gaelic, University of Glasgow
Dr William Lamb, Dept. of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh
Dr Marsaili Macleod, Gaelic, University of Aberdeen
Dr Michelle Macleod, Gaelic, University of Aberdeen
Professor Wilson McLeod, Professor of Gaelic, University of Edinburgh
Dr Kate Louise Mathis, Dept. of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh
Emeritus Professor Colm Ó Baoill, Dept. of Celtic and Gaelic, University of Aberdeen
Dr Caoimhín Ó Donnáile, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, University of the Highlands and Islands
Professor Conchúr Ó Giollagáin, Gaelic Research Professor, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, University
of the Highlands and Islands
Dr Aideen O’Leary, Director of the Centre for Celtic & Anglo-Saxon Studies, University of
Aberdeen
Dr Geraldine Parsons, Celtic & Gaelic, University of Glasgow
Professor Boyd Robertson, Principal, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, University of the Highlands and
Islands
Dr Cassie Smith-Christmas, Lews Castle College, University of the Highlands and Islands
Professor Jane Stevenson, Regius Professor of Humanity, University of Aberdeen
Dr Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, University of the Highlands and Islands
Dr Simon Taylor, Celtic & Gaelic, University of Glasgow
Dr Moray Watson, Gaelic, University of Aberdeen
Dr Alex Woolf, Dept. of Medieval History, University of St Andrews

Rev. Dr. Phillip A. Bernhardt-House, Department of History, Skagit Valley College
Dr Seamus Blake, formerly Adjunct Professor, New York University
Professor Mary Blockley, Dept. of English Language and Literature, University of Texas at
Austin
Dr John Bollard, 2017 Visiting Lecturer, Dept. of Celtic Languages and Literatures, Harvard
University
Dr Lisabeth Buchelt, Associate Professor of English, University of Nebraska-Omaha
Dr Anne Connon, Dept. of History, Ohio Dominican University
Dr Gregory J. Darling, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English, Fordham University, New
York City College of Technology
Professor Morgan Thomas Davies, Professor of English, Colgate University, New York
Associate Professor Charlene Eska, College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Virginia
Tech
Professor Joseph F. Eska, College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Virginia Tech
Dr Brian Frykenberg, Museum of Printing, Haverhill, Massachusetts
Dara Hellman MA, Celtic Studies, University of California, Berkeley
Dr Máire Johnson, Assistant Professor of Ancient and Medieval World History, Emporia
State University, Kansas
Professor Catherine McKenna, Margaret Brooks Robinson Professor of Celtic Languages and
Literatures, Harvard University

Professor Sarah E. McKibben, Associate Professor and Chair, Dept. of Irish Language and Literature, University of Notre Dame

Professor Richard P. Martin, Antony and Isabelle Raubitschek Professor in Classics, Stanford University

Dr Michael Meckler, Center for Epigraphical and Palaeographical Studies, Ohio State University (President, Celtic Studies Association of North America)

Associate Professor Emeritus Daniel F. Melia, Rhetoric and Celtic Studies, University of California, Berkeley

Dr. Amy C. Mulligan, Assistant Professor of Irish Language and Literature, University of Notre Dame

Professor Joseph Falaky Nagy, Henry Shattuck Professor of Irish Studies, Harvard University

Dr Michael Newton, College of Arts and Sciences, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Professor Bríona Nic Dhiarmada, Thomas J. and Kathleen M. O'Donnell Professor of Irish Studies, University of Notre Dame

Emeritus Professor Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, Dept. of Celtic Languages and Literatures, Harvard University

Associate Professor Brian Ó Conchubhair, Director of the Center for the Study of Languages & Cultures, University of Notre Dame

Professor Philip O'Leary, Center for Irish Programs, Boston College

Professor Robin Chapman Stacey, Joff Hanauer Honors Professor in Western Civilization, University of Washington

Dr Joshua Byron Smith, Assistant Professor of English, University of Arkansas

Assistant Professor Natasha Sumner, Dept. of Celtic Languages and Literatures, Harvard University

Dr Patrick Wadden, Assistant Professor of History, Belmont Abbey College (Vice-President of Celtic Studies Association of North America)

Emeritus Professor Andrew Welsh, English and Comparative Literature, Rutgers University

Dr T. Robin Chapman, Dept. of Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth University

Professor Nancy Edwards, Professor of Medieval Archaeology, Bangor University

Professor Tudur Hallam, Chair of Welsh, Swansea University (and Fulbright Visiting Professor, University of Houston, Texas)

Emeritus Professor Marged Haycock, Dept. of Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth University

Dr Bleddyn Owen Huws, Dept. of Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth University

Professor Christine James, Head of Dept. of Welsh, Swansea University

Professor Dafydd Johnston, Director, University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth

Dr Aled Llion Jones, School of Welsh, Bangor University

Professor John T. Koch, University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth

Dr Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, National Library of Wales (retired)

Dr Rhiannon Marks, School of Welsh, Cardiff University

Mr James January-McCann MA, Dept. of Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth University

Professor Huw Pryce, School of History, Welsh History and Archaeology, Bangor University

Dr Iwan Wyn Rees, School of Welsh, Cardiff University

Dr Simon Rodway, Dept. of Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth University

Dr Eurig Salisbury, Dept. of Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth University

Emeritus Professor Patrick Sims-Williams, Dept. of Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth University

Professor Jason Walford Davies, Professor of Welsh, School of Welsh, Bangor University

Professor Gerwyn Williams, Head of the School of Welsh, Bangor University

Emeritus Professor Gruffydd Aled Williams, former Professor of Welsh, Aberystwyth University