

**Earth Science Education Forum – Cymru
Launch 24th January 2006, 7.30pm speech by
the First Minister, Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM**

Summary

In a powerful speech, Rhodri began by praising the National Museum of Wales and particularly noted the Gulbenkian award for the ‘Best Museum of the Year’ prize won by one of its eight sites, the Big Pit National Coal Museum in Blaenavon, and the new Waterfront Museum in Swansea.

He went on to say that it is impossible to understand Wales and its industrial heritage without knowing of its geological history and the minerals and rocks that have underpinned the development of Wales. These led to growing prosperity and the setting up of the Universities and the National Museum of Wales – with their continuing legacy of important Earth science related research projects.

He highlighted the proud record Wales has in the study of geology, noting that the major rock groups Silurian, Ordovician and Cambrian are actually named after either Wales as a whole or tribes who were dominant in Wales in the Roman era. All this because Wales was the stamping ground for many of the great figures of geological studies, 100 or more years ago.

He noted the new geopark status of the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Fforest Fawr Geopark, and applauded the winning, by the Dan yr Ogof cave complex, of the prestigious title “Britain’s Finest National Wonder” in a national competition.

He noted that the Welsh Joint Examination Committee is one of only two Examining Boards offering A-level geology across the UK and that youngsters across Wales should be educated in Earth science because of the strong Earth science heritage of Wales, as well as to produce a qualified workforce of skilled workers, geologists, mining engineers and technicians. He highlighted the range of key roles to be played by Earth scientists in Wales in the future, including oil, nuclear waste disposal, environmental impact, local government planning, EU water directives, flood control and disaster prediction and control. Advice will be needed on renewable energies, environmental issues, conservation and geodiversity, sustainable development and the impact of natural disasters, like the natural tsunami in the Indian Ocean off Indonesia.

‘That expert advice depends on expert education of people coming through that can advise politicians of my generation and perhaps even more important, politicians of succeeding generations.’ he said, ending on a high note, ‘So there is every reason why we are right to celebrate the launch tonight of the Earth Science Education Forum Wales.’

Allan Rogers, Chair, Earth Science Education Forum – Cymru