

Podcast transcript: Interview with Sir Adrian Webb 2 February 2012

It's all about enthusiastically but wisely investing our money to make a real difference to people and places.

That was the voice of Sir Adrian Webb, the new Chair of the Big Lottery Fund in Wales describing what BIG means to him. Sir Adrian says he is excited about his new role and outlines his aspirations for a big future.

We just start by saying we've got to keep this going. It's already very successful and has done a huge amount of work and a great benefit to Wales in many ways for many years so I think the starting point is continuity. But there is a big difference between now and even the recent past in that we are now facing huge economic stress in the UK and Europe and that is resulting in large numbers of people unemployed - huge number of young people unemployed. We've got major changes in things like the welfare benefit system which will cause great uncertainty for many people and, given that kind of background, I think it is even more important that the Wales' committee ensures that the money we have available makes a real impact for people and for communities in Wales in what are really are very hard and distressing times. Going beyond that, the important thing is that we have a freedom to be innovative. We have the opportunity to do things that are different and for me that's one of the great attractions of being here - which is a great thrill and honour for me - it's one of the great attractions I think of an organisation like BIG which has significant sums and the ability to do things differently and to explore ways of helping people, helping communities and perhaps also linking many of the organisations that are out there so they can make a bigger impact together than they can make singly.

The former Vice Chancellor of Glamorgan University has already made a huge difference in his career and now, through his new role, he is looking forward to make a difference to Welsh communities most in need.

That continues to be for me a reason for getting up every morning. Here we have a country with some huge needs and also a very fine history and tradition but the opportunity to try and address some of the disadvantage in Wales is a fundamental reason for being. So yes I'm very excited about the opportunity to be involved as I say in a programme which is not massive but which is substantial - after all we're spending what is it £100,000 a day in Wales which is not small potatoes - but we can do it intelligently, we can do it in ways that other organisations can't; we can hit the kinds of problems or we can hit problems in a way that other organisations can't. So in that sense I think we can punch much above our weight to make a difference and particularly to make a difference to communities, yes, but to individuals across Wales who are facing hard times, have been disadvantaged, lack opportunity or perhaps lack the confidence to take the opportunities that there are.

Finally, Sir Adrian gave a glowing endorsement of the way the Big Lottery Fund is operating in Wales.

The overriding impression is commitment, excitement, passion. There really is a sense among all the people that I've met that they are doing a job that is worthwhile and they're doing a job that is worthwhile because the Big Lottery Wales committee is applying money in a way that is worthwhile and is making a difference.