

## **Culture Committee - CC-12-01(p.2)**

**Date:** 4th July 2001

**Time:** 10.30am-13.00pm

**Venue:** Town Hall, Denbigh

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES**

**CULTURE COMMITTEE**

**REVIEW OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE**

**DRAFT PRESENTATION BY GWYNEDD COUNCIL.**

### **1. INTRODUCTION.**

1.1 The National Assembly for Wales' first strategic plan - *www.betterwales.com*

refers to "our vision". Apart from mentioning "the advantages of bilingualism" (English and French?), no reference at all is made to the Welsh language. Does "consensus" mean making no mention of the Welsh language?

1.2 The strategy contains three main themes:

- sustainable development
- dealing with social disadvantages
- equal opportunities.

1.3 The Welsh language is linked to the three main themes. In the words of the strategy, "sustainable development" means "satisfying present needs without jeopardising the ability of our future generations to satisfy their own needs". The continuity of the Welsh language as a natural means of communication - yesterday, today and tomorrow, is part of sustainable development.

- 1.4 Yet "dealing with social disadvantage" means "developing a comprehensive society where everybody has an opportunity to achieve their potential". Without employment, housing, without education in their own language, individuals and the society of individuals who make up communities, have no hope of achieving their potential.
- 1.5 "Equal opportunities" means "promoting a culture which values diversification and where equal opportunities exist". At present, economic pressure militates against maintaining this diversification in Wales where the continuation of the Welsh speaking communities has offered diversification - up to now. In addition to this, Welsh speakers have not "equal opportunity" to use the language.
- 1.6 The strategy aims to "promote awareness of the Welsh language" through "ascertaining the proportion of Welsh speakers, maintaining the growth in the number of young people who speak the language and assisting adults who are learning the language".
- 1.7 The main benefit to derive from the Committee's work will be to establish Welsh as an integral part of daily life in Wales. In order to do this effectively, it will be necessary to change governing structures and to ensure that Welsh becomes a core subject within Wales; a subject that is taken into consideration by everyone in all fields in the creation of policies.
- 1.8 Finally, it is felt that there is a need to integrate policy on a national level by ensuring that relevant agencies, viz the National Assembly, Welsh Development Agency, Welsh Language Board, in addition to the local councils, work jointly to address the problems.

## **2 EMPLOYMENT**

- 2.1.1 The Assembly's National Economic Development Strategy is one example of the lack of provision towards the continuation of Welsh as a community language. Gwynedd Council's Board has recently considered the document.
- 2.1.2 Some of the main points put before the Council's Board included :-
- Very little attention is given to the problems and needs of the rural economy, and the effort to identify new measures for the regeneration of the rural economy is very disappointing;
  - Also, there is little foundation for referring resources, investment and new development to West Wales. The Assembly should be reminded that an area's geographical location has an effect on its ability to compete in the economy, and that those communities which are peripheral to the main markets need more support in order to promote business growth and the development of the economy;

- The document does not explain how the budgets of those bodies who receive financial support from the Assembly (e.g. Welsh Development Agency, Wales Tourist Board) are reviewed to reflect the need to ensure "equal territorial development".
- The Assembly should be pressured to set local targets for the work of the relevant public bodies.

2.2.1 The same criticism applies to the document on Objective 1 funding - the 'Single Programming Document (SPD)'. (Is there a Welsh version by now?).

If you read the SPD itself, you will see that references to Welsh are scarce, erroneous and unclear. You're taught in Section 2.5.1. that Wales is now a "Principality" and that it is important to provide material in that "Principality" for 'people whose first language is Welsh or another language or who are disabled' (Section 8.2). These people reside in the main in 'the farming communities of West Wales which are the traditional strongholds of the language' (Section 2.1.3). Perhaps inward migration to the countryside will have 'beneficial effects for labour mobility as it increases the value of property belonging to the indigenous population and thereby increases their opportunity to move' (Section 5). And, of course, 'an emphasis on the distinctiveness of Welsh culture might be perceived as evidence of insularity and could discourage inward investors and lead to reduced opportunities for innovation'. (Section 5).

In the document responsible for economic development in places such as Tudweiliog, Cross Hands and Caernarfon it will not be essential to consider the participation of the Welsh speaking Welsh in these projects, nor their effect on the linguistic future of these areas.

2.3.1 The study carried out by Dr Dylan Phillips of the University of Wales' Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies Centre on "The Effects of Tourism on the Welsh Language in North West Wales" is a rare example of a document which incorporates Welsh as core part of the study. Heading 5.0 - the Recommendations - is all-important, for example:-

As the results of this study show, the greatest harm to the Welsh language and the greatest threat to its future is made by the side-effects of the industry. The greatest threat, as already seen, is the way in which tourism encourages and promotes the permanent inward migration of people from outside to the strongholds of the native language.

Despite this, the welcome industry could make a key important contribution to the Welsh language and the future of the communities that are its strongholds by developing a policy which places emphasis on sustainability and promoting strategies which make increasing use of cultural tourism.

### 3. HOUSING

- 3.1 One problem in several peripheral areas of these islands is the one-sided competition for housing between the native population in areas of low employment, e.g. Cornwall, Cumbria and Wales - and people who move to the buying areas from more prosperous areas, e.g. South East England, the Midlands and Cheshire, and who buy houses - permanent homes or second homes.
- 3.2 There are several measures which the Council would wish to see in terms of addressing the problem and reference has been made to some of these in the Council's response to the Better Housing for People in Wales document. A summary is given below of all the steps the Council would wish to see:-
- **general local need** - under existing planning arrangements, planning authorities cannot allocate land for people with local need, only for general need (for the open market). Additionally, the Assembly should publish clear and definite guidelines on how to form acceptable policies and how to limit residency in the future, e.g. through a condition or 106 agreement.
  - **affordable housing** - Clearer guidelines should be prepared and authorities should be allowed to allocate sites specifically for affordable housing to meet local need. This would give authorities, local communities and developers surety regarding the location of those houses.
  - **second homes** - houses used as permanent homes and second homes are currently placed in the same Class in respect of Planning Regulations (1995 Use Classes Order). By amending the regulations, second homes/holiday units could be placed in a separate Use Class from permanent homes thus giving Local Authorities new powers to control a section of the housing stock. It is understood that the National Assembly have the powers to amend the Use Classes Order. This would mean that planning permission would be required to change a permanent home into a second home.
  - **fund** - A permanent Fund should be established to offer financial assistance to local people attempting to buy houses on the open market.
  - **Right to Buy Act** - consideration should be given to amending the Right to Buy Act to limit the sale of houses in rural areas and also to give Housing Associations the first option to buy former Council houses which come onto the market. The Assembly's house buying rules should be amended to allow Housing Associations to buy more private sector houses.

- 4.1 The National Assembly had a golden opportunity to plan for the new Wales in their draft Planning Policy (February 2001) but the relevant professional body - The Royal Town Planning Institute - has criticised the conservative nature of the document. In their opinion, the Assembly must :-
- publish guidelines for planning authorities on preserving and promoting the Welsh language.
  - amend the advice on housing in the countryside in order to develop a Welsh agenda on rural developments.

- 4.2 Gwynedd Council have submitted detailed observations on the document, including seeking assurance regarding the correctness of the Welsh version, e.g.

**The Welsh Language** - The lack of recognition given to the Welsh language in the document is disappointing. To include two paragraphs at the end of a section is hardly sufficient bearing in mind the importance of the language to our country's background, history and culture.

The instructions given continue to be unclear. Whilst stating that the language is a relevant planning consideration, it is said, at the same time, that planning policies should not attempt to control house occupation on a linguistic basis. Clear and definite instructions should be given as to how local planning authorities can meet the challenge of preserving Welsh speaking communities, especially in the context of Unitary Development Plan policies.

- 4.3 Much reference has been made to the planning situation regarding housing and local people in the Lake District of England. In particular, the "Lake District National Park Local Plan (1998)" is a document referred to by many. The Assembly should inspect the document, and, as part of the guidance to planning authorities in Wales :

- explain why the Assembly will not be willing to support similar policies in Wales
- offer guidance regarding the use of similar policies in Wales.

## **5. WELSH IN THE COMMUNITY.**

- 5.1 If trends between 1981 and 1991 have continued between 1991 and 2001 it is envisaged that only in approximately twelve of the community council areas of Gwynedd will more than 75% of the population be able to speak Welsh. Most of these will be urban.

The following table shows a large increase between 1971 a 1991 in the percentages of people born outside Wales and who do not speak Welsh :

Area	Born outside Wales (%) 1971	Born outside Wales (%) 1991	Non-Welsh speakers (%) 1971	Non Welsh speakers (%) 1991
Ardudwy	29.8	46.1	35.2	43.7
Berwyn	14.3	27.1	12.4	23.0
Dysynni	30.7	52.9	41.7	54.7
Eifionydd	18.1	32.1	20.4	28.7
Gwyrfai	14.4	20.6	17.2	18.9
Pen Llyn	17.6	32.4	19.7	29.7
Llyn	13.8	23.4	13.7	21.1
Menai	22.6	30.7	45.4	44.9
Moelwyn	13.7	26.2	13.2	21.5
Nantlle	13.7	28.3	13.2	23.1
Ogwen	16.7	30.6	18.4	29.5
Padarn	14.4	26.8	14.8	23.2
Y Gader	19.0	28.0	24.1	38.1

## **6. UNSTATUTABLE EDUCATION.**

- 6.1 The British Government's vision regarding facilitating people's return to work has led to many care schemes for younger children. However, there is evidence of an English language "atmosphere" in several of these schemes in Welsh areas. As strong financial support has been obtained from public funds, it is expected that such grant would be subject to firm conditions relating to the provision of a bilingual facility.
- 6.2 Permanent education, life-long education is also a growth area. Yet again, the Welsh language, up to now, has not had equal status in this provision.

- 6.3 The lack of provision of Welsh in the further and higher education sector may be criticised. But the situation is worse with vocational training. The Council is not convinced that "ELWa" give sufficient attention to bilingualism in the context of post-16 Education in their Corporate Plan. One of the main difficulties that must be overcome is the lack of instructors and assessors.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS.**

- 7.1 Under Section 32 of the Local Government Act the Assembly may "do anything to support the Welsh language".
- 7.2 The current audit presents the Assembly with an opportunity to bring the Welsh language to the forefront and to create a comprehensive policy - not merely a housing policy, not merely a planning policy, but a comprehensive policy to preserve and restore the Welsh language, in the Welsh heartlands, and elsewhere.