

Culture Committee - CC-3-02(p.2a)

Date: 23rd January 2002
Time: 9.15am-12.45pm
Venue: Muni Arts Centre, Pontypridd

Culture Committee's Review of the Welsh Language / Presentation to the Committee – 23rd January 2002

Menter a Busnes Response

This response concentrates primarily on the theme of Economic Development.

A fuller paper is attached at 2b(for information).

Main Points

- i. What is the connection between the economy and the Welsh language? In the past there was a perception that one caused problems to the other – the language as a barrier to developing the economy, and economic development having a negative effect on the language. Experience shows the link is more complex and varied than this. In a Wales that is changing rapidly the key questions are:
 - o How can we use the language and culture as assets to contribute to improving the economy?
 - o How can strengthening the economy have a clear positive impact on the language?
- i. As Chwarae Teg has been assisting to maximize the potential of women in developing the economy in Wales, so Menter a Busnes has been working with people who speak Welsh.

For a variety of reasons people who speak Welsh tend to work in the public sector, in traditional sectors, and they are half as likely to start a business. So 500,000 people in Wales were less likely in the past to generate more jobs.

Menter a Busnes has been developing ways of encouraging Welsh speakers to become more enterprising and economically active. They now feel more positive about doing things themselves. But there is a long way to go. We now need to create practical ways of

letting people turn their dreams into reality, and of creating more activities in sectors with higher incomes. So that's where Menter a Busnes is moving as a result of the success of the initial work – as a part of the big economic development jigsaw in Wales – a small part but one that can make a real difference.

- ii. In the past physical resources and traditional capital were the primary or the only drivers of economic development.

Looking to the future it's obvious that the people of Wales as a resource will be far more important than in the past in creating economic advantage.

So developing people resources including communication and language skills is increasingly important.

Combining this trend with technological change, the mobility of people, the need for sustainability, and the new framework provided by the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) – we then have a new opportunity to create a connection between the economy and the Welsh language that is advantageous to both.

As well as the general benefit of integrating both, all kinds of other opportunities exist:

- Contributing to developing the Knowledge Economy
- Enhancing individual sector development programmes
- Spreading economic benefits through Wales
- Accelerating the improvement of skills
- Ensuring advantageous language usage in commercial situations
- Strengthening Wales' image
- Etc

We believe that all economic development agencies (local and national) can build into their activities the process of making the most of the assets of Welsh language and culture in a way that strengthens the impact of these activities (described in accompanying paper 7.1).

We also believe in addition there is a means of combining the efforts of these organisations to create a way of converting new ideas into practical action – co-operating with elements of the work of the Welsh Language Board. This would be possible without creating a new organisation (described in accompanying paper

7.2).

iv. This is a possible model for an Additional Focus (7.2)

The general needs will still need to be met as described (7.1)

-			National Assembly of Wales				—		
	WDA	-	An integrated mechanism for development and action (see 7.2.)						
	ELWa	-							
	Local Government	-					-	WLB	
	WTB	-							

	Careers Wales	-			

- i. Possible ideas for development (examples only, many other ideas could be developed).

Development Company

A Welsh language company capable of directly developing opportunities in suitable fields – like communication, multi-media, environment, tourism and leisure, and other language-specific areas.

The company will be proactive, directly seeking opportunities, with partners (private and public), and will make things happen.

It will have substantial resources and will operate commercially itself – with the aim of eventually transferring developed elements totally to the private sector.

(Naturally integration with general economic development activities will be essential.)

Development Areas

In 3 areas (with comparatively high proportions of Welsh speakers) over a period of 5-10 years develop a mechanism for combining all kinds of current and new activities related to the language directly or indirectly e.g.

- Mentrau Iaith / Welsh Language Board activities
- Menter a Busnes programmes
- Planning, land/property use
- General economic development activity
- Education and training services
- Social and community services
- Develop new activities to meet specific needs
- Etc

The focus would be on operating in a holistic way. There would be a clear need to study in detail the effect of all the work, with an element of detailed comparison with other similar areas not operating in this way.

Hopefully it will be possible to discuss these ideas as a part of the consultation.

Hywel Evans, Menter a Busnes