

Culture Committee CC-8-02(min)

MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 25 April 2002

Time: 2.00pm - 3.45pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly

Attendance:

Rhodri Glyn Thomas (Plaid Cymru, Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, Chair)

Jenny Randerson (Liberal Democrat, Cardiff Central, Assembly Minister)

Owen John Thomas (Plaid Cymru, South Wales Central)

Lorraine Barrett (Labour, Cardiff South and Penarth)

Alison Halford (Labour, Delyn)

Dafydd Wigley (Plaid Cymru, Caernarfon)

Glyn Davies (Conservative, Mid and West Wales)

Delyth Evans (Labour, Mid & West Wales)

Rosemary Butler (Labour, Newport West) – item 2 only

Officials

Julia Annand (Committee Clerk)

Stephen Thomas (Deputy Committee Clerk)

Prys Davies (Culture, Sport, and Welsh Language Division)

Also in attendance

Declarations of interest:

- Rhodri Glyn Thomas - member of the shadow board for Cardiff's bid for European Capital of Culture 2008.
- Dafydd Wigley - wife is a prominent member of the arts community in Wales; he had received a grant from the Welsh Books Council and had formal links with Hijinx Theatre.
- Rosemary Butler – Chair of the National Maritime and Industrial Museum Project

Introductory Remarks

1. The Chair reminded members that next Wednesday (1 May), the Committee would be discussing translation issues amongst other things and the Presiding Officer and some of his officials would be present to join the discussion.
 2. The Chair asked Members to ensure that providers in their respective communities were clear about their role in language planning.
 3. In respect of future discussions on the language review, the Chair referred members to the latest work programme (attached as an Annex to Paper 4). He asked the Committee to note one correction: the Committee would discuss its priorities and recommendations/headline report rather than the 1st draft of the report. There was also one addition, following the Minister's statement that morning on a new strategic and advisory structure for Museums and Archives in Wales, the consultation paper would come to Committee on 15 May.
 4. In respect of the Communications Bill, given the restrictions in the timetable, the Chair and the Minister had agreed to opt for a written consultation rather than seeking oral evidence from the broadcasters. The Committee also agreed this approach. The timetable for discussion on the Communications Bill was as follows:
 - 15 May – an official from DCMS would talk the Committee through the Bill;
 - 29 May – the Committee's discussion on the Bill to include consideration of written responses from broadcasters. Following this discussion, the Secretariat would put together a Committee' response to send to the Minister.
 - 27 June – the Committee would discuss the Minister's draft response.
1. The Chair referred to a letter received from the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom asking whether it was possible for the Committee to hold a series of public hearings on the Bill. He informed Members that he intended to reply saying that the Committee did not have the powers to hold sessions. The

Committee agreed with this approach.

2. The Chair informed Members that as the Communications Bill would loom large in the Committee's timetable over the coming months, the scheduled discussions with a number of Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies would be held over until the autumn.
3. Finally, the Chair told Members that because of the packed schedule in the coming months, all Committee meetings from now until the end of term would finish at 12.30pm.

Item 1: Review of the Welsh Language – CC-8-02 (ps 1-3)

Paper: CC-8-02(p.1) – Education: Nursery and Adult

1. As part of the ongoing Welsh Language Review the Committee discussed the provision of Welsh language education at pre-school and adult levels.
2. Following the discussion of Welsh language education provision in the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee the previous day, Lorraine Barrett had the following observations:

- Considerable progress was being made in the provision of Welsh language education to the under-5s
- The number of adults studying Welsh rose from approximately 13,000 in 1994 to approximately 20,000 in 2001. However, dropout rates were still high
- 40% of staff teaching through the medium of Welsh were over the age of 50 and there was concern about finding replacement teachers in the future
- Many pupils who had undertaken National Curriculum Assessments in first language Welsh at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, switched to second language Welsh at GCSE level
- The key message from the meeting was to ensure that "early years" provision was crucial

1. 3 The following comments were noted in discussion:

- There was some discussion and much concern about the fact that pupils were often entered for examinations that were inappropriate for their skills in order to raise the pass rate in schools and improve the standing in the league tables.
- Provision of part time Nursery education for all three year olds was now statutory. Members asked the Minister to make enquiries about the cost of providing part time Nursery education in Welsh for those who wish to take advantage of it. Given the need to set targets for increasing the numbers of Welsh speakers, the Minister was also asked to cost the provision of 50% of school children having access to Welsh medium education by 2006, and 100% of school children having access to Welsh medium

education by 2010.

- There was some discussion about the future role of Mudiad Ysgoion Meithrin, given the new statutory provision for Nursery education. There was agreement that the organisation was doing good work in its field, but some members felt it should now concentrate its attention on a lower age spectrum.
- Members also expressed concern that Welsh medium nursery education should be available for local communities and that parents should not have to travel long distances to obtain it.
- The Committee agreed that Welsh Medium Nursery Education was crucial to the future of the language and that the final report should include some costed targets in this area.
- The Committee also agreed that ELWa had a crucial role to play in the provision of Welsh medium adult education, but that the Welsh Language Board was also a key player here and its role would be discussed further when considering "roles and responsibilities" at its meeting on 1 May.
- Some members felt that a national strategy should be established for Welsh language adult education and that Wales should adopt the very successful structured approach to adult learning which operated in the Basque Country.

CC-8-02(p.2) – Economic Development

1. The following comments were noted in discussion:

- The Chair expressed concern about the lack of reference to the Welsh language in the National Economic Development Strategy (NEDS) and Objective 1 documents. He felt it would have been useful for people setting up Welsh language schemes and services to have been able to take advantage of Objective 1 funding.
- The Committee discussed the possible creation of a National Language and Economic Development Body, proposed by several respondents during the review. The Committee did not see a need for new bodies to oversee or promote the incorporation of Welsh language considerations in economic development plans. It concluded that these functions should be carried out by existing bodies such as the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales Tourist Board and that the Economic Development Committee should ask those organisations to produce proposals as to how they could strengthen their role and remit to provide a focus in this area.
- There was much discussion about regional devolution and the proposal for the Assembly and relevant ASPBs and public bodies to relocate their headquarters from Cardiff to Welsh-speaking heartlands. The Chair drew Members' attention to a letter received from the Chief Executive of S4C stating that relocation was not a feasible prospect for his organisation. Many members agreed with the principle of relocation and commented that the Assembly itself was looking very closely at increased regional devolution of its offices.
- Members agreed that in the final report, this question should be addressed at three levels. Firstly, in respect of government departments, there was already an

encouragement towards regional devolution; secondly, in respect of ASPBs, Ministers should include a statement in the annual remit letter to these bodies, encouraging them to devolve wherever possible; thirdly, the Assembly should invite non-answerable bodies such as S4C and BBC Wales to consider the concept of regional devolution when making management and strategic decisions.

- Members also felt that the Committee's report should stress the economic advantages of bilingualism and the earning potential of Welsh speakers.

CC-8-02(p.3) – Cultural Tourism

1. The Committee briefly discussed the tourist industry in Wales. Members agreed that the tourist industry was a very strong part of the Welsh economy and that more could be done to link the industry with Wales's indigenous culture.
2. The Committee agreed that it should have more formal links with the Wales Tourist Board and meet the Board on a regular basis.
3. In conclusion, the Chair informed members of his current thinking about of the **structure of the final report**. He felt that the main report should be relatively brief and make specific recommendations in a number of areas. Attached to this, would be a larger document summarising the evidence received during the course of the review. The Committee agreed with this approach.

Item 2: Committee's Annual Report – CC-8-02(p.4)

2.1 The Committee agreed this draft annual report prepared under Standing Order 9.9 without amendment.

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Item 3: Minutes of the meeting held on 17 April – Paper CC-7-02(min)

1. Apart from the following amendments, the minutes were agreed:
 - Paragraph 1.9, third bullet should read "a recognition of the rights of the individual" rather than "a declaration of rights...."
 - Owen John Thomas made a specific request for his concerns about the funding of chamber orchestras in Wales to be noted in the minutes of 17 April.

Committee Secretariat April 2002