



*The
Welsh Language
and
Economic Development*

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The Welsh Language and Economic Development

1. Introduction

On the 23rd January Menter a Busnes presented evidence to the Culture Committee of the National Assembly, as a part of the Review of the Welsh Language. Menter a Busnes' focus was on the language and economic development.

Following the presentation Menter a Busnes was asked to provide further detail on the ideas introduced. This note is therefore a follow-up as requested.

The evidence presented to the Committee consisted of a three page response and a fuller more detailed paper. (These are available on request.)

The last section of the full paper noted:

"The Way Ahead?

1.1. General needs

It should be ensured that language development co-operates meaningfully with the following processes:

- Policy – within NAW consideration will need to be given in the discussion of the National Economic Development Strategy as to how the Welsh Language can contribute to its design and implementation, in a meaningful integrated and creative way. (More broadly of course the same process can be rooted in all aspects of NAW work).
- Strategy and operation of executive agencies involved with economic development – WDA, ELWa, Local Authorities, The Tourist Board, Careers Wales, and other linked organisations.

1.2. Additional Focus

As well as these general needs, a specific mechanism will be required to investigate in detail and develop some of the possibilities raised in this paper (and others following detailed consideration).

The following will be needed:

- The means to implement opportunities combining economic and linguistic benefits in a holistic way, contributing practically towards the aims and strategies of the executive economic and linguistic agencies
- That this practical mechanism should grow from the economic development agenda – from NAW policies and specifically from the individual executive agencies plans
- Interlinking with elements of the strategy of the Wales Language Board involved with economic affairs – so that the Board combines its activities with the new direction
- Creating a framework of knowledge and understanding of language and economy links, and combine this with future planning
- Establishing a mechanism of combining the above elements with direct development and operation – a practical laboratory. It must be capable of taking risks in operation. This way of working must integrate meaningfully with the economic agencies on one hand, and with language agencies on the other (The Welsh Language Board and the Mentrau Iaith).

It will be possible to ensure that any action would contribute directly to these organisations aims and programmes, and would create the route for ensuring that any new successful activity is then adopted fully within their mainstream work.

1.3. Practical Considerations

There would appear to be several ways of implementing the General Needs and Additional Focus (as noted in 1.1. and 1.2. above).

- Establish the need to jointly-discuss under the leadership of NAW. It would be possible to plan jointly and ensure action by whatever organisation is appropriate.

In practical terms the process of bridging between the economic and linguistic would depend on several links between many organisations on many levels. Each organisation would commission or operate specific elements. This kind of process could be appropriate for

operating General Needs.

- Create a new organisation, funded directly by NAW to operate all elements, (General Needs and Additional Focus). The obvious weaknesses within this option include potential lack of clarity regarding geographical functions, and its relationship with other economic and linguistic organisations.
- Jointly create an operational vehicle – with the economic agencies co-funding a joined-up process (in-line with their individual strategies) and the Welsh Language Board adding value to the mechanism in terms of the language agenda. This option would not be appropriate for General Needs (each organisation needs to recognise its responsibility within its field). But it would be an appropriate response to the need for an Additional Focus combining economic and linguistic skills and experience, in an arms-length mode integrating various aspects, able to take risks, and feeding its experience into the mainstream.

See model over page.

This is a possible model for an Additional Focus (1.2.)

The general needs will still need to be met as described (1.1.)

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

	WTB	-			
	Careers Wales	-			"

And the three page response also included two possible ideas for development (see 3)

2. An integrated mechanism for action

This would not need the establishment of a new organisation.

It is proposed that, in conjunction with the relevant existing organisations, Menter a Busnes can be the focus to develop this function. This would ensure ownership across organisations, and that measured risk-taking can more easily be accommodated.

1. What would it do?

2.1.1. While the emphasis must be on action, it will need to develop a Research and Development Framework.

Despite the existence of many individual components of research by a range of organisations in the past, circumstances did not allow the creation of a comprehensive framework of knowledge and understanding of language and economy links that could inform overall planning. It is now timely to move towards such a framework.

It will need to utilise current knowledge and to fill gaps in order to establish a meaningful and on-going framework of understanding on which to base long-term planning.

It will obviously link with the range of relevant research in economic and linguistic areas in Wales, and will seek to learn from best practice internationally. Current areas of interest like

the issue of age balance in rural areas and sectoral developments would be examples of linked areas of interest. This element will also establish the benchmarks on which to assess on-going change, and the long-term evaluation framework for measuring the impact of activities.

2. Secondly this proposed function will work very closely with existing economic development agencies (WDA, ELWa, WTB, Local Authorities, Careers Wales) in terms of their own strategies and programmes of action to ensure issues related to the language and speakers of the language can be rooted meaningfully in these actions. This will ensure the maximum economic benefits of these actions as well as the positive linguistic impacts. For example specific programmes to develop aspects of the knowledge economy, ICT, business services, entrepreneurship, skills, careers, tourism, community regeneration, other sectoral projects, etc, could all benefit from this approach. In practice this would require members of staff of these agencies to work very closely (possibly with secondments) with this function, and with each other.

This function would have a strategic link with the bilingual focus being developed within ELWa, ensuring that the range of ELWa's work with raising awareness, and increasing and meeting demand by employers is integrated within the overall economic development arena.

The economic interests of language-specific organisations (the Welsh Language Board especially, and the Mentrau Iaith) can work in a similar way, and in conjunction with the economic agencies.

This approach would also apply to Menter a Busnes' own range of activities.

This element would provide a meaningful and practical mechanism of integration – the key to economy-language development.

3. In addition to working within current strategies and programmes of action this function (again in conjunction with other relevant organisations) will seek to develop new ideas for action (or new combinations) within the economy-language arena. The capacity to seek and to trial these new ideas and actions will be essential within the proposed function. The two examples of the types of ideas (examples only it should be stressed) raised with the Committee are

noted in point 3 below.

1. Methods of operation of programmes of action

The kind of process that would be required could include the following steps – Menter a Busnes staff working with a range of organisations (together or separately as appropriate)

- Identifying needs;
- Establish an advisory team (staff + experts);
- Complete assessment, appropriate research, and design evaluation;
- Plan initial development activity;
- Plan process for linking with the mainstream;
- Ensure resources for development activity;
- Carry out initial development activity;
- Continuous evaluation and review broader usefulness;
- Roll out to the mainstream;
- Assist/advise delivery in the mainstream.

Such a process could apply to small scale activities and major programmes, the timescale for which could range from 6 months to 5 years.

1. Management and Structure

(The details would be clarified in the Development Process below.)

Two levels of management would be required –

Firstly the general strategic direction and management would require senior representation of the relevant organisations (WDA, ELWa, WTB, Careers Wales, WLB, WTB, WLGA) acting as a steering group / committee / board in whatever form is appropriate to ensure meaningful long-term commitment (rather than a short-term ad hoc arrangement). It would not

require the creation of a new organisation/entity as Menter a Busnes (as a company limited by guarantee) can easily adjust its structure to accommodate such a mechanism.

Secondly the teams working on specific actions (as described in 2.2.) will manage their programme and report to the overall management function.

2. Resources

(Again the details would be clarified in the Development Process below.)

The types of resources required will be:

- Core resources – for the research development and evaluation elements, and for initiating and trialing new ideas and actions. Current core functions in Menter a Busnes cost approximately £250,000 per year – this would obviously need to be enhanced. Some of these resources are already in the system in terms of contracts for core services and projects. But the scale of the resources required in the future will need to be assessed. This area of work is not short-term – so the need for long-term commitment is as important as scale.
- Resources for programmes of action – impossible to assess before the Development Process is undertaken. Again much of the resource will already be in the system. But the scale of future requirements will similarly need to be assessed.

1. Development Process

A six month development period is proposed to create a ten year framework, and a three year detailed plan of action.

The process will require the establishment of a temporary Advisory/ Development Group with representatives of the economic and linguistic organisations previously listed; a link with NAW as appropriate; and the capacity to engage external specialists as required. The Group will be supported and the detailed work delivered by Menter a Busnes (using current resources) with partner organisations.

The Group will:

- Assess research development and evaluation needs, and design the

necessary framework

- Learn from best practice internationally
- Develop the practical model for linking with existing strategies and programmes of action
- Design the process of seeking and developing new ideas
- Develop detailed action plans and costings for 2-3 new ideas
- Assess the scale of core resources required
- Design the long-term management structure

2. Some new ideas

Two ideas for development were introduced during the presentation to the Culture Committee – it should be stressed that these are merely examples to illustrate the kind of ideas that could be developed within the integrated mechanism proposed in 2.

1. 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."

Areas - A variety of types of linguistic areas, but mainly areas with high proportions of Welsh speakers (like for example: Llyn, Dyffryn Conwy, Cwm Tawe Aman Gwendraeth, Bro Ddyfi, Preseli, etc) with one example of an area with increasing numbers of Welsh speakers - Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Start with 3 areas - add 1-2 others over 2-3 year period. Size of area should be determined by natural travel to work catchment - larger than single communities/ wards, but smaller than whole counties.

Integration - Would need to link with any other geographically-focussed initiatives like Communities First, Market Towns, and obviously with the relevant local economic and linguistic organisations.

Evaluation - the state of the economy and language currently (benchmark). Carefully track changes and related impacts of activities. Set up comparison areas (i.e. not included).

Activities - as outlined above the focus should be on combining all kinds of activities (current and new) directly and indirectly involving economy and language development. The range especially of indirect activities would need to be designed and agreed in detail at the outset.

Development Process - 6-12 months to design, research/benchmark, agree with range of participating organisations, develop management and co-ordination function, and create operational plan.

A long-term (10 year) commitment must be ensured.

The development process itself is likely to require dedicated resources of say £200,000 (12 months).

Resources - as essentially the approach will be about combining activities the additional resources for these activities should be minimal. How various organisations resources (people or finance) is handled is the key question.

A small co-ordination resource will be required (around £60-70,000 per year per area, plus a central fund for development and evaluation of around £200,000 per year). These are very broad estimates of course until the Development Process is completed.

1. 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.)"

The Company – format to be decided. Needs to be able to take risks and operate commercially. Therefore needs to be one/two steps removed from the public sector. (Also to avoid over-beaurocratic operation). A private/public sector mix. Must be more than a funding mechanism – i.e. can operate directly commercially itself.

Integration – must be integrated with developments by WDA, WTB, ELWa and local authorities.

Proactive – will seek opportunities and private sector development partners, and initiate action.

Sectors – focus on language/culture related (in the broad sense).

Will concentrate on gaps that would not be filled by the private sector without the initial development process – i.e. it will not displace private sector activities but will ensure full long-term development by the private sector. A clear focus on sectors/opportunities or combinations with high value potential.

For example:

- Developing new commercial ventures based on technical developments related to language translation services (obviously in conjunction with established companies) not only Welsh/English but other languages in and out of Wales.
- Create Welsh café/restaurant franchise of high quality, modern, forward-looking, with examples throughout Wales, and in other countries (again in partnership with the most appropriate commercial experience).
- Establish a high value company with international markets in specialist educational services related to multi-lingual needs (multi-media materials, consultancy, new developments, etc).

Funding – will need small core staff, private/public sector development teams and expertise that can be brought in, market research and product development resources, investment resources, with successful spin-outs repaying % to core fund. Detailed costing is impossible until the Development Process is completed – but could be in the range:

Staff - £200,000 per year

Development Resources - £500,000 per year

Fund - £2-3 million (one-off)

Management – private sector chair and members, with representatives WDA, WTB, ELWa, etc.

Process – each individual commercial venture will broadly need to:

- Scan sectors noting potential types of opportunities
- Assess potential for long-term ownership by the private sector
- Initial research activities
- Seek relevant private public sector partners
- Specific market research
- Product/service development

- Market testing (and repeat these steps as necessary)
- Assess long-term viability
- Detailed business planning
- Full commercial operation
- Eventually transfer to private sector

Development period

Will need 12-18 months to:

- Assess best practice internationally
- Design in detail
- Agree initial sectors and partners
- Feasibility and business planning
- Raise funding

This period is likely to require funding of around £100,000.

2. Proposals

On the theme of economic development we recommend that the Culture Committee's Review of the Welsh Language proposes the development of an integrated mechanism for action based on the model outlined in this paper, and directs the primary economic and skills development agencies and the relevant Welsh language organisations to develop the model as described, in conjunction with Menter a Busnes.

Although the two specific ideas outlined in this paper (*Development Company and Development Areas) are merely illustrative examples, if the Committee sees some merits in initiating the preparation of detailed plans, we would naturally propose that such work is done within the context of the mechanism outlined. The preparation process could be initiated at short notice, resources permitting.

Menter a Busnes would be glad to discuss the contents of this paper with the authors of the elements of the final Report dealing with economic development, if requested.

Menter a Busnes

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