

Agenda – Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 4, Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: 17 November 2022

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

Lleu Williams

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddCulture@senedd.wales

Pre-meeting registration

(09.15–09.30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.30)

2 Papers to note

(09.30)

2.1 Letter to the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip from the Chair, Welsh Executive Council, National Union of Journalists regarding Newsquest

(Page 1)

2.2 Letter to the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip from the Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee regarding the Committee's one day inquiry on impact of increasing costs

(Page 2)

2.3 Letter to the Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee from the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip regarding the Committee's one day inquiry on impact of increasing costs

(Pages 3 – 4)



- 2.4 Letter to the Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee from Y Llywydd regarding the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill**
(Pages 5 – 6)
- 2.5 Letter to the Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee from the Head of News and Programmes, ITV Cymru Wales regarding the UK Government's proposed Media Bill**
(Pages 7 – 8)
- 2.6 Press notice from Rubicon Dance**
(Pages 9 – 10)
- 2.7 Additional information from Darren Price, WLGA Spokesperson for the Welsh Language and Leader of Carmarthenshire County Council following the evidence session on 13 October**
(Page 11)
- 2.8 Additional information from Mudiad Meithrin following the evidence session on 13 October**
(Pages 12 – 14)
- 3 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from items 4, 5, 6 and 8**
(09.30)
- 4 Supplementary Legislative Consent Memorandum: Online Safety Bill**
(09.30–09.35) (Pages 15 – 19)
Legal Advice Note
- 5 One day inquiry on impact of increasing costs: Consideration of draft Report (2)**
(09.35–09.45) (Pages 20 – 40)

6 Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPS): Consideration of key issues

(09.45–10.30)

(Pages 41 – 63)

Research brief

Public

7 Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPS): Evidence session with the Welsh Government

(10.30–11.30)

(Pages 64 – 73)

Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Bethan Webb, Deputy Director, Welsh Language

Siwan Jones, Head of Welsh in Education Planning

Written evidence from the Welsh Government

8 Private debrief

(11.30–11.40)

Dawn Bowden
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay CF99 1NA

20 October 2022

Via email: correspondence.dawn.bowden@gov.wales

Dear Minister,

The NUJ has written to you twice with questions about the process by which Newsquest was granted public money for the Welsh-language news service Corgi Cymru from the Books Council of Wales. Our disquiet grew following Newsquest's decision to end *The National*, especially given the decision to entrust money to them again despite its earlier failure with the subbing hub at Newport.

Since the news that Newsquest have now decided to cease Corgi Cymru the NUJ calls on the Welsh Government as a matter of urgency to ensure that a review takes place on how Newsquest were allowed access to public money. This review should also look at why the Books Council of Wales got itself into the position of splitting its previous budget for Golwg 360 between Golwg and Newsquest.

The NUJ believes that in future any request by Newsquest for public funding in Wales should be subject to scrutiny by yourself as Minister and by the relevant Senedd committee.

We also urge you to instruct the Books Council of Wales to take urgent action to ensure that monies are repaid and that Golwg is adequately funded to provide a full Welsh language news service. It should be a matter of priority that the Golwg 360 website is not threatened and indeed is restored to the position it was in before its funding was halved.

We have also copied this letter to Delyth Jewell, MS, as Chair of the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Nick Powell
Chair, Welsh Executive Council
National Union of Journalists

**Culture, Communications, Welsh Language,
Sport, and International Relations
Committee**

Dawn Bowden MS
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief
Whip
Welsh Government

28 October 2022

Impact of increasing costs

Dear Dawn

I am writing to you with regard to the Committee's short inquiry on the impact of increasing costs and your **recent visit to New Zealand**. As you will be aware, the Committee's inquiry on increasing costs has been running since the start of September 2022. The Committee intends to report on this inquiry in the next fortnight (week commencing 14 November 2022).

In light of your recent visit and discussions with colleagues in New Zealand, the Committee would like to ask if there were any other issues or lessons you would like to share as part of the inquiry. If you would like to contribute any comments, I would be grateful if you could send them to the Committee no later than Tuesday 8 November 2022. I appreciate that this is a very short deadline, however I wanted to give you the opportunity to share any relevant information ahead of the Committee concluding its work on this inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



Delyth Jewell MS

Chair of the Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

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We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Ein cyf/Our ref DB/774/22

Delyth Jewell MS
Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language,
Sport, and International Relations
Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

08 November 2022

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your letter of 28 October regarding the Committee's short inquiry on the impact of increasing costs and whether any other issues or lessons were learned relating to this during my recent visit to New Zealand.

Whilst the cost-of-living crisis is a key issue facing the sector it did not feature in my programme visit which was set up a few weeks in advance. The purpose of my visit, in addition to supporting the Wales Women's Rugby team, was to explore some common themes faced by sport in both countries; women and girls sport, using sport for soft diplomacy and increasing participation in disadvantaged areas. On the latter point, I had a meeting to discuss the Active Me – Kia Tū programme, a recommendation of the recent 'Levelling the playing field' Committee report. I was pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the programme in greater detail with Karen Laurie and Susan Glasgow, Young People Consultant at Sport New Zealand and CEO of Variety, The Children's Charity.

I was given an overview of how the programme's policies and strategies were deployed across New Zealand to provide financial support towards sporting equipment and sports lessons to remove some of the barriers faced by disadvantaged families to being active. I was impressed by the positive outcomes of their programme and am keen to explore how these could potentially be implemented in Wales. I have asked officials to further explore with the sector and to report back to me later in the year.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I will write to you and the Committee when I have further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Bowden'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and 'B'.

Dawn Bowden AS/MS

Dirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau a Chwaraeon, a'r Prif Chwip
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip

Delyth Jewell, Chair of the Culture,
Communications, Welsh Language,
Sport, and International Relations
Committee

The Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your letter of 14 October 2022 asking for an extension to the reporting deadline of the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill. Business Committee considered your request against the Welsh Government's proposed timetable at our meeting on 18 October.

Unfortunately, on the basis that a debate on the LCM has been scheduled by the Government in Plenary on 8 November as a result of the timetable for the Bill at Westminster, Business Committee concluded that it is currently not possible for the reporting deadline to be extended past 7 November. However, the Trefnydd indicated that, should the timetable for the Bill in the UK Parliament change, the Government would be willing to revisit the timetable for scrutiny of the LCM.

Yours sincerely,



The Rt Hon. Elin Jones MS

Y Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

Delyth Jewell MS
Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations
Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

7th November 2022

Dear Chair,

I'm writing to highlight a pressing legislative matter to your attention. Along with other public service broadcasters and the wider creative industries, we are growing increasingly concerned about a further potential delay with the UK Government's proposed Media Bill. There is a clear consensus for a new public service media settlement to maintain the prominence and sustainability of public service content which as you know plays such a vital role in the political, cultural and economic life of our country.

The timing of the Media Bill is particularly important in the context of the expiry of ITV's PSB licences in 2024 which underpins what ITV Cymru Wales does in Wales. Indeed, we are now well into the statutory process for the review and renewal of our PSB licences - a process for which a clear understanding of our future PSB commitments is fundamentally important. The deadline for ITV to decide whether to apply for a renewed PSB licence, and hence remain a PSB, is April 2023.

As OFCOM's latest Media Nations reports points out, PSBs remain the most trusted and most consumed news brands in Wales - providing reliable and impartial coverage of events in a world of online misinformation. Within that ITV Cymru Wales currently provides the only national, video news alternative in Wales to the BBC. With a weekly television reach of 1.4m, we are especially proud here at ITV Cymru Wales to be providing a universally funded and free public service to a loyal audience that might otherwise get little, if any, news of Wales.

You are also well aware that in Wales we have a thriving, independent production sector and the crucial role that PSBs play, creating jobs and nurturing talent all across Wales. Together with the ITV Studios company Boom Cymru, ITV is a significant employer here in Wales with some 400 staff operating from various locations right across the country. Indeed, across the UK, ITV spends more on new UK content, more with independent producers and more on programmes made outside London than any other commercial PSB. Nearly half our staff (over 2,100 people) are based in 34 centres outside London.

We also have a vital role in the political and cultural life of Wales. PSBs bring people together to celebrate or cope with adversity. Our sensitive and extensive coverage of the recent death of the Queen is a prime example of this. At the same time we are very much



looking forward to bringing the nation together later this month for Cymru's opening game in the Qatar World Cup as well as following Wales in the upcoming Six Nations Tournament.

However, there is a risk our contribution is taken for granted. I believe the Media Bill and the legislative reform it proposes is crucial and urgent for audiences in Wales.

Without wishing to be too stark about it, it's becoming increasingly difficult to create bespoke content in Wales for the people of Wales when we're now competing with global streamers offering little or no Welsh content.

TV is increasingly delivered and consumed online as global online technology platforms become the gatekeepers for TV in Wales and the UK. Without reform to the current system audiences in Wales and in the wider UK will not only struggle to find the PSB content they value, but large financial sums will be extracted from the PSB ecosystem and the UK creative economy by global online platforms. Put simply, without urgent reform, we are already seeing at first hand how these platforms will extract greater and greater sums from PSBs and the UK creative economy, increasingly threatening employment in TV at scale across the UK and the PSB contribution to national life.

Furthermore, there is a prospect of listed sporting events - that are so crucial to Wales' sense of itself - disappearing entirely from free-to-view TV unless the regime that safeguards them is updated.

Reform of the PSB system is needed urgently if the PSB system that plays such a vital role in the life of Wales is to continue to thrive. ITV Cymru Wales very much welcomes the UK Government's recognition in the Broadcasting White Paper of the huge value that PSBs deliver to the UK's creative economy and society and their fundamental role in growing the creative economy. The Media Bill is critical to ensuring, in an era of online TV that the PSBs have prominence, inclusion and fair value for their content competing fairly with global streamers and securing fair value for our investment in original UK content which has clear value for the UK.

In your role as Chair of the Senedd's Culture Committee we would be grateful if you could support us by amplifying our calls and concerns with DCMS, to ensure that the Government's Media Bill is introduced to Parliament as a matter of the utmost urgency and without further delay.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Henfrey', written in a cursive style.

Phil Henfrey
Head of News and Programmes, ITV Cymru Wales.

Save Rubicon for the Future

Rubicon Dance has been at the forefront of Community Dance in Wales for the past 47 years. The legacy of people who have experienced dance in our building and beyond is immense and they thrive in a world that is very uncertain at times.

Unfortunately, over the past few weeks a serious financial issue has been uncovered by the Board and a newly appointed Senior Leadership Team of Rubicon Dance. Our finances are in a difficult position, and we face an extremely tough few months. A serious incident has been reported to the Charities Commission and a thorough investigation will take place.

Since this discovery, the Board and newly appointed Senior Leadership Team have been engaging with our staff, stakeholders, and funders, including the Arts Council of Wales, in an attempt to resolve the situation. There is a strong undercurrent of support from many sources including the Arts Council of Wales which reinforces our determination to secure the future of Rubicon.

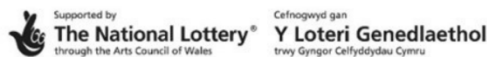
During this time, all of the incredibly dedicated team that remain at Rubicon – from the new Senior Leadership Team, staff and dance leaders, freelancers to cleaners – have done everything to ensure our classes and services continue as normal. Their passion to serve our communities and dancers has been inspirational. We extend our thanks and gratitude to each and every one of them.

Despite best efforts and many positive conversations, so far, we have only been able to secure some of the funds needed to stabilise our medium-term financial situation. We are taking advice, speaking to partners, and continue to focus on resolving this situation.

We cannot imagine Wales without Rubicon, our people centred social arts organisation.

If you can help, have any ideas for ways that could support, or simply wish to share your positive memories and experiences of dance at Rubicon, please get in touch at future@rubicondance.co.uk. If you want to support Rubicon financially, please go to our crowd-funder at rubicondance.co.uk/appeal/make-a-donation

In this very difficult time, we thank everyone for your commitment and loyalty to our vision. With the support of our many friends and supporters we know that our future will be assured.





Before the publication of their WESP in 2022 there were already 3 counties providing more than 70% of education through the medium of Welsh for year 1 children and this figure was 98.5% in Gwynedd and 91.1% on Anglesey.

Another 13 Councils indicate their intention to move schools along the continuum of Welsh-medium categories over the next ten years in their WESP. Some have already started the process for several schools while others are starting their consultation processes with stakeholders. Although there is no specific comment about moving categories in some of the plans that have been published, there is more detail on how they expand the Welsh-medium provision in the schools that are already available and plans to open new Welsh-medium schools.

As the Minister mentioned in his written statement, across Wales these plans include the development of 23 new Welsh-medium primary schools throughout Wales as well as plans to increase the capacity of 25 Welsh-medium primary schools that already exist.

It is also worth noting that the categorization framework for schools had not been published when councils were starting to tackle and draft the WESP, so although the specific framework is useful, plans to move along the language continuum will need to follow councils' corporate scrutiny processes, and many councils start the process of analyzing data and consulting with school stakeholders before being able to commit to the changes they wish to make.

Councillor Darren Price
Leader of the Council
Carmarthenshire County Council
County Councillor Gorslas Ward

Mudiad Meithrin's response: Additional questions following the evidence session on 13 October with the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee and the Children, Young People and Education Committee

Part of the process of developing provision in the English-medium sector is moving schools along the language continuum (i.e. from English medium to bilingual, or from bilingual to Welsh medium). What evidence is there that local authorities have sufficiently addressed this within their WESPs, and if not, what needs to change?

Mudiad Meithrin acknowledges that the patterns of Welsh-medium education provision and bilingual education provision in Wales vary from area to area, and that a significant number of these variations reflect patterns of Welsh language use in the wider community. Our care and education systems must be flexible enough to be able to reflect the unique linguistic characteristics of Welsh communities. Nevertheless, it is important that we ensure that education planning is based on a clear and consistent understanding of the learners' linguistic outcomes.

Mudiad Meithrin recognises that school categorisation is a complex issue, and we welcome the recent efforts made by the Welsh Government to develop one consistent system across Wales, with the publication in 2021 of the *Guidance on school categories according to Welsh-medium provision*. The Minister for Education noted the need for this to be statutory guidance, which would give the content a more solid foundation. However, we are concerned that the linguistic categorisation guidance is currently a non-statutory regime.

We welcome the policy aim, namely to increase Welsh language provision in Welsh schools, and to facilitate the process of moving up the linguistic categories. Without clear incentives, resources and concrete guidance, it is possible that this aim will not be achieved.

It will be necessary to collaborate with local authorities across Wales to ensure that the categorisation system for schools does not have a detrimental impact on the way that they create demand for Welsh medium education, especially when transitioning at the beginning of key stages during the life of the current WESPs. Here are some current examples:

- Denbighshire: moving along the linguistic continuum seems to be an integral part of the WESP.
- Conwy County: Dyffryn Conwy secondary school has already changed to become a dual-stream school, beginning with year 7 pupils.
- Powys: we feel that more discussions would be beneficial, but it is clearly visible in the WESP.
- Flintshire: Moving along the linguistic continuum does not appear to be a prominent target for individual settings in the WESP.

- Wrexham County: Moving along the linguistic continuum does not appear to be a prominent target for individual settings in the WESP.

As part of the process of developing provision within the English-medium sector and moving schools along the linguistic continuum, it will be necessary to carry out a Welsh-language skills audit for all staff who work in, and support, schools and early years education and care settings, not only teachers. This will provide an opportunity to identify where there is capacity to work through the medium of Welsh, and where additional investment is needed from the Welsh Government and local authorities to enable staff to deliver services through the medium of Welsh in specific settings and schools. We will need to ensure a better understanding of linguistic immersion in schools and in early years care and education settings. Mudiad Meithrin already provides bespoke training for the early years workforce as part of a childcare qualification provided through the National Training Scheme, the Cam wrth Gam Schools Scheme, and also as CPD training through Academi.

Innovative work is taking place among CWLWM partners to identify English-medium childcare settings that can be converted into Welsh-medium childcare providers. This will take place over a period of time, with support provided on constitutional, linguistic and charity-related matters, recognising that it will be necessary to have ongoing discussions regarding the implications of this situation with regulators such as Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn.

It will be necessary to offer bespoke professional learning opportunities to teachers and other practitioners to support the progress of learners (and staff) in the Welsh language. This could include providing bespoke sessions for teachers at different stages of progress, and within different sectors, in order to give them opportunities to discuss and consider practical examples.

A number of organisations have made reference to the need to build capacity among Welsh-medium Additional Learning Needs specialists, with the Children's Commissioner noting that lack of access to Welsh-medium support is a systemic issue throughout Wales. Could you expand on the specific challenges of increasing the number of Welsh-medium staff with appropriate subject specialisms, including Additional Learning Needs?

There is a need to increase the number of people who can work through the medium of Welsh in a number of areas and specialist services. We propose that there is a need to prioritise this, in order to be able to provide proactive Welsh-medium services across the wider public sector and in other businesses. We note here the need to ensure the development of Welsh-language skills among current staff members at a number of support services, such as Flying Start staff, speech and language therapists, health visitors and those who work with children and young people, concurrently with any

plans to increase the capacity and provision of Welsh-medium education along the the different education stages.

We also note the need to ensure appropriate opportunities for post-16 students who wish to work in the care, education and health sectors to develop the necessary Welsh-language skills, alongside the studies that they undertake for their vocational qualifications. One part of this is ensuring that there are opportunities for individuals to pursue the relevant vocational and academic courses through the medium of Welsh, within a reasonable distance from their homes.

Access to ALN specialists who can speak Welsh tends to be a postcode lottery, especially outside Gwynedd, Anglesey, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. There is a need to increase the number of people who can work through the medium of Welsh in a number of areas and specialist services – speech and language therapists, health visitors, those who work with children and young people, BSL specialists and teachers of the deaf, among others – concurrently with any plans to increase the capacity and provision of Welsh-medium education along the different education stages.

We are concerned that parents lack the confidence to choose Welsh-medium care and education for their children if they have additional learning needs, as the support is not available through the medium of Welsh. Another concern is that children are referred by specialist practitioners to English-medium provision where the specialism has been established. We welcome the Welsh Government's intention to develop a speech and language screening programme that is specific to Wales, but are there enough speech and language therapists across Wales to provide support for bilingual children (where the language in the home and the language in the setting are different)?

There will be a need to ensure that the professional experts have an understanding of how children with additional learning needs can benefit from attending Welsh-medium care and / or educational settings. This is essential, as parents can lack confidence when weighing up care and education options for children with additional learning needs, and choose to take the advice of specialist professionals before making a decision. Specialist practitioners need a better understanding of suitable approaches to providing support for bilingual and multilingual children; hopefully, this will lead to a situation where English-medium provision is not viewed as the norm for children with additional learning needs. Mudiad Meithrin staff already have plans in place to present information about bilingualism and the immersion approach to practitioners within the health service.

Ceredigion County Council acknowledges that there is a language gap regarding the availability of programmes and training in Welsh and English. Ceredigion's Strategic Plan for 2022-2023 refers to the need for 'high quality bilingual ALN training resources' (p. 27). It notes that the council has 'translated

a speech and language skills assessment programme (Wellcomm) so that it is suitable for use within Ceredigion', and has 'adapted and translated training playlists shared by the County of Swansea.' (p. 27)

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Agenda Item 5

By virtue of paragraph(s) ix of Standing Order 17.42

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Agenda Item 7

Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Delyth Jewell AS
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Jayne Bryant AS
The Children, Young People and Education Committee

Senedd Cymru
Bae Caerdydd
CF99 1SN

4 November 2022

Dear Delyth and Jayne,

I write to you following your correspondence of 11 May on behalf of the following committees:

- Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee.
- The Children, Young People and Education Committee.

Your correspondence relates to an inquiry into Welsh-medium education, focusing on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) and more specifically exploring how the statutory framework, established to promote the planning and development of Welsh-medium education, works.

I have drafted an evidence paper for discussion with both committees on 17 November 2022. The evidence is based on the specific questions that I have been asked:

1. Has the current statutory framework for the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) improved since the recommendations published in December 2015 in the 'Inquiry into Welsh Language in Education Strategic Plans' report by the Children, Young People and Education Committee of the Fourth Senedd? How has the Welsh Government changed its approach to monitoring and approving Welsh in Education Strategic Plans following its acceptance of the report's recommendations?

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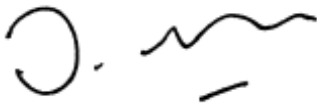
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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

2. To what extent do you expect the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans to contribute to the outcomes and targets set out in the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy - Cymraeg 2050?
3. How are local authorities responding to changes to guidance on school categories according to Welsh medium provision, and do they meet the Welsh Government's ambition to increase Welsh-medium provision in English-medium and dual-stream schools?
4. What challenges lie ahead in designing and developing Welsh-medium provision, ahead of the proposed Welsh Language Education Bill?

I would like to thank both committees for their work in scrutinising Welsh-medium education and I would like to draw your attention to the evidence that I have prepared for both committees, which is included in Appendix 1.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a wavy line and a short horizontal stroke.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

WRITTEN EVIDENCE PAPER TO THE CULTURE, COMMUNICATIONS, WELSH LANGUAGE, SPORT AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE AND TO THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minister for Education and Welsh Language

This paper provides evidence in advance of my appearance before the Committee on 17 November 2022. The invitation asked for information on four specific questions, and the response below focuses on each question in turn.

Introduction

At the end of July this year, I approved all 22 local authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs). These statutory Plans set out how local authorities intend to improve the planning of Welsh in education in their areas over the next 10-years based on a target aligned with our Welsh language strategy: [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#). The approval of the new WESPs marks the start of the next phase in local authority planning as they begin implementing their WESP commitments from September this year onwards. This is a critical 10-year period in terms of meeting our *Cymraeg 2050* targets, and the success of local authority WESPs cannot be underestimated.

1.Has the current statutory framework for Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) improved since the recommendations published in December 2015 in the report of the '[Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans](#)' by the Children, Young People and Education Committee of the Fourth Senedd? How has the Welsh Government changed its approach to the process of monitoring and approving WESPs following its acceptance of the recommendations in the report?

There is no doubt that the statutory framework for Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) has improved since the previous inquiry in 2015. The inquiry made 17 recommendations, many relating to the need for better alignment with Welsh Government strategies and policies; better partnership working within Welsh Government departments as well as externally; clarity around expectations in terms of targets; clarity around categorising schools according to Welsh-medium provision and improved monitoring and assessment processes. There has been significant investment in recent years to address these issues and others, so that the planning of Welsh in education within the framework of local authority WESPs is as ambitious and robust as it can be.

At the time of the inquiry, local authorities were implementing their first WESPs (2014-2017) and the committee acknowledged that the Plans needed time to embed. However, in 2016 we commissioned a [rapid review](#) in response to what was felt to be a lack of direction and ambition by local authorities with regard to their Welsh-medium education provision. One of the review's recommendations was the need to examine the legislation underpinning Welsh in education planning. We established

an independent ¹WESP Advisory Board between May 2018 and March 2019 to address the recommendations. This led to the review of *the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing Demand for Welsh-medium Education (Wales) Regulations 2013*². (“the 2013 Regulations”) and subsequent making of new regulations. [The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans Regulations \(Wales\) 2019](#) (“the 2019 Regulations”). These came into force on 1 January 2020³ and included:

- Removing the duty to carry out a Welsh-medium parental demand assessments and replace this duty with individual local authority targets, calculated by the Welsh Government to reflect our *Cymraeg 2050* expectation to significantly increase the percentage of learners learning Welsh successfully.
- Extending the duration of a WESP from its previous 3-year planning cycle to 10 years to encourage better strategic planning not only aligned to *Cymraeg 2050*, but also to Welsh Government funding programmes (e.g. capital funding programmes, Flying Start) and also reform agendas such as the Curriculum for Wales and Additional Learning Needs.
- Strengthening links between Welsh-medium childcare provision and Welsh-medium education by requiring local authorities to make better use of their childcare sufficiency assessment in the planning of school places from age 3.

We know that the success of a WESP depends on many factors, and working in partnership on a local, regional and national level is one of them. We acknowledged this in the 2019 regulations with a requirement for local authorities to set out how they worked in partnership with their Welsh in Education Planning Forum to prepare the authority’s Plan and oversee its future implementation and evaluation. I was encouraged by the many levels of engagement and planning discussions that took place within these forums during the preparation of the WESPs and more so by commitments made in the vast majority of WESPs to establish sub-groups, such as promotion, support for parents, early years and workforce planning, to support the delivery of their WESP. Our revised statutory guidance included a section dedicated to highlighting the role of partner organisations (local, regional and national) in WESP delivery as well as advice on Welsh language promotion.

Requirements have been strengthened in relation to how local authorities provide parents/carers with information about the availability and type of Welsh-medium

¹ [improving-the-planning-of-welsh-medium-education.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

² These regulations are made under Part 4 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (“the 2013 Act”). They require local authorities to prepare and submit to Welsh Ministers for approval Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) illustrating how they will improve the planning of provision of Welsh-medium education.

³ In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019 were amended. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”) came into force on 1 December 2020 and made changes to the start date of the next WESP cycle – from 1 September 2021 to a year later (to September 2022).

education provision on offer. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we provided RhAG with additional funding to create a [website](#) and [support forum](#) for parents, to signpost and provide them with support and guidance.

We facilitated a programme of virtual WESP planning sessions during 2021-22 to support local authority officers in their preparation of WESPs. 10 sessions took place with 270 attending. To support consistent use of data, we also provided local authorities with a data pack of school statistics including Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC) data. Local authorities were able to access data for their own area, neighbouring authority areas as well as the national overview. This will be updated by the Welsh Government annually.

All draft Plans received in January 2022 for assessment included a clear commitment to the 10-year target proposed by the Welsh Government. This shouldn't be underestimated. The School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 ("the 2013 Act"), under which the WESP regulations are made, make provisions for local authorities to prepare a Plan based on their own targets to improve the planning and standard of Welsh-medium education for their area. These are the first strategic Plans since 2014 driven by a target calculated by the Welsh Government. Plans were assessed with input from across the Education, Social Justice and Welsh Language Group and feedback provided to all local authorities on areas that could be strengthened. Some draft Plans required more input than others, however, the local authorities' response to the feedback was positive.

We've set clear expectations for local authorities in meeting their 10-year targets. I expect all local authorities to submit an action plan for the first 5-years of the Plan, which will be monitored annually in the form of a review report. If appropriate progress is not being made, new provisions in the regulations enable the WESP to be reviewed and replaced by a new Plan at any time during the 10-year period, enabling a more responsive approach to the process of monitoring and reviewing a Plan.

We've also been looking at how the WESPs are considered across Welsh Government policy areas, particularly with regard to our Sustainable Communities for Learning capital funding programme. In approving the WESPs, I made it clear to local authorities that wider school organisation proposals should be assessed to ensure they are consistent with the aims and objectives of the WESP. Guidance around this has been updated to reflect this change. Furthermore, I recently approved a new approach to future investment through the Programme, allowing local authorities to progress their plans with greater flexibility. Every local authority will be required to submit a 9-year investment plan by March 2024. These investment plans will be assessed against the approved WESP to ensure they deliver the required capacity to meet the targets.

Every local authority in Wales is moving in the right direction—increasing access and opportunities for all learners to learn Welsh. There is a clear emphasis on increasing the number of primary school settings across Wales, with commitments to establish 23 new Welsh-medium primary schools and expand at least 25 Welsh-medium primary schools over the next 10 years. The Plans show that a high percentage of these developments will be realised during the first 5 years of the WESP, often made possible with the support of Welsh Government capital funding. Several authorities have made clear commitments in their WESPs to move their English-medium or dual language schools on a linguistic continuum by changing the language category of schools. These commitments are not to be taken lightly. These are all important, exciting developments—but not without their challenges.

2.To what extent do you expect Welsh in Education Strategic Plans to contribute to the outcomes and targets set out in the Welsh Government’s Welsh Language Strategy – [Cymraeg 2050](#)?

Increasing the number of learners studying through the medium of Welsh is a key aim of *Cymraeg 2050*. The most recent PLASC data (2021), published at the end of August shows a small percentage increase in year 1 learners studying through the medium of Welsh⁴ to almost 24% in 2021/22 with learners progressing on to year 2 higher this year. Although there’s been a slight percentage decrease in learners in Reception classes studying through the medium of Welsh during the same period, it’s important to note that schools are not required to report the number of children studying Welsh who are younger than five years of age on 31 August at the start of the academic year. This means that the information is not complete for reception class children. We will continue to closely monitor the data to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on parent/carer choices in relation to Welsh-medium education.

Mudiad Meithrin’s work in this area is vital to enable seamless transition from Welsh-medium childcare settings to maintained school provision. They are on target to establish 150 new provisions by 2026. It must be recognised, however, that improving levels of Welsh-medium provision is a responsibility for the non-maintained sector as a whole, which is why I’ve been working with the Deputy Minister for Social Services to support an expansion of Welsh-medium childcare and early years provision during this Senedd term. In September, a commitment of £3.8m to support more childcare providers develop their Welsh-medium provision was announced.

The 2019 Regulations require local authorities to set a 10-year target outlining the expected increase in Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh during the

⁴ 23.4% (7,900 learners) in 2020/21 to 23.9% (8,010 learners) in 2021/22 (PLASC data)

lifespan of the Plan. These are based on the education targets⁵ set out in the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy and are included in the statutory Guidance to the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, published in January 2021.

This shift in planning according to targets marked a significant step-change. It set out the Welsh Ministers' expectation on local authorities to plan for growth in Welsh-medium education provision in line with *Cymraeg 2050* targets. The methodology for calculating targets grouped local authorities according to population, percentage of Welsh speakers and current model for delivering education. Targets were set using a lower and upper range, as well as grouping areas according to their current provision, acknowledging that the starting point for each local authority would be different and the route to achieving those targets would vary.

Since 2018, over £76m of investment through dedicated Welsh-medium capital grants based on a 100% funding has been made, creating once fully realised, over 3,700 additional childcare and school places, and 285 places in additional late immersion centres or units. I've recently announced a further £7m to support WESP capital developments.

I've already invested £2.2m to support late immersion with an additional £6.6m committed until the end of this Senedd term to support late immersion provision in all local authorities in Wales. I approved bids from all local authorities over the summer and projects have been underway since September.

In May, I published a 10-year [Welsh in Education Workforce Plan](#) to coincide with the Strategic Plans. The Workforce Plan sets out the steps we'll take alongside a range of organisations and stakeholders to increase the number of teachers who can teach Welsh as a subject or teach through the medium of Welsh. The Welsh Government will provide an additional £1m this year to support the delivery of the workforce plan, bringing the total support for Welsh in Education to approximately £9 million, with plans to increase funding over the next two years. We have also extended the Welsh language training provision available to the education workforce. The National Centre for Learning Welsh has published a portal on their website which makes it easier for education professionals to see what bespoke courses are available for them to learn Welsh, and to improve their Welsh language skills. Teachers can also access courses on the National Centre's mainstream community provision free of charge. We are also offering free Welsh lessons for everyone aged between 16-25 since September, which could also improve the Welsh language skills of prospective education professionals.

I'm very aware of the challenges of recruiting, especially in our secondary schools. Programmes such as the *Cynllun Pontio* to enable primary teachers to be supported

⁵ The *Cymraeg 2050* education milestones include increasing the proportion of each school year group receiving Welsh-medium education from 22 per cent (based on 7,700 seven-year-old learners in 2015/16) to 30 per cent by 2031 (about 10,500 in each year group), and then 40 per cent by 2050 (about 14,000 in each year group).

to move into secondary teaching and the *laith Athrawon Yfory* incentive scheme are key. I've also increased funding for the *e-sgol* scheme to £600,000 to extend the e-learning programme to all areas of Wales by 2023. There is a clear need for more intelligent (knowledge-based) planning in this area. All local authority WESPs commit to working collaboratively with us and others to make better use of the workforce data available. This will be monitored in annual WESP review reports. Everyone has a contribution to make to ensure the success of Welsh-medium education and WESPs are a way of facilitating that. However, they can't be the answer to everything.

Our *Cymraeg 2050 Work Programme (2021-2026)* sets out our target to reach 26% of year 1 learners learning through the medium of Welsh by 2026, rising to 30% by 2031. If all authorities achieve their minimum 10-year target range⁶, we'll reach our *Cymraeg 2050* milestone of 30% of year 1 learners in Welsh medium education by 2030/31. We must build on the momentum of the WESPs, and the positive steps being taken to support our ambitions for our language—we have both the expertise and the will to succeed, and I am confident that we will reach our targets.

3. How are local authorities responding to changes to guidance on school categories according to Welsh-medium provision, and are they meeting the Welsh Government's ambition to increase Welsh-medium provision in English-medium and dual-stream schools?

In December 2021, I published non-statutory guidance on [school categories according to Welsh-medium provision](#) following an independent review of the current arrangements in 2019. This has prompted many local authorities and schools to start reviewing their local arrangements—something that has not happened to this extent since 2007.

Publishing the revised guidance was just the first step. We are just beginning our journey and the transition from one system to another will take time to embed. It's important we recognise it'll be a different journey for every local authority.

Since the guidance was published, discussions have continued with schools and local authorities. 8 local authorities across Wales have committed in their WESPs to changing the language category of one or several schools to Welsh-medium over the next 10 years. Since September, my officials have met with each of those local authorities in turn, to better understand how they are introducing the new categorisation arrangements within their areas. Each local authority has already, or is in the process of, mapping provision in their schools and identifying schools with the potential to move category. Further meetings are scheduled to explore what more we as a Government can do to facilitate discussions at school, county or

⁶ Many local authorities are aiming for the higher target range by the end of the 10-year Plan, with some committed to exceeding their target.

national level in relation to increasing the provision of Welsh. For local authorities where there are currently only Welsh or English-medium schools, discussions have been around how they can introduce more Welsh into the school day, particularly in their English-medium schools and settings.

I published in October a [Framework for Welsh in English-medium education](#).. Regional educational consortia and partnerships are working together to develop a national professional learning programme that will support the teaching of Welsh in schools in accordance with the actions set out in the Welsh in education workforce plan. This includes a focus on providing support for schools to use the framework effectively to plan, design and review Welsh in their curricula.

All schools have to record their language category annually within the Pupil Level Annual School Data collection (PLASC). We've been making preparations to enable the updating of datasets to reflect the new categories. Despite being a lengthy process, this time is being wisely spent by schools and authorities to familiarise themselves with the new arrangements. We are scheduled to formally transfer to the new language categorisation arrangements by January 2024, once the updating of PLASC is complete. All local authorities are working towards this deadline.

4.What challenges lie ahead in the planning and development of Welsh-medium provision, ahead of your proposed Welsh Language Education Bill?

We've committed in the *Programme for Government* to introducing a Welsh Language Education Bill during the current Senedd term. This also forms part of the Co-operation between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru. The purpose of the Bill will be to strengthen and increase Welsh language education provision across Wales to meet our *Cymraeg 2050* targets.

I'm keen to explore what more we can do to make access to Welsh language education more accessible and equitable. There are still learners and families missing out on opportunities to access Welsh-medium education—and therefore the best chance of becoming confident bilingual citizens. I'm also keen to explore how we can ensure better linguistic outcomes for learners in English-medium education.

I welcome the Committees' focus on these matters. We've gone as far as we can within the current WESP framework, and we'll look at any evidence and recommendations made as a result of this inquiry as part of developing proposals that could be included in a Welsh Language Education Bill.

In approving the WESPs, I committed to meeting the Leader and Director of Education of each local authority to discuss their WESP. Several of these meetings have already taken place. In meeting them, I've been emphasising what I've said

and written many times before: Cymraeg belongs to us all, as does the responsibility for its future. That's why all of us – at the Welsh Government, and all local authorities and schools – need to work together to ensure all learners in every part of Wales get the opportunity to learn Cymraeg successfully, and of using it in their everyday lives.