



Our ref MA-EM-21770-20

Helen Mary Jones MS  
Chair of Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee  
Welsh Parliament

14 July 2020

Dear Helen Mary,

Thank you for your letter of 17 June in relation to the budget decisions for the Welsh language in the First Supplementary Budget 2020-21. To support the Welsh economy and public services to respond swiftly to the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, it was necessary to reprioritise budgets supporting the Welsh language. Whilst this has been challenging in the short term, we have worked closely with our partners during this time to maximise the digital opportunities and direct funding to organisations with immediate needs. Consequently, within my portfolio there was a reduction of £1.995m to the Welsh Language budget and reprioritised funding of £0.8m allocated to our iconic national events within the Events Wales budget. In addition, there was a modest reduction of £0.350m within the Education MEG following a detailed review. Overall, the total budget maintained for both portfolios of £35m will continue to support the delivery of *Cymraeg 2050*.

In response to your comments and questions, I have distinguished the decisions by portfolio as the Minister for Education is responsible for the Welsh in Education budget.

### **International Relations and the Welsh Language MEG**

#### **The National Centre for Learning Welsh**

Budget impact assessments were undertaken to support the reprioritisation of budgets within the portfolio. Decisions are monitored and continually reassessed to minimise negative impacts and ensure that we continue to deliver on our commitments in *Cymraeg 2050*. The savings identified were primarily for the National Centre for Learning Welsh. To clarify the current budgetary situation for Learn Welsh, I can confirm that the *Cymraeg Gwaith* budget for 2020-21 has been reduced by £1,020,000 leaving a budget of £1,480,000. This was the main saving due to the fact that some of this work could not be undertaken due to Covid-19 (many workplaces were closed, some sectors could not give Welsh lessons a priority, and residential courses could no longer be held). The Centre's main recurrent grant for the 2020/21 academic year, which funds the regional providers, has been confirmed as £8,473,000. This represents a saving of £337,000 compared to 2019/20. Finally, the Centre's

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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.

Core grant, which funds its central operation, has been confirmed as £1,723,800 for 2020/21, which is a saving of £176,200 compared to 2019/20.

Prior to confirming the budget reduction, discussions were held with external partners on how the pandemic would affect their ways of working, what support they would need and potential financial savings that may arise. The discussions with the National Centre for Learning Welsh focussed on rapidly improving and extending the online and blended learning provision available to learners. The Centre led these improvements by forming a specialist group to share best practice on online learning, and has accelerated the production of online teaching resources that were already planned.

Throughout this period, I have been very pleased with the professionalism and the positivity shown by the Centre and by the Learn Welsh tutors across Wales. They have been able to ensure that the full programme of community face-to-face learning is delivered via on-line platforms and a new blended learning programme launched. The interest in this programme exceeded all expectations and 1,300 new learners have signed up to 89 online classes. In addition, the Centre has formed a new exciting partnership with the “Say Something in Welsh” company. This will ensure even more opportunities for Welsh learners to use and enjoy the language, and allows for sharing of resources and expertise.

I am very hopeful that we can build upon these improvements, and the success of the provision in the future. I intend to discuss with the Centre how we can ensure that there is a wide choice of provision available to learners after the lockdown ends, both in the community learning and Cymraeg Gwaith strands, including traditional face-to-face learning, and on-line and blended learning. I intend to explore whether this initial investment in online resources and learning can result in some future savings, whilst ensuring that the Centre receives sufficient funding to ensure that they can continue to deliver, meet targets and be innovative in their Learn Welsh provision.

### **Other external partners**

My officials and I have held numerous discussions with our external partners to consider the impact of Covid-19 on their ability to deliver against *Cymraeg 2050* in the short, medium and longer term. We have also discussed a variety of issues including their future viability due to the pandemic and these discussions will continue. I will provide some examples below.

### **The Urdd**

The Urdd approached my officials to discuss the financial implications of Covid-19 particularly the loss of income streams. They were one of the first organisations to make the decision to cancel many of their activities and to close all of their residential centres until April next year. My officials have therefore worked closely with colleagues in other departments to seek funding opportunities to support the Urdd during these difficult times.

The Urdd continues to receive annual grant funding of £852,184 to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language. This funding contributes to staffing costs across Wales, the Urdd Eisteddfod and arts programme. We have discussed the need to reprioritise this funding while many of the Urdd’s staff are on the Job Retention Scheme to ensure that many of their planned activities are able to continue on a reduced level and through the development of new ways of working.

Additional capital funding of £2.75m has been provided to help address the financial difficulties the Urdd is facing due to Covid-19. This funding is made available from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Capital Investment Fund within the Minister for Education’s portfolio, which is seen as a very exceptional case for providing 100% funding for the capital investment

programme at Glan-llyn and Llangrannog. By providing this funding, the Urdd is able to use its reserves to secure a basic level of operation within all of its departments.

An application is under consideration to the Economic Resilience Fund. The process is nearing completion and the Urdd will be informed of the outcome imminently. Officials will also maintain regular dialogue with the Urdd and explore various avenues of support to help enhance the commercial plans. For example, they are looking at using the Urdd's extensive experience and success to help encourage more girls into sport by partnering with other stakeholders.

In the meantime, the Urdd worked at pace to organise an extremely successful Eisteddfod T during what would have been the Urdd Eisteddfod week at Whitsun. Over 6,000 children, young people and their families took part in various events that were broadcasted on S4C, on-line and on BBC Radio Cymru. It attracted many new competitors and we look forward to seeing some of these new and fun competitions being incorporated into the traditional Eisteddfod in the future.

On 18 May, the Urdd also broadcasted its annual Peace and Goodwill Message where the young people of Wales asked us all to stop the clock to listen and learn from the Covid pandemic. The message was translated into 57 languages and reached 37 million across the world.

### **The National Eisteddfod**

Officials have also been in regular contact with the National Eisteddfod to discuss how Covid-19 has affected them in the short term and assess the future requirements. I was pleased to award an additional £500,000 to the National Eisteddfod to address the short term financial constraints from the postponement of the Tregaron Eisteddfod until 2021. The additional funding will allow the already established community groups in the Ceredigion area to continue activities once the Covid-19 lockdown measures are eased. The tourist and hospitality sector receives a huge boost from the thousands of visitors to the area the Eisteddfod visits and business in Tregaron and Gwynedd will be able to resume taking bookings for future dates. This will undoubtedly bring a much-needed financial boost to the areas in the after-math of Covid-19.

Eisteddfod officials are currently considering how they can work with other partners in order to make the best of the current situation. This includes hosting online events under the AmGen banner. This is an alternative to the traditional National Eisteddfod week held in August that is already underway, where a series of workshops / lectures / gigs will be held online and on TV.

We will continue to provide regular support and advice to our external partners during these unprecedented times.

### **Education MEG**

In your letter, you noted the reprioritisation of £350,000 from the Welsh in Education BEL impacting on early years provision such as Mudiad Meithrin and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. The savings are not related to these areas of work.

Savings of £300,000 are in relation to the reduction in the grant to WJEC for textbooks to support qualifications – there are fewer new titles being developed by publishers during this

financial year which will require translating. Moving forward, there is scope within the remaining budget to continue to commission and to prioritise bilingual projects, which are deemed essential for preparing for the new curriculum. The remaining £50,000 was identified in relation to the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) from the next cycle of new local authority plans being deferred by one year. Covid-19 has meant that elements of the support package envisaged for local authorities cannot take place, such as the national WESP conference and the procurement of Welsh language and education consultants to advise local authorities on aspects of WESP implementation.

### ***Cymraeg 2050 – the future***

Although budgets beyond 2020-21 have not been confirmed, the next spending review supporting the 2021-22 budget will provide an opportunity to consider the long term plans for the organisations and assess the funding requirements to deliver *Cymraeg 2050*. The impacts of the pandemic will be integral to this review. I am keen to capture the positive developments in digital learning in future delivery and I look forward to updating the Committee in due course.

*Cymraeg 2050* is a strategy that sets out the Welsh Government's long-term vision for the Welsh language. It is inevitable that Covid-19 will affect our ability to deliver some objectives within the strategy in the short term. However, the pandemic has also offered many positive opportunities for us to deliver in new, innovative and exciting ways. Despite the challenges facing us, we are confident that we can build on the good progress made since the launch of the strategy in 2017, and a short delay will not adversely affect our progress. We look forward to drafting the second Work Programme for 2021 onwards and will take full consideration of how Covid-19 and indeed other factors such as Brexit will offer challenges but also new opportunities for us to deliver *Cymraeg 2050* in the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

**Eluned Morgan AS/MS**

Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol  
Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language