

WRITTEN EVIDENCE PAPER TO THE CULTURE, WELSH LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language

Introduction

This paper provides evidence in advance of my appearance before the Committee on 8 October 2020. The invitation asked for information on the following areas:

1. Our Welsh language strategy (*Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers*)
2. The impact and response to Covid-19 on the Welsh language
3. Funding for the Welsh language

The response below focuses on each of these issues in turn.

1. [Our Welsh language strategy \(Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers\)](#)

Cymraeg 2050 was launched in July 2017 with an accompanying Work Programme for 2017-2021. Welsh language policy is a long-term aim. *Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021*, the Programme for Government, includes the development and delivery of Welsh language policy in line with the ambitions of the Future Generations agenda. Our [strategy](#) notes the steps we must take to achieve our two headline targets by 2050 to:

- reach 1 million Welsh speakers¹; and
- double the daily use of Welsh².

The strategy has caught the imagination of the public – we have a very clear vision that has been widely accepted and embraced in Wales and beyond.

As with other policy areas, the pandemic has affected the *Cymraeg 2050* Work Plan for 2017-21. The uncertainty of Brexit also poses a real challenge for Welsh language policy. **Whilst the context in which we work has changed dramatically since *Cymraeg 2050*'s inception, our strategic priorities are unchanged.** However, we may need to change and adapt the plan to respond to these new challenges.

Here, under the three themes of *Cymraeg 2050*, I include a brief synopsis of some of the new work undertaken since 2017:

Theme 1: Increasing the number of Welsh speakers

- I will be publishing a policy on the **Transmission and use of the Welsh language in families** before Christmas now that the formal consultation process has ended.
- We have set up a specific programme with **Mudiad Meithrin** focussing on establishing new Welsh-medium early years provision in areas of Wales where there is a current lack of such services. Through this work, 21 new **Cylchoedd Meithrin** and 21 new **Cylchoedd Ti a Fi** have been established since 2018, meaning hundreds more children can take the first step to Welsh-medium education each year. According to data gathered by Mudiad Meithrin, nearly 90% of children leaving Cylchoedd Meithrin in 2018-19 transferred to Welsh-medium education – the highest proportion since this data has been collected.
- Our focus on expanding the **provision of Welsh-medium and bilingual education** and how Welsh is delivered in English-medium schools has included:

¹ In the 2011 Census, 562,000 people said they could speak Welsh.

² The target is: the percentage of the population that speak Welsh daily, and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh, to increase from 10% (in 2013-15) to 20% by 2050.

- Securing £46m through the Welsh-medium and Childcare capital grant, leading to 46 projects across 20 local authorities. This will create **2,818 new places** in Welsh-medium schools and childcare settings.
- New **regulations** for Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) were made in January 2020³.
- We'll consult on new non-statutory arrangements for **designating schools** according to their Welsh-medium provision in October 2020.
- **ITE programmes** from September 2019 deliver a **minimum of 25 hours of Welsh tuition** to all student teachers as part of the PGCE against a national Welsh language skills framework. The language skills framework also forms the basis of **career-long language development** for all practitioners, in line with the Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership.
- ITE partnerships will not be capped in terms of recruitment to courses, except for Physical Education, and will be required to work towards **increasing their Welsh-medium recruitment to 30%** of the overall intake from September 2020.
- In 2018, we expanded the remit of the **Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol** to include developing Welsh-medium post-16 education, and work-based training.
- The **Urdd** provides Level 2 and Level 3 **Apprenticeships** in Sports and Leadership. Since 2017/18, up to the end of March 2020, 102 apprentices had completed their Sport apprenticeships through the medium of Welsh (25 in Level 3 and 77 in Level 2). 70 apprentices continue, with 32 working for the Urdd, and 28 employed by external partners (mostly primary schools in the Valley Taskforce Area, with a small number in Ynys Môn and Gwynedd).
- We have financed and adopted a new approach to the delivery of Welsh-medium apprenticeships for early years. 40 new apprenticeships have started with Mudiad Meithrin, with the potential to create further partnerships with new providers.
- We've funded the **National Centre for Learning Welsh** to create new speakers. The Centre held 20,330 activities for 13,260 individual learners in 2018/19. Also:
 - in [2017-2018](#), there were 12,680 **unique learners** and 13,260 in 2018-2019 – **an increase of 5%**.
 - in 2018-2019, learners attended 20,330 learning activities, **an increase of 4%** when compared to [2017-2018](#).

Theme 2: Increasing the use of Welsh

- We have published our new **internal use of Welsh strategy**, *Cymraeg. Mae'n perthyn i ni i gyd* (*Cymraeg. It belongs to us all*). I believe that the strategy will

³ We're making amendments to the regulations in response to Covid-19. They include beginning a new WESP cycle in 2022 instead of 2021. We'll extend the current WESP period to ensure there won't be any period when a LA is not under a statutory duty to plan Welsh-medium education.

influence the use of Welsh across the Welsh public sector and potentially beyond.

- **Welsh language standards** now apply to over 120 organisations. Standards were made for the health sector in 2018, placing duties on Health Boards to provide services in Welsh and adopt plans to be able to provide more clinical care in Welsh. We plan to introduce standards for health care regulators next.
- **Work Welsh** offers training and support to help workplaces increase their daily use of the language and improve the services they provide. During 2019-20, over 1,600 employers registered for Work Welsh courses.
- We have funded a **behaviour change** project to increase the use of Welsh in workplaces, which will create a freely available toolkit which can be adopted by all.
- We grant fund the Urdd, the leading youth organisation in Wales:
 - It has over 56,000 members.
 - 10,000 **volunteers** are active Wales wide with the Urdd.
 - Approximately 45,500 children and young people benefit from **residential experiences** at one of the Urdd's camps annually.
 - In 2019, 100,000 visited the **Eisteddfod** and around 80,000 took part in competitions.
 - In December 2019, a new partnership between the Urdd and Llamau was announced and a Christmas lunch was hosted for 250 young people affected by **homelessness**. The partnership will give young people experiences that could increase their confidence and explore and expand their ambitions.
 - It endeavours to reach children and young people of all backgrounds and means and therefore has developed a project to offer places at the camps to **disadvantaged children**: 200 places have been offered to date.
- We grant fund the National Eisteddfod – it provides opportunities to use the language, to celebrate our culture and so much more:
 - Economic impact assessments demonstrate that the Eisteddfod has a positive **economic value** of between £17-£18m each year in the areas it visits.
 - In 2019, £2,741,330 was spent on **small businesses** linked to the Eisteddfod.
 - In 2019, over 175,000 people **visited** the Eisteddfod Maes during the week-long festival.
 - The Eisteddfod is a **two-year community project**. On average, 250-350 community events are held during this period. These provide opportunities for local income generation. The festival also provides a platform to test new business ideas, many of which continue beyond the festival.
 - Our investment in the Eisteddfod also secures a platform to **showcase new art, literature and supports new performers**. This is an important economic sector in Wales, and for this modest grant funding, the

Eisteddfod supports and nurtures new Welsh talent – artists who sometimes become global ambassadors championing Wales.

- We grant fund the **Mentrau Iaith** and in 2019, they provided 9,229 opportunities to use the Welsh language and 231,366 attended these events.
- The Mentrau Iaith hold **music festivals** in order to attract new audiences and normalise language use outside of the classroom:
 - We partly fund many of the larger festivals (**Tafwyl** attracted 38,000 visitors in 2019) that have become an important part of the cultural calendar.
 - In 2019, we also provided funding of £50,000 for new and **smaller festivals** in order to introduce the language and culture to new audiences. The funding was divided between 11 smaller festivals for example Gŵyl Canol Dre in Carmarthen and Gŵyl y Ferch on Ynys Môn.
- It is estimated that the 52 **papurau bro**, funded by the Welsh Government, publish 43,000 editions each month, with most papers publishing between 500 and 1,000 copies. Assuming each paper is read by two people, the papers reach 139,000 readers.
- **Dydd Miwsig Cymru** has established itself in the calendar as a day to celebrate the vibrancy of Welsh language music. It raises awareness of the language and our culture.

Theme 3: Creating favourable conditions – infrastructure and context

- As part of our **Welsh Language Technology Action Plan** (published 2018), I've made Cysgliad (a Welsh spellchecker, grammar checker, and series of dictionaries) available free of charge for individuals, schools and organisations with fewer than 10 staff. So far, it has been downloaded 3,600 times.
- A strong **linguistic infrastructure** (dictionaries, terminology, corpus resources, standardisation mechanisms) is essential to make it easier for everyone to use the language – be they school children, employees or new speakers. We're developing a policy for this area of work in order to make it easier for everyone to access linguistic resources. I will be in a position to make a statement shortly.
- The first cohort is currently taking a pilot course on **Leading in a Bilingual Country** that we developed with Academi Wales, with the aim of embedding the spirit of *Cymraeg 2050* into organisations around Wales.
- In 2018, we established a **Bilingual Educational Resources Stakeholders Group** to consider creating a national infrastructure for providing educational resources. The group's recommendations have been submitted to the Minister for Education, and we'll make a further statement on the way forward shortly. High quality Welsh language educational resources will be central to the new infrastructure which will support the new curriculum for Wales.

- I have established an **Economy and Language Round Table** to look at challenges and opportunities facing rural Welsh-speaking communities in west Wales.
- The 2019 **UNESCO International Year of Indigenous Languages** was a good opportunity to unite both aspects of my portfolio. Our bilingualism in Wales can help us learn from other countries who are promoting minority languages and who exist in multilingual environments. Based on the success of the year, in which Wales played a leading role, UNESCO decided to establish a *Decade of Indigenous Languages*, which will begin in 2022. I'm eager for Wales to be seen as a world leader, and a "go to" nation to contribute to the effort to protect and promote languages world-wide.

We are proud of the progress made to date towards a million Welsh speakers. However, even before Covid-19 struck, some areas were more challenging than others in this respect. One example is the need to more quickly **increase the number of teachers** able to teach through the medium of Welsh / teach Welsh as a subject.

Another is the number of children **attending Welsh-medium education**. We have made steady progress since 2017, but school organisation, in particular establishing new schools, takes time. We will soon start working with local authorities to discuss their ten year Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) so that we can make greater strides in the future. However, we need to acknowledge the support and great work that some local authorities have undertaken so we have a much stronger platform from which to build. I need to emphasise nevertheless that some local authorities need to deliver their WESP commitments with conviction.

The **2021 Census** will provide us with data on our progress towards our *Cymraeg 2050* targets. While the Census is the authoritative source for the number of Welsh speakers in Wales and forms the statistical basis of our ambition to reach a million speakers, we also monitor trends shown in the **Annual Population Survey**. This has shown an increasing trend in the number of speakers over the past decade. However, the past few quarters have recorded a small decline. We'll be keeping an eye on these trends.

2. The impact and response to Covid-19 on the Welsh language

Covid-19 has posed many challenges to the delivery of *Cymraeg 2050* and I have been impressed by how our partners have responded during recent months. I'm sure that much of the new and innovative work undertaken will become part of our new way of working in the future.

In March, the initial **short-term** challenges we faced were to:

- Support the short-term resilience of partner Welsh language organisations.
- Ensure that children in Welsh-medium education and their parents / carers received support and reassurance about the children's Welsh language skills (a) during lockdown and (b) in the school reopening process.
- Ensure that the renewed online approach to adult Welsh language learning was supported.

Here are some examples of the work we've undertaken with our partner organisations during the pandemic:

- Earlier this year, I tasked the **Welsh Language Partnership Council to establish three sub-groups** to consider aspects of *Cymraeg 2050* in more depth. As part of their work, they're considering the effect of Covid-19 as follows:
 - Subgroup 1: **Education** will look at the potential effect of lack of contact in educational settings on linguistic development / support for parents in non-Welsh speaking households / immersion education.
 - Subgroup 2: **Increasing Language Use in the Community** has commissioned a community audit of language use to see which opportunities currently exist, what the gaps are, and how the pandemic has affected them.
 - Subgroup 3: **Economy and Language** will focus on mainstreaming Welsh within economic programmes, and provide a better understanding of how various economic interventions could affect the vibrancy of the Welsh language.
- We have awarded over £3.1m to the **Urdd** in order to support it to survive the effects of the pandemic, in the absence of it being able to create income from its residential centres. This Government intervention has meant being able to support 180 jobs. However, with the continued insecurity around how long Covid-19 will affect the Urdd's activities in the future (the full re-opening of residential centres / limiting the amount of face to face community activities held / hosting national events such as the Eisteddfod and sport activities), it has become apparent that redundancies are inevitable and that the Urdd faces significant challenges in the long term. Despite these uncertainties, the Urdd has continued to deliver and innovate in exceptionally difficult circumstances. For example:
 - It delivered its annual **Peace and Goodwill Message** digitally. The message reached 37 million people.

- It held **Eisteddfod T** in place of its normal field Eisteddfod. Over 6,000 took part in various competitions. Many of these had never taken part before. There will definitely be lessons from this initiative to be taken forward to future Eisteddfodau.
- They've recently launched an exciting initiative called *Cefn Llwyfan* ('Backstage') which is a **mentoring programme** for young people aspiring for jobs in the performing arts. The initiative's particular focus is on developing disabled young learners and those from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not be able to access such support.
- We allocated an additional £0.5m to the **National Eisteddfod** to provide support with the costs associated with the postponement of the Tregaron Eisteddfod. Postponing the Eisteddfod led to the successful hosting of the first ever **Eisteddfod AmGen**. The event secured 4 million impressions on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube and over a million views.
- **The National Centre for Learning Welsh** has adapted swiftly despite the fact that all face to face learning has stopped:
 - Over 1,300 **new learners** are now following courses in 89 virtual classes.
 - Since 16 March, there have been over 17,000 enrolments on the Centre's **online taster courses** by 8,000 individuals. This is more than the previous three years together and shows that interest is growing apace.
 - The Centre has launched weekly lessons on Facebook in partnership with **Welsh for Kids**, targeted specifically at parents / carers of small children.
- The **Federation of Young Farmers** and **Merched y Wawr** have been supporting vulnerable people in their communities by offering practical support, delivering meals and manning a phone line called "Ffoniwch Ffrind" ('Phone a Friend').
- **Tafwyl** is Cardiff's annual celebration of Welsh arts and culture. This year, the festival was held online and was watched by a global audience of more than 8,000, with people tuning in from the USA, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain and France to name but a few.
- In partnership with Canolfan Bedwyr, I've ensured that **Cysgliad** is now available free of charge for individuals, schools and organisations with fewer than 10 staff.
- We postponed the official launch of **Helo Blod**, concentrating instead on ensuring that the service was available online to help the voluntary and business sectors to provide services in Welsh.

Now to address the potential **medium to long-term impacts** of the pandemic:

Theme 1: Increasing the number of Welsh speakers

Our new policy on the **transmission and use of the Welsh language in families**, to be launched before Christmas, will form an important part of this work.

Nationally, lockdown provided us with a period of reflection with regard to **Welsh-medium education**, reminding us of the role parents play in supporting our

children's education. The need for a more tailored package of support for parents of children in Welsh-medium education who don't speak Welsh became evident. We've started a reassurance campaign to regularly communicate with parents regarding bilingualism. Our '[Summer full of Welsh](#)' campaign started this process.

With regard to our efforts to **expand access to Welsh medium education**, we're in the process of developing new timeframes in order to give local authorities space to respond to the pandemic and to implement new Welsh in Education Strategic Plans at the same time. This revised timetable is likely to have some short term effect on our targets in relation to increasing Welsh medium education. However, considering the long-term nature of the planning process, we believe that we'll be able to mitigate this.

Theme 2: Increasing the use of Welsh

The pandemic has affected how and when we communicate with others. The opportunities that we used to have to communicate in Welsh will have drastically changed in some instances:

(i) Workplaces

Working more flexibly and new use of technology will continue in the long term – many workplaces may have changed forever. This raises questions in relation to both formal and informal language use in workplaces.

Virtual simultaneous human interpretation must become easier to access, and opportunities must be created within co-working spaces for workers to use Welsh during the working day e.g. informal, 'water cooler' conversations will be important. We're engaged in positive discussions with Microsoft on the interpretation aspect of this.

On the other hand, early evidence shows that those learning Welsh online have increased significantly. The pandemic has created opportunities that will make it easier for lessons to be held in virtual workplaces and for workers to learn in a much more flexible manner.

(ii) Language use at community level

Language is a social phenomenon that requires communities or networks of speakers. Technology enables the development of new virtual networks but maintaining linguistically vibrant communities in the west and north-west continues to be key in creating opportunities for people to use the language.

The Increasing Language Use in the Community Sub-group has commissioned a community survey into the impact of the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 on community language use. We'll work with the sub-group to draw up policies that aim to safeguard opportunities to use Welsh at a community level in the future.

Some of our external grant partners continue to face an uncertain future. We'll continue to work with them to ensure their future viability.

(iii) Services

The pandemic has led to legal resources within WG being redeployed. For the time being, the preparation of Welsh language standards can only proceed if legal resources become available and if they do, we'll prioritise the standards for Healthcare Regulators.

As regards our plans to make it easier for the voluntary and business sectors to use more Welsh, we made our **Helo Blod** service available in March this year. It's our One Stop Shop for the Welsh language and it's already making a difference to these sectors.

Theme 3: Creating favourable conditions – infrastructure and context

(i) Second homes

Second homes and the related issues are emotive and have a long and complicated history. Communities where this is an issue often thrive thanks to the visitor economy, but we must continue to question if we have struck the right balance between economy and community. A vibrant community needs jobs and its people need homes – it needs sustainable infrastructure and a sense of place. Achieving this means balancing permanent homes and those occupied for part of the year or let as businesses. The Minister for Housing and Local Government has invited interested Members of the Senedd to look at these issues in detail with her.

(ii) The economy

Ensuring the economic viability of communities with higher percentages of Welsh-speakers will become an increasing challenge due to Covid-19 and Brexit. It is likely that the economy will have shrunk significantly during this period, and that the effects will be more evident in rural communities due to their dependency on the agriculture, tourism, cultural and food and drink sectors. Significant pressure on public services, another important sector for the rural economy, is also anticipated. As part of the response to the pandemic, it will be important to understand how the Arfor programme's interventions has supported the local economy and also benefited the Welsh language. It is vital that we learn lessons and look at ways in which we could deliver these innovative economic interventions within mainstream programmes. This will form part of the work of the Economy and Language Sub-group.

(iii) Technology

We've just awarded a new grant to Canolfan Bedwyr (Bangor University's Centre for Welsh Language Services, Research and Technology) which will implement many of the work packages in our *Welsh-language Technology Action Plan*. The new

components created will be available via open licence, which means that they can be freely used by others in their products and services. I'll also soon be presenting a full report to you on the implementation of our *Welsh Language Technology Action Plan* for your forthcoming inquiry on Welsh language technology.

3. Funding for the Welsh language

Pre Covid-19

The Welsh language budget allocations support the activities and priorities outlined within *Cymraeg 2050*. The priorities for the development of the Welsh language within the community, the workplace and within education are delivered within the Education MEG and the International Relations and the Welsh Language (IRWL) MEG and supported by the Welsh Language Division. The Final Budget for 2020-21, as reflected in the table below, included a total budget of £37.216m for Welsh language: revenue budget of £36.831m and a £0.385m capital budget (allocated to the Welsh Language Commissioner to modernise IT systems).

In response to Covid-19 and the urgent response required to the public health situation, budgets were immediately repurposed across Welsh Government. The seriousness of the current situation means that we've had to make difficult decisions to ensure that we can support the most vulnerable people affected by Covid-19. Budgets have been primarily targeted at front-line NHS services and supporting organisations under pressure during these difficult times.

In assessing the Welsh language delivery and the ability to support the Welsh Government's priorities, we undertook a detailed review of budgets based on the following criteria:

- Those things that could no longer happen as a result of the pandemic (e.g. external travel costs and some funding in relation to Welsh language promotion activities in the community).
- Those that could be delayed (e.g., the formal launch of *Helo Blod* and the review of our Language Promotion Grants).
- Those that can be done differently (these are especially relevant to activities in the community, or those that pertain to learning e.g. courses run by the National Centre for Learning Welsh were successfully moved online as was our *Leading in a Bilingual Country* programme through Academi Wales).

In working in this way, we believe we've kept negative impacts to a minimum, and that we've made every effort to ensure we continue to deliver on our *Cymraeg 2050* commitments. In fact, we've seen many positives during this period for example: new innovations, exceptional use of digital technology and an additional cohort of learners attending virtual lessons. We will learn from these experiences and build upon them in future planning.

We've been able to reprioritise budgets within the revised allocation. An example of this is, as noted above, an additional £0.5m to the National Eisteddfod to address the shortfall in income as a result of the cancellation of the 2020 Eisteddfod in Tregaron.

This was made up of £0.1m from within the Welsh Language BEL and a further £0.4m was transferred non-recurrently from the Events Wales budget within the IRWL MEG.

Overall, there is a decrease of 4% in the Welsh language budget from £37.216m to £35.671m. The budget changes are summarised in the following table:

MEG	BEL	2020-21 Final Budget £m	2020-21 Contribution to Covid-19 £m	Within MEG Transfer £m	2020-21 First Supplementary Budget £m
REVENUE					
Education	Welsh Education (BEL 5164)	12.675	(0.350)	0.000	12.325
IR&WL	Welsh Language (BEL 6020)	20.949	(1.595)	0.400	19.754
IR&WL	Welsh Language Commissioner (BEL 6021)	3.207	0.000	0.000	3.207
Revenue Total		36.831	(1.945)	0.400	35.286
CAPITAL					
IR&WL	Welsh Language Commissioner (BEL 6021)	0.385	0.000	0.000	0.385
Capital Total		0.385	0.000	0.000	0.385
Total Budget		37.216	(1.945)	0.400	35.671

2021-22 Budget allocations

We currently only have a revenue and capital budget for one year (2020-21), the period for which we have a funding settlement from the UK Government. Funding implications for the Welsh Government beyond 2020-21 will be known following the UK Comprehensive Spending Review which is scheduled to take place in the autumn. The Welsh Government's budget planning process will then set the budget allocations at a MEG level for future years.

Once we know the financial position, I will work with policy officials to plan for the next financial year and beyond. It will be important to be mindful that any agreement to fund beyond 2020-21 will be placing a commitment upon a future Government. Therefore, we will need to strike a balance with a progressive approach to supporting the ambitions of *Cymraeg 2050* without constraining any new Government's possibility of introducing its own ambitions and innovative ideas to meet the targets.

In these insecure times, I'm proud of the achievements I've noted above. Whilst the pandemic has presented new challenges, it has also offered many exciting new opportunities. I believe we have a strong platform to build from and to continue on our *Cymraeg 2050* journey.

Eluned Morgan AS
Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language