

Eluned Morgan MS  
Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language  
Welsh Government

17 June 2020

Dear Eluned,

### **Welsh Government Supplementary Budget 2020–21**

The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee discussed the Welsh Government’s First Supplementary Budget 2020–21 at our meeting on 11 June.

I understand that the Welsh Language budget allocation within your portfolio has decreased by £2 million. The explanatory notes that accompany the Supplementary Budget laid before the Senedd says these savings have been made by ‘adapting the learning environment and managing delivery in the current climate’ and a reprioritisation of funding from ‘planned activities that can no longer happen as a result of the pandemic or can be delayed or adapted’.

I also note that £350,000 has been reprioritised from the Welsh in Education BEL within the Minister for Education’s portfolio. This funding would have been used to support early years provision such as Mudiad Meithrin, Welsh–medium education planning and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

The National Centre for Learning Welsh has presented evidence to the Committee’s inquiry into the effect of the COVID 19 outbreak on areas within its remit. It states that the Centre discussed a decrease in its budget with the Welsh Government at the end of March 2020, and the result was a £1.5 million reduction



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to its budget between April 2020 and July 2021. Of the £1.5 million reduction, £1.02 million comes from the Cymraeg Gwaith/Work Welsh budget. As a result, the Centre will have to pause some of its planned work programme and consider other opportunities for employees to learn Welsh.

I note from their evidence that the Centre has expanded its online learning to accommodate the increase in demand during the lockdown. The centre has provided 89 online classes and registered 1,300 learners. This increase in demand for digital learning has demonstrated that there is a public appetite for learning Welsh. The Committee want to ensure that we build on this once the lockdown is lifted. I also note from the Centre's evidence that there are continuing discussions with the Welsh Government on further budget cuts.

I very much hope you can reassure us that the budget reduction within your portfolio is only temporary, and that the budget will be restored in full after July 2021. Indeed, if we are to build on this surge in interest for language learning online, then additional investment will be needed to support digital learning, alongside more traditional methods of learning in the future.

I am keen to ensure that the gains made by the Centre will not be lost. Will your department be carrying out a risk analysis of the impact of reducing the budget for the Centre?

Whilst it is imperative that funding is channelled to deal with the immediate threat of COVID-19, I am concerned that the reduction in funding does not become permanent. Can you reassure the Committee that there is a sufficient level of funding to deliver the Welsh Government's commitments to achieving 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050?

Clearly, resources must be prioritised on reducing direct and indirect harm resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also a priority to support those whose livelihoods are at risk from not being able to work. I therefore welcome and support the reprioritisation of £800k from the Events Wales budget to support the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol and Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod following the cancellation of events in 2020. Please can you let me know if you will be



meeting with representatives from these organisations to assess the financial impact of cancelling these events? The Committee would also like to know whether the Urdd and other organisations that support the Welsh language have approached you for additional support in the short and longer term.

I would be grateful if you could respond to the questions in this letter at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Mary Jones." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Helen Mary Jones

Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

c.c. Llyr Gruffydd, Chair of the Finance Committee

