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

Via e-mail: SeneddCulture@senedd.wales

21 September 2021

Dear Chair and Committee Members

Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee consultation on priorities for the sixth Senedd

I would like to submit a response on behalf of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (the Coleg) to the Committee's request for information on the matters that the committee should prioritize in planning its work programme.

Our response will focus on the main factors relating to the Coleg's remit that affect the Welsh Government's language strategy to create a million people who speak and use the Welsh language by 2050. The Coleg's work in the post-compulsory sector, which includes further education, apprenticeships and higher education, contributes directly to the aims of the Government's language strategy, and the Coleg has the potential to make an even more substantial contribution over the next five years if it receives the necessary support and investment to do so.

Cymraeg 2050: the Government's new plan for 2021-26

The Coleg has welcomed the [new plan](#) announced by the Government in July this year that outlines what the Government will do during 2021-26 to achieve a million Welsh speakers and double the daily use of Welsh by 2050. The recognition within the document of the key role of the post-compulsory sector, and of the Coleg's role as one of the Government's core partners, are very welcome.

- Training Welsh language teachers

Given the importance to the language strategy of ensuring an adequate supply of teachers, the shortfall of over 300 primary and 500 secondary teachers is of great concern to the Coleg and a number of other individuals and organizations, including the Welsh Language Commissioner, Dyfodol i'r Iaith and UCAC. While the Government's new plan recognizes that ensuring an adequate supply has been a challenge, the Coleg is not confident that the interventions currently in place are sufficient to transform the situation.

We very much welcome the reference to the fact that the Government is developing a 10-year plan to increase the number of Welsh teachers and Welsh-medium teachers and improve the language skills of the education workforce so that local needs can be met in line with each county's WESP (Welsh in Education Strategic Plan). Although no further details on this have yet been announced, we welcome the reference to "expanding the Coleg's role". Several papers have been submitted to the Government over the last eighteen months in relation to our concerns about the teacher training sector and our desire to take on a more significant role in planning for the training of Welsh

language teachers. We are currently discussing with the Government how our responsibilities in this area can be developed as we have the experience, the expertise and the will to support them and the Education Workforce Council in carrying out their statutory duties in this area. Whilst maintaining our eagerness to take on a more leading and wide-ranging planning role in the field of teacher training, we will be submitting a bid to the Government for a budget of £150,000 to implement two projects during 2022-23 that will contribute to its strategy to attract and support more students to qualify as Welsh medium teachers.

- [Welsh-medium Education Bill](#)

We look forward to holding discussions with the Government in due course regarding the Welsh-medium Education Bill and matters relating to the Coleg.

- [The Coleg's budget](#)

Another development that we welcome in the Government's new plan is the commitment to provide additional funding to the Coleg over five years to expand provision in further education, apprenticeships, and higher education.

To date, the Coleg's budget to operate in the post-16 sector has been very limited, and there is an urgent need to invest in this area if we are serious about seeing a change at grassroots level where there has been very little tradition of Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching. The Government made £810,000 available for the 2021-22 financial year to begin work on increasing the number of staff and tutors who can teach through the medium of Welsh and bilingually in colleges in the priority areas, namely health and care, public services, and childcare. The additional funding for further education colleges was welcomed, but in order to continue investing in these areas, to expand into other areas such as agriculture, tourism and leisure, construction, business and performing arts, and to develop Welsh-medium and bilingual apprenticeships, the Coleg will submit a request to the Government for an additional budget of £1,090,000 for the post-16 sector in 2022-23 (£590,000 for further education and £500,000 for apprenticeships).

The Coleg has been active in higher education for a decade, and the position of the Welsh language in the sector has been transformed as a result. The provision available to students is now extensive and the number of lecturers teaching through the medium of Welsh has increased significantly. The first five years of the Coleg saw a significant increase in the number of students studying part of their degree through the medium of Welsh, but following a budget cut in 2016, and an increase in the number of Welsh students choosing to study at universities outside Wales, we have not seen the same increases since. The Coleg believes that new audiences can be attracted to the Welsh language in the higher education sector, and we are currently developing exciting plans to that end. Due to the challenging financial situation of the universities, additional Government investment will be key to making progress while, at the same time, protecting existing Welsh-medium subjects and provision. We will be submitting a bid for additional funding of £213,168 to the Government for 2022-23 to implement our higher education plans.

- [Developing a bilingual health and care workforce](#)

The [evaluation](#) of *More than Just Words* (the Welsh Government's strategy to ensure Welsh language services in health, social services and social care), which was published this week,

highlights the scale of the challenge facing the Government and Health Boards in making services freely available to the public in Wales in the language of their choice. While the report shows that some progress has been made since the publication of the strategy in 2012, particularly in higher education as a result of investment by the Coleg Cymraeg, the report also notes that a considerable amount of work and focus locally and nationally is needed in order to deliver the original seven objectives.

Health Boards across Wales report that recruiting a bilingual workforce is a challenge, and developing more bilingual training opportunities in the post-16 and higher education sectors is therefore a priority for the Coleg over the coming years.

Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) is the body responsible for planning and developing the NHS workforce in Wales, and it has a substantial budget for this purpose. The Coleg already works with HEIW, but the Coleg would like to develop a strategic relationship with HEIW in order to agree suitable targets and goals and develop bespoke plans to increase the Welsh language and bilingual skills of the health service workforce in Wales. The Coleg wishes to see such a plan incorporating a commitment to include language awareness as a core and standard part of the training of all prospective health and care practitioners in Wales, with clear targets being set for the number of trainees enrolling on bilingual provision across all health courses each year. HEIW would need to identify an appropriate budget to support universities to deliver this. This fits in with Social Care Wales and HEIW's [Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy](#) published by the Welsh Government in 2020.

- [Tertiary Education and Research \(Wales\) Bill](#)

The Coleg was pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the draft Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill during the fifth Senedd. It is vital to ensure that the new body, as well as the post-compulsory sector as a whole, is committed to working with the Coleg in an effective and strategic way to support the aim of increasing and promoting Welsh-medium and bilingual provision. The proposed Commission, if set up appropriately, offers the opportunity to achieve this, and these points were echoed in the responses received to the consultation on the draft bill.

We have kept our comments quite broad and brief in this letter, but a manifesto document was developed before the election detailing our policy and funding proposals for the new Government, which can be found on our [website](#).

Thank you for the opportunity to put forward a response on behalf of the Coleg to this important consultation. We would be happy to provide you with further information on the issues outlined in our letter, and you are welcome to contact Gwenllian Griffiths on g.griffiths@colegcymraeg.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Ioan Matthews, Chief Executive