



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

Aled Roberts
Welsh Language Commissioner
[Welsh Language Commissioner](#)

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

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3 September 2021

Dear Ms Jewell

Priorities for the Sixth Senedd

Thank you for the invitation to contribute to the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee consultation on its priorities for the Sixth Senedd. My office has written to you earlier this summer drawing your attention to a number of issues that we believe need urgent attention. I attach that letter for your information.

The aim of that letter was to underline the need for the Committee to scrutinise very carefully during this Senedd the delivery of the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy. I will be publishing my 5-year Report on the position of the Welsh language shortly and am already concerned that the Government's activities to date have not been sufficient given the huge task of achieving the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Our analysis of the delivery of the Strategy and indeed the Government's own acknowledgement in its work programme for 2021-26¹ that it has not achieved two of its main targets by 2021 already suggests that we are not following the trajectory towards a million speakers. The first years of the Strategy, and in particular the next few years, are the period in which the foundations will be laid for a significant increase in numbers between 2031 and 2050. As the data regarding the delivery of the Strategy is already causing

¹ [Cymraeg 2050: our plan for 2021 to 2026 | GOV.WALES](#)

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concern we believe that the Committee needs to scrutinise in depth both the trajectory and the Government's work programme covering several related areas, particularly the education sector. We also referred in our letter to the importance of ensuring that the Welsh language is mainstreamed into wider legislation and policy that affect the delivery of the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy and the status of the Welsh language. There is a role for this Committee and for other Senedd Committees in this respect.

The impact of Covid on the Welsh Language

We were pleased that the Fifth Senedd's Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee responded to our call as Commissioner and published a report on *The Impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the Welsh language*² and that the Welsh Government has accepted the Committee's recommendations. Similarly we are pleased that the Government in its work programme for 2021-26 commits to taking action in light of the recommendations of the Welsh Language Partnership Council sub-group, following a community survey of the impact of COVID-19 on the use of the Welsh language in the community, as well as introducing some other measures to support key national bodies in terms of the Welsh language to re-build following the pandemic.³ However, the pandemic has led to the acceleration of social changes and changes in working patterns that have significant implications for the Welsh language and its use throughout Wales. In that respect we would encourage the Committee to consider in particular the following:

- One of the effects of Covid and Brexit is the increase in second homes that has affected house prices in many areas of Wales and the ability of local people to buy houses in their communities leading to inequality and a lack of social cohesion. As you know, this is a problem that has a major impact on many communities where a high percentage of the population currently speaks Welsh. The Welsh Government has published plans⁴ to try to address this crisis. We believe that the Committee should scrutinise the adequacy of these plans and the timescale for their implementation to ensure that they will indeed respond adequately to the challenge.
- The pandemic has led to a large increase in remote working, and it is the Welsh Government's intention that 30% of the workforce will work

[cr-ld13874-e.pdf \(senedd.wales\)](#)

³ [Cymraeg 2050: our plan for 2021 to 2026 \[HTML\] | GOV. WALES](#)

⁴ [Welsh Government announces three-pronged approach to address "second home crisis"](#)



remotely⁵ and will set up hubs to accomplish this. This change in working pattern can affect the use of Welsh in the workplace and in the community, presenting opportunities and challenges for the Welsh language. It can of course also affect decisions about living and working locations and lead to possible demographic changes. Consideration should be given to how the challenges could be mitigated and support given to the opportunities presented.

The Committee's priorities in planning the short and long term work programme

Above we have already expressed the importance of careful and detailed scrutiny of the implementation of the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy 2050 and we believe that this needs to be done regularly throughout the period of the next Senedd. We also recommend that the Committee gives particular consideration to the following issues and discusses the suitability of undertaking such work in relation to the activities of other relevant Committees:

- The education system is absolutely central to achieving *Welsh Language Strategy 2050*'s vision. The Welsh Government intends to introduce a Welsh-medium Education Bill to strengthen and increase Welsh-medium education.⁶ We would urge the Committee to look at the current position of Welsh-medium and Welsh-medium education in English-medium schools in preparation for what would be in such a Bill.
- The Welsh language in health and care is an issue that needs to be prioritised during this Senedd. Receiving care in Welsh is essential for many people because of their age or health conditions but it is also the wish of many people regardless of their situation and, as such the principle of the active offer is essential. During the period of the last Senedd Welsh language standards were introduced for local authorities responsible for social services and for health boards, and duties in relation to the Welsh language were placed on primary care providers. *More than just words*, The Welsh Government's Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health, Social Services and Social Care has been in place since 2012 and the Welsh Government recently published an evaluation of the implementation of the framework for the 2016-19 period.⁷ The Welsh Government will also publish an evaluation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 shortly. At the beginning of a new Senedd we believe that it would be useful to consider

⁵ [Aim for 30% of the Welsh workforce to work remotely | GOV.WALES](#)

⁶ [Cymraeg 2050: our plan for 2021 to 2026 \[HTML\] | GOV. WALES](#)

⁷ [Evaluation of More than just words: final report | GOV.WALES](#)



the position of the Welsh language in the health and care sector and the work of the Government and other health and care agencies in this field.

- The contribution of the Welsh language to the Welsh economy and the contribution of the Welsh economy to the viability of the Welsh language are issues that need much more attention, be that by this Committee or the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee. The last Government held a Round Table on the Welsh Language and the Economy and the new Government intends to continue to convene it⁸ in order to mainstream the Welsh language into relevant economic and employability programmes. The Government also published research on *The Welsh language and the economy: a review of evidence and methods* in 2020⁹. This Committee must ensure that the Welsh language will be central to the new Government's economic development plans and we would recommend that you look in detail at the extent to which the Government will mainstream the Welsh language into its developments. Consideration should be given to how the Government ensures the contribution of the Welsh language to the Welsh economy as well as how a prosperous economy throughout the country, and particularly in places where there are high percentages of Welsh speakers, can contribute to the viability of the Welsh language.
- We believe that there is a need to consider the opportunities available for people who speak other languages (other than English and Welsh) to learn Welsh in Wales particularly within the context of the Welsh Government's intention to be a nation of sanctuary. The Welsh and English languages must be treated equally as part of the policy and people who make Wales their home should have the same opportunity to learn English and Welsh. There are commendable examples of initiatives to introduce Welsh to speakers of other languages and of people learning Welsh as a result of individual initiatives. However, we believe that there is a need to better understand the Welsh Government's plans for ensuring that Speakers of Other Languages, with many refugees and asylum seekers among them, will have the opportunity to learn both languages of Wales in order to increase their vocational opportunities and enable them to settle fully in all parts of Wales.

We understand that a great many of the points to which we refer above are matters which are relevant to other Senedd Committees as well as this Committee. With that in mind, we will be responding to the consultations of a number of the other Committees and will ensure that you as a Committee

⁸ [Cymraeg 2050: our plan for 2021 to 2026 \[HTML\] | GOV. WALES](#)

⁹ [The Welsh language and the economy: a review of evidence and methods \(gov.wales\)](#)



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receive copies of those responses. We will again in those letters be emphasising that it is essential that each Committee considers the impact of its work and the Welsh Government's legislation and policy on the Welsh language. In the meantime, I look forward to discussing our Annual Report for 2020-21 and our Assurance Report for 2020-21 later this month.

Yours sincerely,

Aled Roberts
Welsh Language Commissioner

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