



Eich cyf/Your ref: 23 January 2023
Ein cyf/Our ref: JMEWL/00123/23

25 January 2023

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your letter of 19 January, and for the opportunity to discuss the draft budget for 2023-24 with the Committee last week.

You enquire about the £400,000 allocated to two projects to Cwmpas for community empowerment and the creation of social and cooperative enterprises. These enterprises, which will be monolingual Welsh language spaces, and will respond to the socio-economic and linguistic challenges of local communities.

£150,000 is being allocated directly to Cwmpas for the implementation of the '*Cymraeg: it belongs to our communities*' (Perthyn) scheme. Our consultation on the draft *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* made it clear that there was significant support for helping communities to create co-operatives. But many respondents cited the need for the community groups to have financial support to help them do so. My officials discussed with relevant stakeholders and it was often noted that it was small funds that are needed to build such capacity locally. The remaining £250,000 is being used as a small grant fund to build the capacity of community groups. This grant funding provides added value and reinforces the *Perthyn* scheme. Community groups which not part of the *Perthyn* scheme will also be able to apply if they can demonstrate that their projects are aligned with the priorities of the *Welsh Communities Housing Plan*.

As I outlined in Committee, measuring the impact of our activity is key, but that has its challenges of course. In relation to the *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan*, for example we have earmarked an evaluation budget, which will help us assess how effective the interventions have been in achieving the aims and objectives set. We agree that establishing a framework to measure the impact of all our policies across Government on Cymraeg would be beneficial. I have had initial conversations with my officials about this and would be happy to write to the Committee once again outlining how such a framework could work.

I am also grateful for the comments from Committee members about the work of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities chaired by Dr Simon Brooks. The Commission will be looking at several policy areas in relation to the Welsh language and it intends to publish a report and recommendations to me by Summer 2024.

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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.

I will be keen to look at the situation of the Welsh language in communities where there are lower percentages of Welsh speakers after the first phase of the Commission's work has finished.

The Committee also asked me to write listing the initiatives we had in place in technology and the Welsh language. Our [Welsh Language Technology Action Plan](#) sets out our work in this area. I recognise the importance of technology to the future of our language, so that we can use it in as many situations as possible.

Among our recent work in the field (as I explained in Committee), is language interpretation in Microsoft Teams. The Welsh Government partnered with Microsoft to develop this new functionality which is now available for use in scheduled Teams meetings. It is included, at no additional cost, for everyone with a Microsoft 365 license (and available worldwide for all language communities). We already use it in the Welsh Government, and I sincerely hope that it will contribute to increasing the use of Welsh in line with our strategy for our language in the Government itself: *Cymraeg – it belongs to us all*. I look forward to more collaboration on this and similar technology related themes.

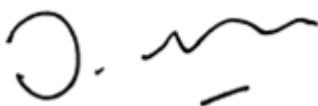
Our *Welsh Language Technology Action Plan* espouses an open software philosophy. Everything we fund is available for use and reuse under an open licence. This includes technical aspects such as Welsh language lemmatisers, named entities and synthetic voices in Cymraeg (amongst other things). A list of Welsh language software can be found on our *Helo Blod* website, which we will update regularly.

In Committee, reference was made to voice-activated smart assistants. The work we fund in this field contributes to a basis for such assistants to be developed in Welsh. The trick, however (given that so many of us who can speak Welsh live and work bilingually, not monolingually in Welsh), is to work towards a situation where such assistants can be used in Welsh and English *at the same time*. Ensuring that remains a challenge for some smart assistants operating in the world's larger languages, so it's important to manage expectations about this.

We have also worked closely with the Centre for Digital Public Services to ensure that the Welsh language is considered from the outset of its work and that a Welsh language user experience is at the heart of designing each service. One aspect of this collaboration is a bilingual services 'community of practice' that we have established in conjunction with CDPS. This is a vibrant community where all aspects of technology and the Welsh language are discussed and is also a forum to share experiences and build capacity to develop bilingual technology. We [have also published guidance](#) based on our experience in technology and the Welsh language which makes it easy to develop Welsh language services from the outset. This is intended to be used in tender specifications, and to build capacity for the development of good bilingual user experience, and is part of my wider work to ensure that 'doing' Welsh is as easy as possible for us all.

Finally, I mentioned that we have worked alongside S4C to develop a Memorandum of Understanding on Cymraeg 2050. We plan to launch the MoU over the next few weeks. I will forward it to you immediately after the launch.

Yours sincerely,



Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and the Welsh Language