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Cenedlaethol

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Dear Committee,

Ref: Call for information – the Welsh Government's Draft Budget proposals 2024-25

Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2024-25.

Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol works with further education colleges, universities, apprenticeship providers and employers to create opportunities to train and study through the medium of Welsh. We inspire and encourage everyone to use their Welsh skills. The Coleg's aim is to build a Welsh and bilingual education and training system that is accessible to all and to develop bilingual workforces.

Our response to the consultation will focus on those elements in the Budget that are relevant to the Coleg's terms of reference.

Higher education

The Coleg was established in 2011, and extensive Welsh-language and bilingual provision has now been developed in all major subjects delivered at Welsh universities. There are now over 7,200 students studying part of their degree courses through the medium of Welsh, which equates to 28% of all Welsh speakers at Welsh universities.

The Coleg's latest Academic Plan outlines our intentions for the next phase, with one of the main aims being to attract new audiences to Welsh and bilingual higher education, including those who are less confident using Welsh. There are 20,000 Welsh speakers studying at Welsh universities and the Coleg is currently developing plans to attract more of them to study part of their courses in Welsh. It is absolutely vital that the Coleg receives the anticipated funding to support this important work and to safeguard its existing provision.

Further education and apprenticeships

In 2018, the Coleg was given responsibility for further education and apprenticeships, and we are currently implementing ambitious plans to develop the

provision for every learner in these sectors, regardless of their Welsh-language skills. There has been clear progress made in the area of learning activities with an element of Welsh in the post-16 sector since the Coleg was given the responsibility for investing in new staff, provision and resources, as shown in the table below:

Learning activities with at least one Welsh element:

Year	Further education	Workplace learning
2017/18	7.3%	10.3%
2018/19	8.7%	11.9%
2019/20	8.8%	13.0%
2020/21	14.7%	20.8%
2021/22	18.2%	25.3%

Data source: [Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers – Annual report 2022/23 \(gov.wales p.24\)](#)

It is clear from the data that momentum has now begun to develop towards increasing Welsh and bilingual provision, and that further education colleges and apprenticeship providers have so far responded well to the challenge of embedding Welsh across the sector. In order to ensure continued momentum and sustainable growth, it is vital that we see Welsh Government funding continue and increase over the coming years.

Funding Welsh and bilingual tertiary education

Funding Welsh-medium and bilingual further education and apprenticeships

Some 2% of the Welsh Government's further education budget is spent on further education provision and Welsh-medium and bilingual apprenticeships, while Welsh speakers represent 24% of learners. The Action Plan for Welsh-medium and bilingual Further Education and Apprenticeships by the Coleg and the Welsh Government targets *everyone* in the sector, regardless of their Welsh skills.

Funding Welsh-medium higher education

Some 3% of the Welsh Government's higher education budget is spent on Welsh-medium and bilingual higher education provision (this does not include the Student Maintenance budget), while Welsh speakers represent 14% of students at Welsh universities.

Discussions have been held and are continuing with the Welsh Government and opposition parties about the need to invest in developing the Welsh language in the further education, apprenticeships and higher education sector to achieve the objectives of the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy. It is absolutely vital to ensure opportunities for people to continue to build and develop their Welsh language skills after leaving school, and to prepare them to work in bilingual workplaces, if the goals of having a million Welsh speakers and doubling the daily use of Welsh in our communities are to be reached.

The Government made targeted increases to the Coleg's budget during 2022-23 and 2023-24, as part of the Co-operation Agreement, specifically to increase staffing and provision in the post-16 sector, and to implement two initial teacher education projects – an extremely important agenda given the lack of people training each year to teach in the Welsh and English sector.

In December 2022, forecasts were received for further budget increases in 2024-25 [and this was confirmed in a letter from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language to the Children's Committee](#). The commitment is also consistent with the Government's commitments in its current Programme for Government, and with the Co-operation Agreement between the Government and Plaid Cymru:

1. [Programme for Government 2021-2026:](#)

“Expand the role of and increase funding to the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the National Centre for Learning Welsh.”

2. [Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru Co-operation Agreement:](#)

“Expand the role of and increase funding to the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the National Centre for Learning Welsh.”

3. [Cymraeg 2050 Work Programme, 2021-2026:](#)

“The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the National Centre for Learning Welsh both have important roles to play in Welsh language acquisition and learning...

15. In collaboration with the regional consortia and local authorities, expand the role of the National Centre for Learning Welsh to support the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools and provide a language learning pathway from school to post-compulsory education.

16. Expand the role of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, and develop proposals for the Welsh-medium Education Bill to place the Coleg on a statutory footing.

17. Provide additional funding over 5 years to the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to expand Welsh-medium provision in further education, apprenticeships and higher education.

18. In conjunction with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, develop targets to increase linguistic progression between statutory and further education and apprenticeships.

19. Increase learning, assessment and progression through the medium of Welsh by establishing the new Tertiary Education and Research Commission, through the proposed Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill, with strategic duties associated with promoting Welsh-medium tertiary education.”

Establishing the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

With the establishment of the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, and the statutory duties it will have for promoting Welsh-language research and provision, it is vital to ensure not only that momentum keeps building, but that the expectations for the tertiary sector, in terms of Welsh-language and bilingual provision, also grow.

The Coleg was designated by the Welsh Ministers to provide advice to the Commission from 1 April 2024, and this is a key step forward. Initial discussions between Commission and Coleg officials have been positive, and we look forward to formalising the relationship between the two bodies. The duties held by the Commission will lead to increasing expectations on the sector as a whole to make meaningful progress in the development of the Welsh language and while that is welcome, it is critical that the developments are adequately funded.

The proposed Welsh Language Education Bill

Another key policy development affecting the tertiary sectors was the publication of the White Paper on the Welsh Language Education Bill. The Coleg has supported the main objectives of the White Paper and we look forward to playing a full role in discussions to establish a robust legislative structure and framework to support the progress that the Government wishes to see. In the current economic climate, it is more important than ever that all options for support structures are fully considered, including the option to split or merge resources and services where they already exist. As set out in our response to the White Paper, the Coleg is very open to discussing all of these options with the Government and others.

We look forward to continuing our discussions with the Government and members of the relevant Senedd committees to ensure that this important agenda is given the priority it deserves in the Government's Draft Budget for 2024-25 and beyond.

For further information, please contact Gwenllian Griffiths, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Chief Engagement Officer at g.griffiths@colegcymraeg.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Ioan Matthews
Chief Executive

cc. The Senedd Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee (SeneddCulture@Senedd.Wales) and Children, Young People and Education Committee (SeneddChildren@Senedd.Wales)