

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Cyllid](#) ar [Cyllideb Ddrafft Llywodraeth Cymru 2024-25](#).

This response was submitted to the [Finance Committee](#) consultation on the [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25](#).

WGDB_24-25 52: Comisiynydd y Gymraeg | Response from: Welsh Language Commissioner





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

30/11/2023

Dear Chair,

Welsh Government draft budget for 2024-25

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with comments to assist you in scrutinising the Welsh Government's draft budget for 2024-25. My comments below specifically relate to the need to ensure that your scrutiny work considers the impact of budget allocation decisions on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language. The areas that the [Finance Committee has identified](#) as ones on which it wishes the scrutiny to focus do not specifically include the Welsh language. However, I believe that many of the areas would have an influence on opportunities to use the Welsh language and there is a need to ensure that Welsh is considered when discussing them in the context of the budget. These include the following:

- o **The sustainability of public services, innovation and service transformation and the need to provide sufficient resources for local government to deal with increasing pressures**

More than 120 public organisations are required to operate in accordance with the Welsh language standards and therefore there is a need to ensure that they are adequately funded to enable them to operate in accordance with those statutory requirements. These include all local authorities and national parks in Wales. In particular, they are required to produce 5-year strategies for increasing the use of the Welsh language in their areas. There is a need to ensure that they have an adequate budget to enable them to implement the objectives of their strategies in order to benefit the viability of the Welsh language in their communities.

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- **the need for services to co-operate to address the challenges facing the NHS and social care sector**

In addition to the local authorities referred to above, every health board is required to comply with the Welsh language standards including a specific standard (standard 110) which requires them to produce a plan for the provision of clinical care to patients. The Welsh Government has also produced an action plan for increasing the use of Welsh in the health and care sector, namely *More than just words*. Whilst we fully understand that there is great pressure on health and care services, it is essential that adequate resources are available to enable bodies to implement the Welsh language standards and the actions of *More than just words* that will lead to better care and outcomes for people who need to receive care in Welsh.

- **how evidence informs the Welsh Government's work in setting priorities and allocating the budget; what impact are inflationary pressures having on revenue and capital budgets and how has this changed the affordability of previous plans**

In [scrutinising the 2023-24 budget, your Committee noted](#) 'concern – given the current inflationary pressures – that organisations will have to achieve less than they currently do' and 'if the Welsh Government is serious about meeting the Cymraeg 2050 target, it will need to ensure that those organisations that support Welsh-medium opportunities in the community are adequately resourced and supported. This is particularly important in deprived areas and places where the Welsh language is not so widely spoken, particularly given the pressures of costs caused by inflation and increases in living costs.' I consider that these comments remain relevant when scrutinising the 2024-25 budget. In addition to the pressures of inflation, it must be borne in mind that this is the Welsh Government's first budget since the results of the 2021 Census were published. The census evidence regarding the position of the Welsh language should be used in determining the Government's priorities. Although I am of the opinion that the results of the 2021 Census represent a more complex picture than the bare figures, the fact remains that they show the lowest number and percentage (538,300, 17.8%) of Welsh speakers ever recorded and that the most substantial drop was seen in the number of Welsh speakers in the counties in the west of Wales, namely the traditional strongholds of the Welsh language. It is therefore clear that this is not the time to try to find savings within the Welsh language budget. The 2024-25 budget will need to address the challenges facing the Welsh language highlighted by the census and ensure that sufficient investment is available to



enable the objectives of the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy to be realised. I am concerned about the impact of inflationary pressures on the ability of many of the partners who contribute locally and nationally to implementing the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, and what the impact will be on the Welsh Government's ability to deliver the plans that are part of the strategy. There is also a need to ensure that the Welsh language is fully mainstreamed and adequately supported in other Government funding streams that do not directly involve the Welsh language.

- o **the need to give more support to those studying and working in the education sector**

The Welsh Government published a white paper on Welsh-medium education during 2023, which is intended to bring legislation to Senedd Cymru in 2024. The white paper proposes an ambitious vision to set out in legislation the expectation that all children in Wales will leave school speaking Welsh confidently, placing the Welsh language, and learning the Welsh language, as a core part of educating the children and young people of Wales. The Welsh Government is already supporting activities that will contribute to the implementation of the white paper's vision. It must be ensured that the 2024-25 budget is sufficient to enable these initiatives to be sustained and increased in order to lead to the delivery of the white paper's vision. This is particularly true in the context of the education workforce where I believe that substantial investment is needed to develop the education workforce in the short term in order to realise the intentions of the white paper in the long run.

Other issues that the Finance Committee is keen to consider include resources to support economic recovery and Welsh Government policies to reduce poverty and the impact of the cost of living crisis including the identification of community led solutions to tackle the root causes of poverty and inequality. It is clear to me that economic recovery and reducing poverty and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis would have a positive impact on communities where the Welsh language remains a living community language but facing a linguistic shift to English. This is supported by the work of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities which noted in its [position paper](#) published in June that there is a need to consider variation in socio-economic and socio-linguistic fields in order to stabilise the Welsh language as a community language in these areas. It should therefore be ensured that the Welsh language and its use as a community language are taken into account when considering the impact of decisions on economic recovery and reducing poverty and inequality.



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
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I trust hope these observations will be useful to you as you carry out your scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget.

Yours sincerely,

Efa Gruffudd Jones
Welsh Language Commissioner