

Cyfarfod Grŵp Trawsbleidiol ar Ddigidol yng Nghymru – 22/06/2022

Minutes of the Cross-Party Group for Digital in Wales' meeting, hosted on 22/06/2022 12:30pm on Zoom.

In attendance: RhAI Rhun ap Iorwerth (Chair – Member of the Senedd for Ynys Mon)
PaRh Pryderi ap Rhisiart (Secretariat – M-SParc)
HR Heledd Roberts (Rhun ap Iorwerth MS' Office)
JT Jamie Thomas (M-SParc)
ER Emily Roberts (M-SParc)
MC Manon Cadwaladr (Cymen)
RhP Rhoslyn Prys (Meddal.com)
DJ Dewi Jones (Bangor University)
SG Stefano Ghazzali (Bangor University)
JS Jack Sargeant (Member of the Senedd for Alun & Deeside)
NA Natasha Ashgar (Member of the Senedd for South-east Wales)
OD Owen Derbyshire (S4C)
AR Aled Roberts (Cymen)
DR David Rees (Member of the Senedd for Aberavon)
DC Daniel Cunliffe (University of South Wales)
TB Tom Burke (Haia)
GD Gareth Davies (Swansea University)
PW Peter Williams (Welsh Government)
JE Jeremy Evas (Welsh Government)
RD Ryland Doyle (Mike Hedges MS' office)
IB Ioan Bellin (Rhys ab Owen's office)
HY Huw Ynwr (Gwynedd County Council)
ER Ellie Richard
GP Gruffudd Prys
GT Gary Thompson

Apologies: CT Carolyn Thomas (Member of the Senedd for north Wales)
LIG Llyr Gruffydd (Member of the Senedd for north Wales)

Agenda item	Action
<p>1. Welcome and open session.</p> <p>RhAI welcomed everyone to the meeting, including new members. It was noted that the group is a discussion forum for the digital sector, helping to move Wales forward and gain community and economic benefits in the digital sector, with this session's conversations focussing on digital from a Welsh language perspective, and how Wales can be a leader in the field of Language Technology.</p>	
<p>2. AGM and electing of new Chair and Secretariat</p> <p>JS and NA put forward nominations to re-elect RhAI as Chair of the group and M-SParc as Secretariat, with the nominations accepted by the group without objection. Both will continue in their roles for the following year.</p>	
<p>3. Dr Jeremy Evas, Welsh Government Technology Action Plan</p> <p>JE began his presentation outlining Welsh Government's goal of doubling use of Welsh through the use of technology and the work he and his team are doing in this sector. It was noted that Welsh Government want to enable language technology to be developed in all digital contexts for the benefit of Welsh: speech, translation, conversational AI, whilst detailing the challenge of developing technology that works just as well in English as it does in Welsh and vice versa. JE</p>	

<p>discussed how language technology components which have been funded by Welsh Government are all freely available to download and use, and that this is a condition of funding.</p> <p>A focus area for Welsh Government is to drive the market for multilingual software with the hope that the experience of doing this for Welsh can help others too, before closing his presentation by discussing an upcoming Hackathon that Welsh Government and M-SParc have partnered on to support innovation in the sector.</p>	
<p>4. Dewi Jones, presenting regarding the Welsh Language Unit (Canolfan Bedwyr) at Bangor University</p> <p>DJ discussed the background of the Welsh Language Unit at Bangor University and how open-source code fits into their working practices. He detailed the team structure within the unit, with 13 team members working in two groups and looking at terminology, dictionary terms and editing, with the other group working on developing language technology and evaluating, researching and developing software with a range of methodologies.</p> <p>DJ added that the unit is entirely self-sufficient, with no funding from the university, and income being provided via a mix of short-term paid projects with a variety of stakeholders whilst also having a number of commercial products that they've developed themselves or in partnership with private companies, with outputs including the likes of Cysill and the Geiriaduron app. DJ said the unit's core vision is to normalise and revitalise Welsh language, wanting to work with more partners to create Welsh resources for Welsh use, with their work being recognised on an international level.</p>	
<p>5. Tom Burke, with an introduction to Haia.live</p> <p>Developed during pandemic as a hybrid conferencing platform that covers all the bases, TB says Haia is a service with Welsh language at the heart of it. TB adds that the language landscape of the United Kingdom is an 'asset' and one that Haia have enjoyed having as a focal part of their offering. TB detailed that Haia are working with Canolfan Bedwyr on the Welsh language and translation elements of the platform, feeding DJ and the team there a lot of data which has helped improve Haia, but also potentially can help Canolfan Bedwyr in the long term too. TB concludes by saying he would like to see Wales becoming a hub for innovative language technology.</p>	
<p>6. Rhoslyn Prys; Meddal.com – The role of open source and the Welsh language</p> <p>RhP discussed how remarkable it is to see the progress that has been made over the last 25 years in this sector, congratulating others on the call for their work over that period. He added how many opportunities open source coding enables, and how software developers in this space have welcomed having the Welsh language as something they can work with due to the work that has been done in this regard, adding that it has certainly raised the profile of Welsh in the software world, making it more likely that commercial companies consider Welsh language versions of their software.</p>	
<p>7. Discussion, AOB and close</p> <p>GT asked if Haia had plans to make it completely multi-language as a platform or was the focus just to look at Welsh-English and vice versa. TB outlined being multi-language is certainly the long-term vision. DR asked what percentage of software out there regarding the Welsh language is open source and DJ responded that it is difficult to pinpoint, however Welsh is in a fairly</p>	

strong position with a lot of work still to do to realise the full potential for the language. OD concluded by adding that the idea of having Wales as a home for leading language technology is amazing but that we need to find finance and vision to do that, with working in partnership crucial and an existential threat to the language looming if these conditions can't be put in place.

RhAI confirmed he and his team would look to release a press release, including contributions from the Group, to that effect.

Date for next meeting TBC