

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

**Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a'r Gymraeg
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Welsh Language**



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1369
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEEW/05188/24

**Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government**

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

21 May 2024

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your further letter of 11 April, concerning the petition which calls for only Welsh names to be used for places in Wales.

Your letter request details regarding the work of the linguistic infrastructure unit in relation to safeguarding Welsh place names, and about the research commissioned to understand more about how Welsh place names are changing in Wales.

We set out our initial steps in relation to Welsh place names in our [Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan](#), and last year I launched our [Welsh Linguistic Infrastructure Policy](#), which outlined the role of a new linguistic infrastructure unit in the Welsh Government which, as well as coordinating work on dictionaries, terminologies, corpora etc, is responsible for developing steps to safeguard Welsh place names.

Both documents above set out initial steps in relation to Welsh place names, in line with our commitments in the Programme for Government and the Cooperation Agreement with Plaid Cymru. The priority was to obtain data to drive policy developments. That's why, in both the *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* and *Welsh Linguistic Infrastructure Policy*, we refer to the importance of commissioning research to learn more about how and why place names are changing.

Place names research

In early 2023 a research project was commissioned by Cadw, in conjunction with officials from the Cymraeg 2050 Division, with the aim of identifying where, how and why changes to names are taking place, how many names are changing or have recently changed, and the nature of these changes. The purpose is to make informed recommendations on possible options to safeguard those Welsh language place names that may be under particular threat.

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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.

The following types of place names are being considered:

- Property names — including houses, farms and other buildings
- Business names
- Development and associated street names

Topographical names — for natural features in the landscape – were also a part of the initial research project. However, since a suitable methodology could not be identified within the time and resource available, only limited attention has been given to topographical names to allow the focus to be given to areas where policy could be more effectively deployed. The research has followed a three phase approach. Phases one and two have been completed, namely:

Phase One – *Understanding the current landscape.*

- a literature review to help understand the associated factors with name changes.
- understanding the threshold for Ordnance Survey and digital maps to change names appearing on official maps, and how the data is gathered to achieve this.
- contacting other key stakeholders working in the field to establish their understanding of the current issues and any operations.

Phase two – *Data gathering:*

- Obtaining quantitative data for name change applications from all local authorities.
- Interviews with all local authorities to understand:
 - Their policies or approach for responding to name change applications and how their policies are operated in practise.
 - Their policies or approach for naming new developments/streets.
 - Whether the current policies are effective in safeguarding Welsh-language place names.
 - Their perception of their role and its effectiveness in safeguarding Welsh place names, including any differences that may exist between the discharging of the role between individuals and developers.
 - Other evidence around place name changes.

Phase three (currently in its final stages) – *Further investigation of unofficial naming practices within 7 selected communities*

- Further investigations including surveys in 7 locations, a pan-Wales digital dwelling name survey and data science analysis to compare official addresses with displayed names and to establish changes over time.

Officials received a copy of the interim report, which described initial findings from phases one and two, in early February 2024. The interim report has not been published as it is anticipated that data collected during the third and final phase will have a bearing on conclusions across the entirety of the report. The research findings will inform our direction of travel in terms of next steps in this area, including those set out in the Welsh Language Housing Plan and Welsh Linguistic Infrastructure Policy. We anticipate that the results will be presented in a final report for publication by the end of June.

Other steps led by the Linguistic Infrastructure Unit

As we await the research results, we're exploring what we can do in the short term to better safeguard Welsh names. This includes:

- Considering the use of covenants to safeguard house names.
- Considering the use of conveyancing packs as a way to raise awareness of the worth of certain names.
- We have developed guidelines concerning how to use Welsh names on social media and websites – through the medium of Welsh or English; we're also considering

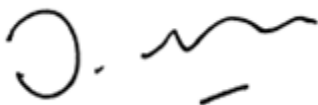
developing guidelines to help people collect Welsh names that do not already appear on a map, and to record them. The aim will be to share these guidelines widely with other organisations and bodies, so that they can adapt them for their own purposes.

- We've established a Local Authority Place Names Forum with Gwynedd, Môn / Anglesey, Ceredigion and Sir Gâr / Carmarthenshire local authorities, with the aim of:
 - sharing information
 - pinpointing gaps in how we all deal with place names, and opportunities to work together
 - supporting each other to find practical solutions to prevent Welsh names from being displaced
 - sharing good practice, so that examples of what works in one organisation can be adopted, where appropriate, in another.

Education and awareness raising is also a part of the picture. Engendering pride, so that people want to keep or bestow Welsh names on their houses, farms or any other property. In this context, another intervention is the Cultural Ambassadors Scheme. The *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* contains a number of interventions to support Welsh language communities which have been affected by second homes, such as communities taking ownership of schemes according to their needs. During the public consultation on these interventions, it became clear that voluntary cultural ambassadors were called for, and that specialist training was needed on how to represent cultural and social history.

On St David's Day I launched the Cultural Ambassadors Scheme, which is a part of the Wales Ambassador platform. Its aim is to encourage individuals, businesses and third sector organisations across Wales to undertake the modules and to become a part of our network, which shares the information they've learned with visitors, neighbours and the wider community. Under this scheme, we're developing a module about place names. At present, we're writing silver and gold level content, meaning that information about how to collect place names will be available shortly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a wavy line and a short horizontal stroke.

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