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Welsh Parliament  
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Dear Chair,

### **Development of post-16 Welsh language provision**

Thank you for your letter of 30 April 2024 regarding the development of post-16 Welsh language provision. I am pleased to provide the following information in response to the questions you have raised in your letter.

#### Potential impact of 2024-25 funding decisions

In the first instance I wanted to provide an update on the recommendation arising from the scrutiny of the Draft 2024-25 Budget, namely that:

*“The Welsh Government, as part of an exercise to collate information on the impact of budget cuts on Cymraeg 2050 targets, should provide an assessment of the potential impact of funding decisions on the number of learners able to access Welsh language post-16 provision, and in particular, apprenticeships.”*

The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has submitted additional information about the impact of the 24-25 Budget on its post-16 work. A copy of this submission is attached at Annex A for information.

I am pleased to report that Coleg has confirmed that the decision to maintain budgets at 2023-24 levels will not result in any job losses amongst its staff. However, it has confirmed that a number of activities it originally planned for 2024-25 will no longer take place. What this means for learners is proving to be a more challenging assessment; not least because of the number of budgets which directly impact on provision in the post-16 sector.

As I am sure you are aware, the allocations for the Coleg and the National Centre are only a small part of the overall picture. The main source of funding being the mainstream allocations for FE colleges, apprenticeship providers and school sixth forms.

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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 current financial settlement is one of the toughest we have faced since the start of devolution. In spite of this we have protected provision for 16-18 year olds in colleges as well as creating a Change Management Fund to ensure that no FE college will see more than a -1% reduction in their mainstream funding in 2024/25, when compared to 2023/24. Similar arrangements have also been put in place for school sixth forms, albeit some local authorities may still see a reduction in their allocations due to a falling demography.

Acknowledging the concerns raised during the Draft Budget scrutiny, the previous Minister for Economy reversed the planned £5.25m cut to the apprenticeship programme in 2024-25 – meaning we will invest over £143m next year in the apprenticeship programme. This budget should enable us to maintain the number of targeted apprenticeships starts for young people during this Senedd Term.

Whilst we are reasonably confident that we can maintain current levels of Welsh-medium delivery, what is more difficult to determine is the potential loss of momentum as a result of maintaining budgets at 2023-24 levels.

As a result of our additional investment in 2022-23 and 2023-24, the Coleg has provided funding for 62 practitioners in the FE sector as well as 21 assessors in priority apprenticeship sectors including Health and Social Care, Childcare, Business, Creative Arts and Hospitality. We have also introduced an innovative funding model which applies an uplift for apprenticeship provision delivered bilingually or through the medium of Welsh. We are hopeful therefore that the additional posts the Coleg is funding and the new funding model will lead to a continued growth in the numbers of apprenticeship learners accessing Welsh-medium or bilingual provision as part of their apprenticeship programme.

We will be regularly monitoring the number of apprenticeships starts and delivery in the FE sector during this financial year to better understand the impact of maintaining budgets for 2024-25; albeit we do not expect to have a full picture until year end. We will also work with the Coleg to identify priorities for Welsh-language skills development and to identify ways to increase capacity for Welsh-medium and bilingual apprenticeships in these areas.

#### Commitment to re-profile budget allocations

Our initial intention was to reprofile beyond the term of the 3 year Co-operation Agreement as a way to manage the challenging financial situation we have found ourselves in. With the Agreement having been brought to an end, I am not able to make any decisions on budgets for 2025-26 at this point in time.

I want to build on the recent successes of the Coleg and the National Centre and, like yourself, I do not want any loss of momentum. That said, final funding decisions for 2025-26 and beyond will depend on our funding settlements from Westminster and these may not be sufficient to meet all pressures and allow us to do all the things that we want to do.

I am also mindful that the budgets for the Coleg and the National Centre are the largest budgets in the Welsh Language BEL. Spending more in some areas means that there is less to spend in other areas and we may need to adopt a pragmatic approach to support our other key partners, including the Eisteddfod, Mentrau Iaith, the Urdd and Mudiad Meithrin to name but a few.

### Mitigating for loss of momentum

We greatly value the work of the Coleg and the National Centre and the contributions they make to our Cymraeg 2050 goals. It was a difficult decision to maintain funding at 2023-24 levels and naturally we are concerned about the potential impact this may have on providers and learners. However, as outlined above, I am not able to give any funding commitments at this point in time.

I am pleased that the Coleg and the National Centre have developed a Memorandum of Understanding as this will help to avoid duplication and to facilitate effective collaboration between the two organisations.

I am also pleased that the National Centre has already taken steps to review its mainstream delivery in order to maintain current delivery levels and to ensure that its grant funding to providers is put to best use. We have also provided an additional £500k for 2024-25 to support the development of the education workforce. This additional funding will fund a range of additional provision, including face-to-face courses, residential courses and provision for those about to start their initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. The funding will also support the ongoing development of the Centre's digital platform which will expand the on-line offer available to the education sector.

The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research will be responsible for funding and overseeing post-16 education and research from August 2024. The Commission will need to work effectively with the Coleg Cymraeg, the National Centre for Learning Welsh, post-16 providers, and others to ensure adequate provision is available and increase the number of post-16 learners studying through the medium of Welsh.

In establishing the Commission, we bring together responsibility for the strategy, planning and oversight of tertiary education within a single body. This will strengthen the framework for planning and funding post-16 provision, ensuring a more coherent approach for developing and maintaining Welsh-medium provision. The aim is that the Commission will do more than just meet the current demand for Welsh-medium provision; it will also build the demand for Welsh tertiary education and encourage individuals to participate in Welsh-medium education.

In June 2023, the Coleg was appointed to be the designated body to provide advice to the Commission on its duties relating to the Welsh language. During 2024-25, the Coleg and the Commission will work together to establish a strong partnership and framework for offering and receiving advice; the Commission will then be expected to take account of the College's advice as it prepares its first Strategic Plan.

I am confident that the Commission will benefit from the Coleg's extensive expertise and experience in supporting and developing Welsh-medium tertiary education.

### Supporting post-16 workforce development

Welsh Government is supporting the post-16 sector to develop a bilingual workforce through its funding allocations to the Coleg and the National Centre. Additional incentives are also provided for those undertaking the PGCE FE course.

The Welsh in Education Workforce Plan focuses solely on the school workforce and teachers who teach (or plan to teach) in school sixth forms are supported under the various strands of the Plan including the Iaith Athrawon Yfory Incentive Scheme.

The Coleg leads on the development of FE and Apprenticeships workforce and has a number of training schemes in place to develop the language and pedagogy skills of staff, ranging from those fluent and confident in their Welsh skills to staff embarking on their journey of learning Welsh.

The Coleg's schemes include the Sgiliaith National Development Programme, the Academic Staff Development Programme, the Gwreiddio Scheme, and they also fund PhD research scholarships that increase the capacity of Higher Education establishments to offer Welsh-medium courses. The Coleg also arranges annual conferences and staff awards all of which aim to embed bilingualism by fostering a community of bilingual staff across the sector.

The Coleg provides support for ITE partnerships as well as running two specific projects to develop the confidence of students to be able to teach through Welsh, and to attract students back to Wales to teach through the medium of Welsh.

The Coleg also received additional funding in 2023-24 to run a mentoring scheme to strengthen and encourage the Welsh language skills of students on FE PGCE courses at Welsh universities.

Our funding to the National Centre supports a range of interventions for the post-16 workforce, including the Cymraeg Gwaith scheme which is delivered in conjunction with the Coleg. The scheme supports around 700 practitioners annually in the FE sector to improve their language skills.

We also provide an incentive grant for FE PGCE students to improve their Welsh language teaching and learning skills. Under the scheme, students studying any subject (with the exception of Welsh) can apply for an additional grant of £1,000 and providers of ITE providers have committed to provide opportunities (up to 40 credits) on the course to develop Welsh language skills.

### Review of Vocational Qualifications in Wales Report - Recommendation 18

Recommendation 18 is a specific recommendation for the new Commission to work with Coleg Cymraeg to develop a way in which staff able to speak Welsh can, if willing, support a variety of learning providers.

With the Commission not set to become fully operational until August 2024 it is too soon for us to answer this question. We will be meeting regularly with the Commission during the 2024/25 academic year and will provide an update on this as soon as possible.

### Progress on Recommendations in the Review of Vocational Qualifications in Wales Report

Qualifications Wales and Welsh Government officials have been engaging regularly to discuss the response to the recommendations in the Report. We have provided Qualifications Wales with additional funding of £50k for 2024-25 in order to respond more quickly to some of the recommendations.

Qualifications Wales has already started to implement some of the recommendations, and is currently in the process of agreeing, through its Board, the approach it can take to implement all the recommendations from the review that are relevant to its work. It intends to publish its approach in Autumn 2024.

In relation to Welsh-medium qualifications, Qualifications Wales' [Choice for All](#) strategy clearly sets out its commitment to the Welsh language and to increasing the number of Welsh-medium qualifications that are made available to learners in Wales. Awarding bodies must already make all their [Approved](#) qualifications available for assessment in Welsh.

From September 2027, qualifications offered to 14–16-year-olds will be required to be available for assessment in Welsh.

For post-16 Designated qualifications, Qualifications Wales requires that awarding bodies take all reasonable steps to increase the availability of assessment through the medium of Welsh. It works closely with awarding bodies and stakeholders to target post-16 Designated qualifications to be made available in Welsh and provides grant funding to awarding bodies to increase the number of Welsh-medium vocational qualifications that they offer. During the 2023-24 financial year Qualifications Wales provided grant funding of almost £226k to eight awarding bodies to support qualifications and assessments relevant to around 90 qualifications.

Alongside its Welsh Language Support Grant, Qualifications Wales has taken several other steps over the past five years to support the qualifications system and increase the availability of Welsh-medium qualifications. It continues to undertake its series of [phase 2 sector reviews](#) that focus on ensuring that a suitable range of Welsh-medium qualifications are available. It meets regularly with the awarding bodies who award high numbers of vocational qualifications to prioritise areas in need for additional Welsh-medium qualifications. It has also established an awarding body Welsh language group to share best practice in the delivery of Welsh-medium qualifications and a strategic partnership with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

Qualifications Wales is currently developing a new strategy that will replace its Choice for All strategy. The new Cymraeg strategy, which it intends to publish in 2025, will bring together all our work in relation to Cymraeg and Welsh-medium qualifications. Later this year we will be engaging with stakeholders to seek their views on our proposed strategy.

### Funding Commitments

Our funding commitments for the 2024-25 financial year are set out below.

#### *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol*

Core Grant	£7,063,000
Additional Co-operation Agreement Funding	£2,825,000
Y Gymraeg fel Pwnc (Supporting schools to offer Welsh as an A-level subject)	£125,000
Y Fframwaith Cymwyseddau Iaith (to support the delivery of the Language Competency Framework across ITE providers)	£25,000
Additional funding for educational resources	£150,000
Total	£10,118,000

#### *National Centre for Learning Welsh*

Elements of the National Centre's budgets support the development of post-16 skills, albeit we are not able to disaggregate the exact amounts spent on post-16 skills. The Centre's budget for the 2024-25 financial year is as follows.

Cymraeg Gwaith (Work Welsh)	£2,500,000.00
Ymlaen Gyda'r Dysgu (Additional funding supporting provision for 16-25 year olds and the education workforce)	£1,675,000.00
Operational Grant (running costs of the Centre)	£1,900,000.00
Recurrent Grant (grants for Learn Welsh providers)	£8,810,000.00

Camau Scheme (a scheme for Childcare practitioners)	£45,000.00
Education Workforce funding	£570,000.00
Total	£15,500,000.00

*Additional WM/B uplift grants funded through the mainstream allocations for FE colleges and school sixth forms<sup>1</sup>.*

FE Colleges	£3,900,000
School Sixth Forms	£2,996,000
Total	£6,896,000

*Additional WM/B uplift funding for Apprenticeship Providers<sup>2</sup>*

2022/23 Academic Year	£920,085
2023/24 Academic Year (to date August 2023 – April 2024)	£762,281

### Datasets and data sources

There are six main datasets used by Welsh Governments and its delivery partners. These are:

- Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) - data collected by the Welsh Government via the Lifelong LLWR underpins many aspects of our work, including the planning, funding, monitoring and quality assurance of post-16 provision in FE colleges and for Apprenticeship providers. The data also provides the official source of statistics on post-16 learners in Wales.
- Post-16 Data Collection – data collected by Welsh Government is used to derive local authority school sixth form funding allocations and to monitor delivery including calculating post-16 achievement measures which look at the retention and achievement of pupils undertaking A level, vocational and Welsh Baccalaureate programmes.
- Higher education data – which is collected and published via the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).
- Learn Welsh data – data on Learn Welsh provision collected and published by the National Centre for Learning Welsh.
- Education Workforce Statistics – information about the education workforce in Wales, including staff in FE and work-based learning settings, collected and published by the Education Workforce Council.
- Qualifications in Wales (QiW) database – which contains details of all qualifications that are approved or designated for teaching in Wales for learners aged under 19, including their Welsh language availability.

<sup>1</sup> Via the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

<sup>2</sup> Potentially fundable values which may be drawn down against providers' contract values.

Individual awarding bodies also collect information on the learners who register for their qualifications.

It is true that there are challenges with the data submitted by colleges and apprenticeship providers via the LLWR, both in terms of how providers submit data and with the accuracy of the data which is submitted. This in turn, impacts on our ability to set targets and to measure performance against these targets. This is a concern which is also shared by the Coleg, which uses LLWR data to set targets and monitor delivery for its provider grants.

One of the major challenges we face is the sheer size of the datasets and the breadth of different learning activities submitted annually to the LLWR. The size and complexity of the data sets means that achieving a consistent approach across colleges and Apprenticeship providers is challenging and considerable analytical resource is required for data analysis. Introducing new data fields is also costly and requires considerable lead in times for software companies and providers; as well as impacting on the workload of staff in the post-16 sector.

Another challenge is in identifying the language skills of FE and apprenticeship learners as, out of necessity, this information is provided by learners themselves. It simply is not feasible to ask providers to assess the linguistic ability of some 45,000 full-time FE learners or the 46,000 learners on Apprenticeship programmes, which means that we rely on information from learners who often underestimate their Welsh language skills.

Officials have been working with FE and apprenticeship providers to improve the accuracy of data submitted to the LLWR and this work will continue after August when responsibility for data collection via the LLWR moves to the Commission. We are also working to improve our capacity to analyse link data, which will give us a better understanding of learners' choices at aged 16 and future demand for post-16 Welsh language provision.

Officials have also developed proposals for a new learner level measure for FE and apprenticeship learning. Currently statistics for learning delivered through the medium of Welsh or bilingually at FE institutions and on Apprenticeship programmes are calculated on a learning activity basis. This new measure will give us a learner level output which takes into account differences in size between activities and will allow us to compare data on apprenticeship and FE delivery on a like for like basis.

Initial proposals for a learner level measure have been shared with providers and work on refining the new measure will continue in 2024-25. We will work closely with Coleg to better understand and respond to their data requirements.

### Sharing good practice

As part of its remit, the Coleg supports a number of networks aimed at sharing good practice in developing post-16 Welsh-medium provision. The Coleg's Post-16 Strategic Board brings together representatives from FE institutions, apprenticeship providers and employers to share good practice and advise on priorities for delivery. The Coleg also runs the Gwreiddio scheme for staff in the FE and Apprenticeships sector who either work bilingually or want to work bilingually. It provides staff with the latest information about new resources and training and networking opportunities.

The Coleg's Resource Portal is an online library full of Welsh and bilingual digital teaching resources for staff and students at FE colleges and universities. It also includes a number of resources to support apprentices. The Welsh Government's Hwb platform also allows post-16 providers to share resources to support Welsh medium and bilingual delivery.

The Coleg also has a course finder on its website which allows prospective students and students to easily identify Welsh-medium learning opportunities in HE institutions across all subjects. The course finder also allows students to identify which courses have scholarship opportunities linked to them.

Qualifications Wales have also established a Stakeholder Group to consider the Welsh language and to expand the offering in the post-16 sector. The Group includes membership in the colleges, apprenticeships and school sectors.

### Existing and future demand for Learn Welsh provision

The National Centre continues to monitor the uptake of its Ymlaen gyda'r Dysgu provision for young people aged 16-25 and has prepared marketing and communication campaigns which specifically target young people from that age group. The Centre also works in partnership with FE colleges and HE institutions, apprenticeship providers, and other organisations such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award to ensure that young people are aware of the Learn Welsh offer.

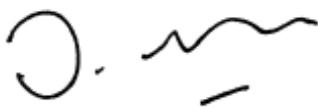
The Centre has also formed a partnership with the Duke of Edinburgh Award to ensure that young people can use learning Welsh as a recognised skills achievement.

To encourage a sustainable workforce of tutors, the Centre also runs an annual "Tiwtoriaid Yfory" course to attract more young undergraduates to become Learn Welsh tutors.

I have asked the Centre to prepare an evaluation of the Ymlaen gyda'r Dysgu programme, which should include recommendations for mainstreaming the provision in future years. This is due to be presented at the end of the 2024-25. This evaluation and the uptake and progress of the programme is discussed regularly as part of the grant management process.

During the 2022/23, 2,170 learners aged 16-25 accessed Learn Welsh provision with the National Centre. 1,790 learners aged 16-25 have enrolled with the National Centre during 2023/24 - these enrolments cover the period August 2023 to March 2024.

Yours Sincerely



**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**

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