

Translation of Submission by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol – received March 2024

Information for Welsh Government officials: in response to a request from the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee for further information on the impact of the 2024-25 budget on the Welsh language in the post-16 sector

1. Background

In February 2024, following a scrutiny session with the Minister for Welsh Language and Education, the Culture Committee published a report: Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2024-25.

Recommendation 4 of the report by the Committee to the Government states:

- Recommendation 4. 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.

Welsh Government officials have asked the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to provide information to assist them in responding to the Committee's recommendation.

Since receiving this request from officials, the Coleg has received an invitation from the Clerk of the Culture Committee to present oral evidence on the same subject on 17 April 2024 and the Coleg has accepted the invitation.

2. Impact of the Government's 2024-25 budget on the Coleg's work in the post-16 sector

[In a letter from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles MS, to the Chair of the Senedd's Children's Committee, Jayne Bryant MS](#), in December 2022 (pp 38-39) the Government confirmed that, in accordance with what had been agreed with Plaid Cymru, through the Co-operation Agreement, the Coleg would receive an increase to its budget over a three-year period (2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25). The increase was welcomed by the Coleg, and also the assurance of a three-year budget, as this enabled the Coleg to sustainably plan for the growth of Welsh in the post-16 sector.

The additional funding to the Coleg over three years was mainly for the extension and maintenance of new Welsh and bilingual provision in the further education and apprenticeship sectors. These are sectors that desperately need to be developed as set out in a recent report by the Welsh Language Commissioner, [Post Compulsory Education and the Welsh Language - the Learners' Voice](#), and are absolutely key to the Government's *Cymraeg 2050* Strategy.

The Coleg received the expected increase for 2022-23 and 2023-24. This allowed the Coleg to invest in the following projects:

Apprenticeships

- Funding was provided for apprenticeship providers to appoint 21 assessors in the Business, Health and Social Care, Childcare, Creative Industries and Hospitality sectors.
- Support for apprenticeships infrastructure was provided to ACT and also Neath Port-Talbot College.
- Grants to promote and facilitate provision were provided to the apprenticeship providers and sponsorship was provided for the establishment of a Welsh language award for apprentices.

Further Education

- Funding was provided to support 62 practitioners and tutors within the Health and Social Care, Childcare, Sport, Agriculture, Business and Creative Industries sectors.
- Grants to promote and facilitate provision were provided to colleges and sponsorship was given for the establishment of a Welsh language award for learners.

The Education Workforce

- Funding was provided to Gower College and Cardiff and Vale College to develop a project for teaching assistants. An end of project report will be available shortly.

The Draft Budget for the 2024-25 financial year published on 19 December stated that the Coleg would not receive the anticipated increase of £840,000 for the third year of the Co-operation Agreement. This was confirmed by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language at a scrutiny session with the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee in January 2024 where he noted that the Coleg would receive a flat budget in 2024-25.

A flat budget for the Coleg for 2024-25 enables the Coleg to continue to support the projects outlined above and that is welcome.

But, as a result of not receiving the expected increase of an additional £840,000 in 2024-25, activities which were intended to take place and receive support during 2024-25 will now no longer happen. These include:

- It will not be possible to expand on Welsh-medium and bilingual provision in the priority areas of Health and Social Care and Childcare, where there is a significant shortage of bilingual workers.
- It will not be possible to develop Construction provision in all further education colleges as planned.

- The Coleg will not be able to invest further to appoint apprenticeship assessors and consequently the provision will not extend beyond the small number of areas already supported.
- The Coleg will not be able to host a national conference this year for staff in the further education and apprenticeship sectors.

As set out in the table below, the data published by the Government in its *Cymraeg 2050* annual reports shows a promising increase in learning activities with an element of Welsh since the Coleg accepted responsibility for the post-16 sector in 2018.

Table 1 – Learning activities with at least an element of Welsh

Year	Further Education	Work-based Learning
2017/18	9.6%	13.4%
2018/19	11.9%	15.4%
2019/20	11.8%	14.6%
2020/21	14.7%	20.8%
2021/22	18.2%	25.3%

Source: <https://www.gov.wales/cymraeg-2050-annual-reports>

Whilst not receiving the additional expected budget of £840,000 in 2024-25 is worrying, the fact that the Government and Plaid Cymru published a [paper on the Government's website](#) setting out an intention to reprofile funding to the Coleg during the 2025-26 financial year is some consolation that the extension of provision can be resumed at that time. A delay of more than 12 months would be a significant risk to the success and momentum of the Action Plan and the ability of the Coleg to make further progress in the post-16 sector.

3. A note on post-16 data

The post-16 education data situation is extremely challenging as providers currently submit data in inconsistent ways. While some measure the percentage of their apprentices and learners pursuing some Welsh and bilingual provision, others submit the number of learning activities, others submit framework data and others record a figure for each apprentice/learner. There is also a discrepancy with recording the language skills ability of apprentices and further education learners as this is reported by the learners themselves, resulting in a tendency to underestimate skill levels.

The [Further Education and Apprenticeship Wales Action Plan](#) was published in January 2019. As the Coleg reviews the Plan over the coming months, and as we proceed to present advice to the new Tertiary Education and Research Commission on its duties relating to the Welsh language in light of our designation by the Welsh Ministers to advise the Commission, the Coleg will develop clear recommendations on how to improve the quality of data collected for this area.

For more information please contact the Coleg's Director of Policy,
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