

**P-04-483 A plain English /Cymraeg clir policy for all Welsh Assembly and Government communications – Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 01.09.2013**

**A response to William Powell and all at the petitions committee regarding petition P-04-483 ‘A plain English /Cymraeg clir policy for all Welsh Assembly and Government communications’**

Many thanks for your active interest in this petition and subject. Here is an additional response which I hope you will find constructive:

I believe that having an official policy of fully implementing Cymraeg Clir/Plain English for all Welsh Government and Assembly communications would be hugely beneficial to politics in Wales. Although I have been in touch with both groups, I can't speak for them personally on this matter but agree that this would be a great place to focus attention. Their work has been crucial in helping to make sure language is clear and understandable where possible and necessary. I would hope that this is something they would be able to help to implement and manage, and believe that local authorities and public bodies should also consider implementing this policy.

Although I think it's fair to say that most AM's themselves do use clear, non elusive or overly jargonised language for the most part, (refreshingly less jargonised/elusive than many Westminster members) and no one should be told how they should or shouldn't speak, I believe the use of abbreviations and acronyms that's mostly only known to Senedd and Government members could be cut down or limited when speaking in public. This especially includes media appearances and, for example, the Senedd debates which are filmed and televised to Wales by S4C's 'Y dydd yn y Cynulliad'

Where possible I also believe it would be better for Welsh and English material to be written as separate original versions rather than what often seems to be the case that Welsh material is merely translated from English. I realise that this may not always be possible but I believe it would help strengthen a bilingual policy that isn't solely based on systematic literal translations and would ensure that information can be expressed in an original, idiosyncratic and uniquely expressive manner in both respective languages.

In my view it is often not only about the style/quality of language used but often as much about how language and information is used by public bodies, local authorities and Government to avoid answering questions in a simple direct way. From experience, simple questions or

enquiries are often answered in such a jargonised and bamboozlingly unclear way, and by numerous referrals to other sources, that it puts people off engaging and asking straightforward questions and therefore not being helped with their query and not being able to fully understand the process under which they are being governed.

Members of the committee made very good points at the 16<sup>th</sup> of July meeting about people's lack of general understanding of the political process as well, which also has relevance to the way it's communicated. A clear language policy could work hand in hand with a clear politics policy which would mean that the Welsh public could be more engaged in the political process as well. The complex process of initial consultations, open consultations and the forming of bills is something that most of the public have no knowledge of yet are able to play a vital part if they so wish. Perhaps there is a need for the Welsh Government to also publicise/advertise consultations more in traditional newspapers and online and invite more public interaction in open consultations as well as clearly explain what these are about, how they will affect our lives and what we can do contribute to them.

A well branded one stop information house for Wales, filled with knowledgeable, helpful and enthusiastic staff to help anyone with all matters relating to Wales, including current open consultations and all other governmental and civic matters could be developed, with a single memorable phone number help line (branded and marketed like the 118 118 campaign for example), a single email address and a simple informative website especially concentrating on current open public consultations perhaps. Anyone would be able to call or contact the centre for any information on the Government and Senedd, such as government policies, consultations (as mentioned), who their representative are and what they do, local authorities, the cost of a bus pass or the price of bread. All done under a clear/plain language policy.

I hope this is of some constructive interest and I thank you for taking the time to read and consider these important subjects,

Diolch yn fawr