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Rennes, January 10, 2012

Mr. Prime Minister,

Teaching and studying Welsh has been present at the University of Rennes since the end of the nineteenth century, when Breton and Celtic Studies were established there by Joseph Loth.

In the 80s, with the setting up of a degree in Breton, thanks to the work of Per Denez, a Welsh language course came into being and the post of Welsh Tutor was created in cooperation with the Welsh Department of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth (now Aberystwyth University). Up to now, this partnership has meant that Aberystwyth University and the University of Rennes 2 have been able to jointly develop research, publish research and cooperate regarding teaching and educating. Welsh plays a prominent role in the provision of the Department of Breton & the Celtic Languages at our university, where teaching Irish is given similar attention. Our university is the only one in France which offers Welsh courses (including distance learning). As there is a disaffection amongst students for studying languages and as financial conditions are increasingly difficult, our university is compelling us to end the teaching of Welsh at Rennes 2 from September 2012. Such a closure would be very prejudicial to our department, without any doubt, but also to the place Wales and Brittany within France. The step would also be prejudicial to the exchanges and cooperation with the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. We know that there are many strong links between the Welsh Government and the Regional Council of Brittany. We also know how much the President of our Regional Council, Jean-Yves Le Drian, is implicated in these connections.

We are also writing to you to ask you for some financial aid, so as to assure the continuation of the teaching of Welsh (degree and further degree). I would be very happy to provide you with any complementary information you would require. I could also come to Cardiff to meet you, or one of your representatives, so as to be able to better answer any questions you would like to ask.

Yours sincerely

Prof. Herve Le Bihan  
Director of the Department of Breton and Celtic

Copie to :

M Jean-Emile Gombert, Président Université Rennes 2  
M Jean-Yves Le Drian, Président Conseil Régional de Bretagne

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