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Evidence to the National Assembly for Wales Finance Committee September 2014

Dathlu'r Gymraeg (Celebrating the Welsh Language) believes that the Assembly needs to ensure that a fair proportion of government expenditure is devoted to providing services through the medium of Welsh.

The Standards of Welsh will be implemented during 2015, and all Government departments need to consider earmarking funding to ensure that the standards are implemented correctly and that all services provided by the Welsh Government and its agencies are available through the medium of Welsh.

Dathlu'r Gymraeg believes that we need more resources to ensure prosperity for the Welsh language over the coming years. Current expenditure should also be diversified to ensure that a fair proportion is available to develop and strengthen opportunities to use the Welsh language.

The Government has taken small steps to challenge what came to light in the results of the 2011 Census, but further investments are required to provide status and fair opportunities for the Welsh language. The Government's current budget does not clearly illustrate the funding which is earmarked for the promotion of the Welsh language. We believe that the funding has reduced, particularly in the area of learning Welsh for adults.

The First Minister has assumed responsibility for the Welsh language portfolio, and we believe that the portfolio's budget should be illustrated separately to the Education Department budget.

We also believe that there needs to be a substantial increase in the budget for the Welsh language. All government departments could be asked to contribute to the portfolio, to make it a substantial pot with which the First Minister may work.

The Assembly's committees need to look at the expenditure of non statutory bodies such as the Education Consortia, which receives funding from the Government and local government. Those bodies as well need to act according to the Standards of Welsh.

Background to Dathlu'r Gymraeg and its supporters

23 organisations, which represent the majority of Welsh-speakers – the Urdd, Language Enterprises in Wales, Merched y Wawr, The Association of Welsh Teachers (UCAC), Rhag, Cymdeithas yr Iaith (the Welsh Language Society), the National Eisteddfod, the Association of Welsh Translators and others are part of Dathlu'r Gymraeg. Our aim is to ensure that everyone in Wales is able to use the Welsh language. To safeguard Welsh as a community language. To assign additional resources to safeguard the vitality of the language. To create operational plans for the strategy 'A Living Language: A Language for Living'. Achieving the various milestones in the Welsh Medium Education Strategy. To safeguard a prosperous and independent S4C for the future.

The need for the Government to increase the investment necessary to promote the Welsh language.

To achieve this we need a significant step to give status and funding to provide a worthy opportunity for the Welsh language to co-exist alongside the most powerful language in the world. Dathlu'r Gymraeg believes that we need more resources to ensure prosperity for the Welsh language over the coming years. Current expenditure should also be diversified to ensure that a fair proportion is provided to develop and strengthen opportunities to use the language.

In line with historical expenditure patterns, there is little government investment in the Welsh language. In Education, the demand of parents for Welsh-medium education has caused County Councils and the Government to expand the provision, but the demand has not been met in full. In other areas, the expenditure on the Welsh language directly is less than £12 m per annum from the Government's annual budget of over £13.6 billion (2015/16). We note that much greater investment is devoted to the language of the Basque Country, and we see that the investment is paying dividends, with an increase in the number of speakers of the language from 24% in 1991 to 32% in 2011.

The recent Census results highlighted a number of challenges that the Welsh language is facing, but we believe that there are specific areas in which the money could be invested which would benefit, not only the Welsh language, but would meet a number of Government objectives too. There has been no significant increase in the funding provided for the promotion of the Welsh language for many years. The last significant increase occurred in 2002.

Welsh in our communities

The Major Conference showed the enthusiasm for the Welsh language and the need to take steps.

We need to focus on:

- (i) The transfer of the language through the generations;
- (ii) Children's use of the Welsh language in school and socially;
- (iii) Opportunities for young people to use the Welsh language;
- (iv) Opportunities to use the Welsh language in the workplace and create new jobs and new social opportunities.

The effect of cutbacks on the provision of Welsh

Some of the cutbacks in the Government's 2014 - 2015 Budget was disappointing. We realise that the financial situation is difficult, but something must be done soon. Also, local authority cutbacks are having a detrimental effect on Welsh language services, in Education specifically. County Councils are moving to contract out for services, without giving due regard to the Welsh language.

Our wish is to be confident about the future of the Welsh language.

There needs to be an increase in expenditure on the Welsh language and the provision of Welsh services.

We call upon the Government to increase its spending on specific Welsh projects, over time, to 1% of the budget, i.e approximately £136 million in 2015/16.

Part of this expenditure will come from diversification of the current expenditure. We also call upon County Councils and other statutory bodies to ensure that all their services are available through the medium of Welsh.

There is a need to ensure that there is equality for the Welsh language in the provision of all Government activities and services .

Yours faithfully

Penri Williams
Chairman
Dathlu'r Gymraeg