

## **Minutes**

1. Introduction by the Chair, Keith Davies AM
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4. Discussion with Reverend Aled Edwards OBE
5. Questions from the floor
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7. Confirmation of future topics for discussion
8. Any other business

### **Introduction**

The Chair, Keith Davies AM, welcomed everyone. The meeting was split into two sections - the Annual General Meeting and a discussion on 'ethnic minorities and language'.

### **In attendance**

Keith Davies AM, Rhun ap Iorwerth AM, Simon Thomas, Aled Edwards OBE, Ceri Owen (RhAG), Colin Nosworthy (Cymdeithas), Lowri Hughes (AMSS), Penry Williams (Dathlu'r Gymraeg), Meinir Jones (Office of Welsh Language Commissioner), Dr Dylan Foster Evans (Cardiff University), Carl Morris (NativeHQ), Jamie Bevan (Cymdeithas), Osian (Cymdeithas)

### **Apologies**

Apologies Alun Fred AM, Janet Finch Saunders AM, David Melding AM, Dr Huw Thomas Hywel Glyn Lewis, Tegwen Morris (Merched y Wawr), Bethan Whittall (CYDAG), Dr Gwenllian Lansdown Davies (Mudiad Meithrin), Jill Stephens (Menter Iaith Sir Flint), Catherine David, Emily Cole (Mentrau Iaith)

## **Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

It was explained that under the rules of the Table Office, we are required to hold an AGM within 12 months. A copy of the Annual Report was distributed.

After a nomination process, Keith Davies AM was re-elected as Chair. It was also decided that the joint secretarial arrangements would continue between Keith Davies's office and Dathlu'r Gymraeg.

The Annual Report and Financial Statement were discussed, outlining the basic four sections namely membership, meetings, any professional lobbyists and the financial statement.

## **Introduction by Reverend Aled Edwards OBE**

Aled Edwards thanked the group for inviting him to address them. He explained that he was in attendance while wearing several hats.

Aled Edwards (AE) introduced himself and the organizations that he works with - he is on the Welsh Committee of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights; he is Chair of the Immigration Partnership, 'Displaced People in Action'; and Secretary of the Inter Faith Council for Wales.

The linguistic impact of migration: migration occurs for various reasons, including inward migration from abroad or economic/industrial reasons. The reality is that learning English is a significant achievement in its own right.

He referred to the linguistic impact of international migration: 1 in 33 of us lives in a country in which we were not born or brought up, which is a staggering statistic.

The population of Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham has increased over the last few years and this will probably be the case in Anglesey as a result of Wylfa B. This could have huge linguistic implications and we must be aware of that and find ways to withstand the influx; there may be lessons to be learned in due course.

The arrival of a new prison in Wrexham is another example.

It is likely that immigrants/asylum seekers will be distributed to areas outside the traditional 'cluster areas'. This presents a major challenge.

He said he was also involved in Displaced People in Action, a programme that trains refugees and asylum seekers. One notable example is the Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors scheme. Thus far, the scheme has employed 150+ individuals, with 73 of them working in the Health Service in Wales.

More often than not, children are the linguist medium or vehicle between the family and the wider community. They attend schools and acquire the language of the new country and then transfer it to the home. It is they who learn English first, which is also an opportunity to learn Welsh.

These people have the ability and empathy to be able to understand injustice and being part of a minority. The mindset of immigrants is often compatible with the way of life of the people who live in the areas where they settle; in terms of abilities, skills and values. It is important to remember that immigrants have a contribution to make.

He also noted that he is the Secretary of the Inter Faith Council for Wales and their remit is to promote the Welsh language among people of various faiths.

The signs are bilingual in Muslim community centres. During the opening, the younger children welcomed attendees by singing in Welsh. The community was significant in the 2011 referendum, handing out leaflets advocating a 'yes' vote for more legislative powers.

In post-devolution Wales, we must celebrate the characteristics that define us, namely: the right to be unique, to belong, to call yourself Welsh if you wish to do so. The underlying values that make our politics different. We see our multi-ethnic communities buying into the values of equality, human rights and commitment to sustainability.

Reference was made to the importance of Welsh education to these efforts. These principles must be sold to these communities in an environment that is a counterpoint to the negative and inflammatory attitudes that are manifested by parties like UKIP.

It was noted that hate crime is increasing across the UK, which indicates that a lack of basic tolerance is increasing.

### **Questions from the floor/wider debate**

**Colin Nosworthy:** This is a fundamental question about who is responsible for promoting the Welsh language among our multi-ethnic communities. Nobody seems to be taking responsibility at the moment. It is an important question to ask the Government: how much work is going on at the moment with these groups?

**Aled Edwards:** The Welsh Language Commissioner has held preliminary successful discussions with ethnic minority leaders. The Commissioner has outlined the advantages of Welsh-medium education. It may be an area to build upon in the Government's Welsh language strategy.

**Dylan Foster Evans:** We see that about 15% of pupils from Ysgol Pwll Coch, Cardiff, are from ethnic minorities, which is an encouraging number but a lot less than many English medium schools nearby, where some of them have 90% or more.

More often than not, simple obvious and practical obstacles underpin that e.g. geographic location, lack of local provision, lack of transport. Given that, 15% is an amazing percentage. Policy needs to be considered.

A report was commissioned recently by the Welsh Government as an additional language (in the same way as taught English is taught as a foreign language). Awareness of such support is extremely low.

It was noted that the School Information Booklets for Parents discuss Welsh education but do not mention that Welsh education is for everyone regardless of their linguistic background and that help is available if people want it. Reference is made to English schools as 'community' schools but not the Welsh schools. The messages given are vitally important.

**Aled Edwards:** Very early discussions have been held about the idea of multi-faith schools (controversial). There need to be strategies that really overcome the barriers and provide resources.

**Keith Davies AM:** There are English-medium schools in Llanelli that have a high proportion of ethnic minorities.

**Aled Edwards:** We must change the cultural climate in terms of advertising the advantages of Welsh-medium schools. We must really think about the challenges and incentives for immigrants to learn Welsh.

**Simon Thomas:** The same approach is taken in relation to the mindset of children with ALN in this context, i.e. that these children 'will not be able to cope or that Welsh is not relevant to them. We need to recognize that there is considerable potential here, and that individuals from these communities have a wealth of talent and the ability to excel in Welsh.

In fact, the same message is highlighted when considering the Flying Start programme but poverty is the obstacle in that context.

Is the Welsh-medium sector is ready to cope with the challenges posed by reaching out to those communities?

**Aled Edwards:** The Welsh Government has put out a tender for someone to be responsible for its immigration policy, an opportunity to strengthen the Welsh-language element.

**Rhun ap Iorwerth:** There is a lack of contact between people who move to Wales and the framework of the society that they move into. We must motivate people to integrate, and to see the benefits of doing so.

e.g. estate agent packages, which were largely unsuccessful

a book package for new parents has been more successful - but because it's an effective hook

Essentially, there is a lack of basic mentoring. We must be more creative and innovative in creating successful mentoring systems.

There are Welsh Government information packages that offer an introduction to Wales. They refer to the Welsh language but no more than that. This situation is totally inadequate. There is an opportunity here for something more substantial, e.g. information about Welsh-language education, opportunities to learn the language etc.

The promotion of the language is part of the concept of social cohesion and national identity, and language is an important part of achieving that.

It was noted that there is clearly insufficient investment to connect with these communities.

The shortcomings and the divide are obvious: we need national strategies to promote, encourage and reach out to them.

Careful planning and a change in environment is needed in order to achieve that.

There must be civic energy to offer a counterpoint to the anti-Welsh narrative and the narrative that opposes welcoming immigrants to our country.

Aspects of the Welsh language need to be co-ordinated within strategies/ legislation and linguistic targets should be set for the next 20 years.

e.g. The 'Pethau Bychain' campaign: how much effort has been made to date to reach out to these communities?

### **Action:**

The idea of writing to the Welsh Government to ask questions raised was discussed.

They also discussed writing to the Welsh Language Commissioner for more information about her work in the field so far.

It could be put on the agenda of the Equality Commissioners' Partnership.

The Equality Commission needs a Welsh element and the regulation needs to happen here in Wales.

### **Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes were circulated and members were invited to propose any improvements or changes by email.

### **Future topics for discussion**

The topics decided upon for the next meeting were the Welsh language strategic plans in education and counties' attitudes to Welsh-medium education, including a discussion on the curriculum.

**No further business.**