

Guest Speaker: Professor Sioned Davies, who will discuss her report 'Review of Welsh Second Language'.

1) Introduction by Keith Davies AM (chair)

2) In attendance

Keith Davies AM, Professor Sioned Davies, Simon Thomas AM, Alun Ffred Jones AM, Lowri Hughes (AMSS for Keith Davies), Colin Nosworthy (Cymdeithas), Penri Williams (Celebrating Our Language), Fred Francis (Cymdeithas), Gwyn Williams (office of the Welsh Language Commissioner), Dafydd Idris Edwards (Welsh Folk Song Society), Dr Hywel Glyn Lewis (University of Wales Trinity St David), David White (Cynghrair Cymunedau Cymraeg – Alliance for Welsh-language Communities), Rhian Jones (Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol), Carys Moseley (Church and Society Department Liaison Officer, Presbyterian Church of Wales), Meryl Davies (National President of Merched y Wawr).

Apologies

Aled Roberts AM, Bethan Jenkins AM, Mike Hedges AM, Suzy Davies AM, Kerry Owen (RhAG), Gwennllian Lansdown Davies (Mudiad Meithrin), Dylan Foster Evans (Cardiff University).

3) Introduction by Professor Sioned Davies

It is now a year and a half since the report was published and the eleventh hour is upon us.

Several themes were discussed:

- Status

It is currently not a core subject in the curriculum. It is an important way of measuring performance; there are schools rated as 'excellent' by Estyn that have low standards of Welsh.

- Workforce (training)

Staffing is a huge problem - sometimes the training period (which is relatively short) is not sufficient for learners. As well as goodwill, a workforce and training are needed

- Curriculum

Although the Welsh language is a compulsory subject, there is concern that other subjects are sometimes prioritised on the timetable.

There needs to be a greater emphasis on communication instead of learning by rote - as discussed in Donaldson. It is felt that sometimes year 7 Welsh learners have more conversational confidence than some older students of Welsh as a second language.

Good technology and exciting resources are needed in order to get people's attention. That is, by encouraging children to learn Welsh on IT equipment.

While Mentrau Iaith and the Urdd have carried out some excellent work, there are still challenges in terms of increasing the opportunities to practice Welsh and getting young people to join in.

In the Donaldson review, the Welsh language is given a specific section in the curriculum, 10, which recommends where the Welsh language is considered to be essential.

- Continuity

It is time to get rid of the term 'second language'. We must look at the language continuum, especially for pupils who change from Welsh-language primary schools to English-language secondary schools.

The field must be looked at in context and not in a vacuum - looking across the levels, not viewing them separately. If we want to give opportunities to our children, we need to look at fluency in Welsh. Pupils in the focus groups were aware of the importance of the Welsh language for the purpose of employment.

4) **Questions from the floor**

Q1 Dr Hywel Glyn Lewis, University of Wales Trinity Saint David's:

Wants to change the current administrative model to an educational model, where the focus is on children becoming fluent speakers. The value for money provided by Welsh as a second language has been improved, which needs to be considered in the light of changes to it.

Answer: The current model does not work, but changes cannot take place overnight. There is a need to invest in the workforce, and to make the teaching profession attractive.

Q2 Alun Ffred Jones AM

Question on foundation models. Should we look at primary schools first if we want to look broadly at how to improve A-level grades?

Solution Succeeded to get WJEC to change. To start with, in primary schools, there must be something that happens in tandem.

Q3 A lot of detailed planning for the new regime, it is important to go in the right direction. Consider the need for the Minister to move from Welsh as a second language to a language continuum.

Answer The report focuses on Welsh-medium schools. Something radical needs to be considered, not just playing around with the current model. The size of the task sometimes means that people do not know where to begin, but there are academic models.

Q4 Colin Nosworthy (Cymdeithas)

The First Minister appeared before the scrutiny committee last week and said that he had not forgotten about the report at all. What would you like to see in the near future?

Reply Soon after the report's publication, it was suggested to the Government that there is a lot that we could do immediately with relatively low costs e.g. promoting careers, raising its status by changing the ethos in schools and improving language awareness. Cardiff University has a 'Languages for all' project, which now includes the Welsh language. There is plenty of good practice that could be transferred to other schools

Q5 Penri Williams (Celebrating our Language)

We are close to the 2016 Assembly election. How can we encourage the Welsh Government to take action on the recommendations with the resources that we have?

Answer: By considering the possibility of creating a pilot school to monitor the success and awareness and to show the output.

March 24, 2015

CROSS PARTY GROUP ON THE WELSH LANGUAGE

8.30

CONFERENCE ROOM 24

5) **The next meeting's topic of discussion**

The next meeting will take place at the Eisteddfod in August of this year.

6) **Any other business**