



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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## WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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**Title:** Welsh Language Strategy 2012-17

**Date:** 29 February 2012

**By:** Leighton Andrews AM, Minister for Education and Skills

The Programme for Government 2011-16 emphasised this Government's support for the Welsh language and included a commitment to publish a new Welsh Language Strategy to meet the Government aim of "strengthening the use of Welsh in everyday life".

I am pleased to announce the publication of a new five-year Welsh Language Strategy: *A living language: a language for living*. It will replace *Iaith Pawb: National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales* (2003) as the Welsh Ministers' strategy for promoting and facilitating the use of Welsh. Adopting a Welsh language strategy is a requirement placed on Welsh Ministers by section 78 of the Government of Wales Act 2006. It will come into effect on 1 April 2012 and run until 31 March 2017.

I am keen to maintain and develop a political consensus that exists around measures to develop and strengthen the language. The new strategy builds on the consultation draft published by the One Wales Government. The final version was developed with the assistance of a Ministerial Advisory Group comprising a wide range of key stakeholders. I am grateful for the group's valuable input to the work of developing the strategy and for the comments and suggestions received during the consultation on the draft.

The strategy builds on *Iaith Pawb* whilst also reflecting important legislative, policy and structural changes since 2003. These include changes as a result of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 which will see the establishment of the Welsh Language Commissioner's office in April 2012, the abolition of the Welsh Language Board and the consequential transfer of the majority of its activities to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh into the Welsh Government. The publication of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy in 2010 provided an added imperative to update the Government's strategy for promoting the use of Welsh more widely.

Six strategic aims have been identified for the strategy. The consultation on the draft, and discussions with my Advisory Group, showed there was wide-ranging support for action in these areas. The evidence review which was conducted to support the development of the final strategy also provided evidence that the six aims are both appropriate and necessary. The six aims are:

1. to encourage and support the use of the Welsh language within **families**.
2. to increase the provision of Welsh medium activities for **children and young people** and to increase their awareness of the value of the language;
3. to strengthen the position of the Welsh language in the **community**;
4. to increase opportunities for people to use Welsh in the **workplace**;
5. to improve **Welsh language services** to citizens; and
6. to strengthen the **infrastructure** for the language, including digital technology.

In addition, the strategy emphasises the importance of the Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy as an essential component – alongside encouraging the use of the language in families – in producing the Welsh speakers of the future.

The strategy is geared towards providing opportunities for people to use their Welsh language skills, whether acquired in the home or through the education system, in all aspects of everyday life.

There is a particular emphasis on the need to develop greater opportunities for children and young people to participate in Welsh-medium activities outside the education system, and to do more to promote the value of using their Welsh language skills both economically and culturally. This links in with the greater emphasis on the workplace as an important domain in which the use of Welsh can be nurtured, where confidence in language skills can be built and where the value of the language can be demonstrated. This is closely related to the aim of improving Welsh language services to citizens.

The strategy also demonstrates how the new legislative framework established by the Measure will have an important role to play. Whilst the Welsh Language Commissioner will act independently of Government and set her own priorities, the Commissioner's work in developing Welsh language standards, to impose duties on a wide range of organisations, will complement the activities that the Government will undertake in implementing this Strategy. Welsh language standards, in turn, will help share the responsibility for promoting the use of Welsh amongst a wider range of organisations.

A key aspect underpinning the strategy is the need to develop the infrastructure for the language, and in particular to take advantage of the opportunities that new technology can provide to promote its use. The need for new developments in technology and digital content to be available in Welsh is crucial if the language is to be seen as a modern and living language, particularly amongst young people. I have, therefore, established a group to explore how we can provide support for the development of more opportunities for people to use Welsh in this context. The Welsh language is an important and defining characteristic of Wales, and it belongs to all the people of Wales – Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers alike. In implementing this strategy, I want to invite new voices to help us with the challenging task of increasing the use of Welsh. I look forward to working with a wide range of organisations and individuals, including the statutory Welsh Language Partnership Council which I will be establishing shortly.

Finally, I fully recognise that language planning is a long-term process. The purpose of this five-year strategy is to move confidently towards our long-term aim of seeing the Welsh language thriving in Wales. I look forward to discussing these matters with Members in the Plenary debate on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March.

The strategy can be downloaded from the Welsh Government's website:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/welshlanguage/publications/wlstrategy2012/?lang=en>