



DYFODOL I'R IAITH

Evidence for the Committee of Experts

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

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Dyfodol i'r laith is an independent movement established in August 2012. It was formed by supporters of the Welsh language who were aware of a lacuna in the public debate, and of the need to provide a forum for discussion of matters concerning the language and to lobby the government in a democratic and open fashion.

Dyfodol i'r laith is convinced that the main issues facing the language today involve the economy, planning and demographics.

Whereas the main language campaigns of the last fifty years have been in the fields of education, the media, and language status, comparatively little attention has been given to address matters that particularly affect Welsh speaking communities.

There have been large population movements during the last fifty years. It is said that of all European countries, Wales, after Luxembourg, has the largest proportion of its population born outside the country.

Rural parts of Wales have witnessed substantial population change. This has many causes: the availability of better work opportunities in England and in Cardiff; the high cost of housing due partly to a thriving second home market; lack of economic development.

The wellbeing of the Welsh language in communities throughout Wales has been affected by these factors. Although progress has been made in many fields, **Dyfodol i'r laith** considers that the Welsh language is being eroded at community level.

There are other issues which are challenging to the language at community level. These include lack of recognition of the language as a living language in public services, e.g. health; lack of use of Welsh as a language of administration in all counties apart from Gwynedd; and lack of opportunity to use Welsh in the workplace.

Dyfodol i'r laith is a movement funded by its members which aims to influence politicians and decision-makers at local and national level. With a conviction that matters involving societal and economic planning are at the heart of this period of language planning in Wales, **Dyfodol i'r laith** wants to see all government departments, particularly economic development, housing, and public services, making the wellbeing of the language a priority.

Part II

Para 1.b) The respect of the geographical area of each regional or minority language in order to ensure that existing or new administrative divisions do not constitute an obstacle to the promotion of the regional or minority language in question.

There are at present plans to review local government in Wales. The First Minister has recently ordered a review of public services in Wales by establishing a Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery.

Key Issues for the Fourth Assembly, produced by the Research Service of the National Assembly of Wales has drawn attention to the financial advantages of cutting the number of local authorities from the current 22. *The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011* has given Welsh ministers powers to enforce the amalgamation of councils and to force collaboration. Action has already been taken by removing education from the competence of some authorities.

Some local authority leaders have already suggested possible structures for local government in future. One suggestion is to provide one authority for north Wales. Another is for Gwynedd to link with Ynys Môn. The former suggestion could have serious implications for administration through the medium of Welsh or bilingually, while the latter suggestion could promote this.

Recently, Adam Price, the former M.P. and a member of **Dyfodol i'r Iaith** suggested forming an administrative authority to serve western Wales, from Ynys Môn to Carmarthenshire, with the aim of making Welsh or bilingual administration the norm in this area.

We believe that the Welsh Government's comment that there have been no developments since the last report to be incomplete, as there are clear signs that radical changes are planned.

We suggest that any changes should promote the use of Welsh in the administration of local government and to promote the use of the language in communities.

Para 1.c) The need for resolute action to promote regional or minority languages in order to safeguard them

There have been several developments in the field of language support which have had varying degrees of success. There is, however, a lack of realisation that the viability of the Welsh language on a community level is essentially linked to a sustainable economy, and there has been little resolute action in this context.

Matters involving the Welsh language in the field of economic development, planning, housing, administration and some public services have had little attention.

There is evidence from the recent census that adopting Welsh as an administrative language gives Welsh speakers a much better economic foothold in their own communities. This contributes to the sustainability of these communities. The impact of Gwynedd County Council's policy of the internal use of Welsh has resulted in many communities with a high percentage of Welsh speakers maintaining and even increasing their percentage. This is coupled with an education system that ensures that a high percentage of school leavers are fluent in Welsh. In contrast, other traditional Welsh-speaking areas such as Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire witnessed decline. Here the language has an insufficient economic foothold and a less linguistically effective education system. **Dyfodol i'r laith** feels that if Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire were to introduce similar policies, the language would become more sustainable in these areas.

An increase in Welsh speakers was seen in areas such as Cardiff where there are substantial employment opportunities for Welsh speakers and a growth in Welsh medium education.

Relocation of Welsh institutions

The relocation of Welsh institutions to Welsh-speaking parts of Wales would be valuable. S4C has suggested that it will devolve some administrative aspects away from Cardiff, and this is welcome news, but further relocation is needed. New studios for recording episodes of the long-running Welsh soap, *Pobol y Cwm*, were built in Cardiff rather than in Carmarthenshire, where the soap is presumably located.

Little attempt has been made to relocate government departments which could operate largely through the medium of Welsh to predominantly Welsh-speaking areas. These departments could include aspects of the education provision, the service of the Language Commissioner, the media and others.

Where services have been devolved, these do not always give proper attention to Welsh. Attention was recently drawn to the lack of Welsh at the Government offices in Llandudno.

Economic planning

More attempts should be made to ensure the economic viability of Welsh-speaking communities.

Large companies based in predominantly Welsh-speaking areas have closed during the last four years. These include dairies, meat processing plants and others. Large plants in Ynys Môn have closed with little success in finding equivalent large scale enterprises. In Ynys Môn, most of the eggs now seem to be put in the nuclear industry, however language issues have not been assessed, and at present it seems that a prospective new nuclear station will be built by a foreign company.

Recently, the government has failed to give financial support to farmers who have suffered substantial losses during the cold winter. A strong farming community is vital for language sustainability in rural areas.

Housing

There are substantial issues associated with housing. Second home ownership is at its highest in attractive parts of rural west Wales, where the Welsh language is traditionally strong. There has been little attempt to curtail the selling of houses as second homes.

Social housing in some Welsh-speaking parts of Wales has been used to house people from other parts of the UK, and this can impact on the linguistic balance of communities. Little is done to secure their integration into the indigenous language community.

At present there is a substantial threat to many Welsh-speaking areas as plans are presented for new housing. These plans often have little concern for the linguistic balance of communities.

There are many caravan sites in rural areas in Wales, available for less than 12 month tenancy. Recently, applications have been made for these to be available all year round. This will have an unbalancing effect on local language communities, as caravan dwellers will be able to live in the caravans permanently. There are no plans for integrating these into the indigenous language community.

The Welsh Government has issued a technical advice note – TAN20 – which gives guidelines to local authorities on measuring the impact of new developments on the use of Welsh in communities. This note has been found to be lacking in influence, and new guidelines have been prepared but have been delayed. The Language Commissioner for the Welsh Language has highlighted this delay.

The Welsh Government's 2003 Language Strategy *laith Pawb* identified the need to strengthen this note. It has still to be updated 10 years later. Meanwhile, many communities will have seen language instability. This issue needs urgent attention.

Some developments, e.g. presently at Pen-y-banc, Carmarthenshire, where around 300 new houses are planned for a village of 400 houses, will clearly be detrimental to the language, but little Government action has been taken to date.

Dyfodol i'r laith believes that successful solutions to such matters is fundamental to ensure the wellbeing of the language.

Dyfodol i'r laith is also very concerned about the new Local Development Plans which are now under way. Little regard has been given as to how these will affect the Welsh language, and a new TAN20 is still not available. New housing plans have already been proposed for some areas, and the number of

houses involved is often quite disproportionate to the numbers already living in these areas, and seems to be based on past periods of substantial economic growth.

Current Welsh Government figures and the England and Wales planning inspectorate estimate a 320,000 houses growth for Wales over the next 20 years. This exceeds local need by about 80%. These figures are largely based on historical immigration figures. Between 2001 and 2011 the population of Wales grew by 5%, yet 90% of this was in-migration. These figures have been driven in the past by planning policy which has been totally insensitive to impact on the Welsh Language.

These plans will encourage in-migration which will disrupt language vitality and will present enormous challenges to the present weak efforts at linguistic integration in Wales.

Para 1.d) The facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of regional or minority languages, in speech and writing, in public and private life

While we recognise the success of many Government funded projects, we are concerned that there is a lack of clarity at the moment regarding how the Welsh language is to be promoted. The Welsh Language Board was able to kick-start projects, such as *Mae dy Gymraeg di'n Grêt*, which targeted the use of Welsh by young mothers, but there is now uncertainty as to how creative projects such as this can be funded.

This project dealt successfully, admittedly on a small scale, with the lack of confidence of Welsh speakers in using the language in an increasingly anglicised world. There is a desperate need to build confidence in Welsh language use.

At present, the world of administration and communication, at local and government level, and in commercial enterprises, is mainly English. There is a need for Welsh to be seen to be used at all levels of communication, and for ease of use. It is a common experience for telephone receptionists, for example, to greet in Welsh but not to be able to proceed further.

Government departments, including both ministers and civil servants, should consider how the use of Welsh can be made normal and obstacle-free. Until this is achieved, the uptake of Welsh services, available largely on request, will continue to be limited.

Para 1.g) The provision of facilities enabling non-speakers of a regional or minority language living in the area where it is used to learn if they so desire

Dyfodol i'r laith has supported the establishment of *Canolfannau Cymraeg* – Welsh social/teaching centres – corresponding to the *Euskaltegi* in the Basque Country. Learners and Welsh speakers living in largely English-speaking parts of Wales often find difficulty in finding Welsh-medium social networks. It has been found that the few *Canolfannau Cymraeg* which exist in

Wales are successful in integrating Welsh speakers with learners, in providing learning opportunities and in providing a vibrant cultural life. We propose that the Government should consider how best to establish such centres throughout urban Wales.

Para 1.h) The promotion of study and research on regional or minority languages at universities or equivalent institutions.

The *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* has made several bold initiatives in promoting Welsh as a medium of study at higher education level. It remains to be seen whether this will meet with numerical success.

Dyfodol i'r laith is concerned that student grants for students from Wales, decided upon by politicians, do not differentiate between study in Wales and study in other parts of the UK. It can be argued that some skills needed by Wales are only available in universities outside Wales, but a formula is needed that will promote study in Wales, and thus study through the medium of Welsh.

Part III

Article 8

1f (i): to arrange for the provision of adult and continuing education courses which are taught mainly or wholly in the regional or minority languages

1f (ii): to offer such languages as subjects of adult and continuing education

Dyfodol i'r laith is concerned that the present provision of Welsh for Adults does not have the resources to make substantial changes in many aspects of Welsh life.

There is a dire need for more teachers, civil servants, local authority officials, workers in the health and social care services, among other fields, to be able to speak Welsh.

This need cannot be catered for without substantial funding for the provision of intense courses, planned for centrally. We envisage that a Government funded strategic centre for Welsh for Adults should be established to give a lead in this field, to set targets and to guide the work of providers.

We look forward to the conclusion of the present review of the Welsh for Adults sector, which will report, we hope, by September 2013.

See also Part II, 1.g above.

Article 10 - Administrative authorities and public services

1a (i) to ensure that the administrative authorities use Welsh;

Dyfodol i'r laith is concerned that most administrative authorities do not use Welsh in administration. Whereas local authorities present a bilingual interface,

it is often found that it is not possible to use Welsh orally on a deeper level than first greeting.

In local authorities where this is possible, it is usually found that the language of administration is English, and that translators have to be heavily depended upon.

This does not give Welsh speakers equal opportunity to use their language skills, and the language is then seen as less attractive in the work sphere. This has implications for how Welsh speakers view their language.

We refer to the language of administration in Para II, 1.b, above.

1e (i) to encourage and/or facilitate the creation and/or maintenance of at least one newspaper in Welsh;

Some support is given to maintaining the weekly newspaper, *Y Cymro*. *Y Cymro* receives a grant of some £19,000 annually, and the weekly magazine, *GoIwg*, £75,000. The last Government failed to take an opportunity to support the establishment of a national Welsh language daily paper.

The decision made at the time was to give financial support of £200,000 to *GoIwg360* to provide a Welsh-medium news service.

The news service provided by the BBC Welsh-medium website and *GoIwg360* is just that: usually curtailed items of news garnered from other sources, with little scope for discussion and interpretation, as one would expect from a daily newspaper. There is little coherent debate on political issues, simply reporting with some room for individual comments. There is no international content on the BBC website. Both websites have extremely limited sports content. While there is some attempt to provide local content, this has been severely curtailed on the BBC website over the last few years.

There was a distinct lack of vision in the refusal to support a Welsh-medium daily paper, and a cheaper option was chosen at a time when the Government spent substantial sums of money on other projects.

To put these sums in perspective, one can note the following:

£1.9 million was given to pay off debts of the National Botanical Garden of Wales, and at present it is receiving a subsidy of £1,570,000 over two years.

£13.5 million was given to pay off debts of the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff, and its annual funding rose from £1.2million to £3.7million.

Article 11

1a to the extent that radio and television carry out a public service mission:

i. to ensure the creation of at least one radio station and one television channel in the regional or minority languages;

There has been particular concern with the funding formulae for S4C. This concerned a change of the major funding base, now transferred to the BBC. In addition, a further concern is the substantial cut in finance. The changes were political in substance, made by politicians far removed from the Welsh language context, and probably disinterested. It seemed that Welsh language television was utilised as a tennis ball in a game between funding partners.

While *Radio Cymru* provides a whole day service, there have been concerns with payment for musicians, which led to musicians breaking away from the Performing Right Society to join a new agency. This agency, *Eos*, withdrew its music from the BBC, with a consequential loss to the BBC of 30,000 songs. *Radio Cymru* curtailed its broadcasting time by two hours, and cut its evening programmes for young people.

Dyfodol i'r laith argued that the BBC was thus not faithful to its charter, one of whose aims is to promote creativity.

While the music is at present restored, the matter is still under discussion.

Another broadcasting matter concerns the provision for Wales by Radio Wales. This radio station rarely presents matters pertaining to the Welsh language and Welsh culture, thus depriving non-Welsh speakers from ownership of the language. **Dyfodol i'r laith** would welcome a more inclusive agenda.

Dyfodol i'r laith is suggesting that a second Welsh medium radio station should be created to provide specifically for popular young people culture.

Article 13

2c to ensure that social care facilities such as hospitals, retirement homes and hostels offer the possibility of receiving and treating in their own language persons using Welsh who are in need of care on grounds of ill-health, old age or for other reasons;

Strategic framework to strengthen Welsh language provision in health and social services

The Welsh Government has identified four groups of vulnerable individuals for whom language-appropriate services are a matter of critical need. These include older adults, children and young people, people with mental health needs and people with learning disabilities. It should also be highlighted that all health and care service users are vulnerable by default.

There needs to be a strategic framework to strengthen Welsh language provision in health and social services. The Welsh Government needs to take a lead in developing policies that ensure that Wales has an appropriately skilled

workforce in terms of Welsh language skills. This will entail a considered approach to education, professional training and workforce planning.

Dyfodol i'r laith is very concerned that the Welsh speakers have not been treated with due respect for their language in much of the health and social care sector. We have made representations to this effect.

Dyfodol i'r laith is, however, looking forward to a review of this sector by the Language Commissioner and the Minister.