

Aspiration and Achievement

DYFODOL I'R IAITH proposals for
Welsh-language Policy,
2021-2026

DYFODOL



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1 Good Intentions

The announcement of a target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050 was a revolution of sorts. The intention henceforth, the Welsh Government was saying, was to initiate a process of restoring Welsh as a national language. And the intention was not just to have a million people with **knowledge** of the Welsh language, but a steady increase in the number of those who would **use** the language on a day-to-day basis in all aspects of their lives.

DYFODOL I'R IAITH commends all of this, and particularly the cross-party consensus reached in support of the intention.

The key question, as the May 2021 election approaches, is how to turn the **aspiration into reality and the good intention into an effective process** that will ensure its delivery. The technical term for such a process, effectively put in place by, for example, the Government of Euskadi, the Basque country, is “reversal of language shift”. The election of the new Welsh government, of whatever political colour, in May 2021 will provide a historic opportunity to inject new momentum into the process, recognising that much has already been done to set it in train.

2 Holistic Planning

In recent years, it has been increasingly emphasised that policy to strengthen the

place of the Welsh language is about much more than advancing the rights of its speakers, important though that is. In order to develop the Welsh language and to extend its use in the face of the immense pressures of English, an extremely powerful international language, what is needed is **holistic planning, a comprehensive creative strategy across all policy areas.**

3 Disseminating an understanding of bilingualism and language awareness

In creating a country of Welsh speakers, we need to understand how languages are used by their speakers and what are the factors that affect the linguistic preferences of people and populations.

An enormous body of research exists in this field and it should be drawn upon. A necessary first step would be for Project 2050 to compile or commission a summary of the lessons of this research and utilize it in the formulation of policy and strategy. An understanding of bilingualism would then be cascaded down through institutions and networks of all kinds: from nursery groups to government offices, from universities to shops, from private businesses to art and leisure centres. The material produced would include, inter alia,

- The importance of language in the history of mankind
- The significance of the Welsh language in the history of Wales and its identity
- The wonder and fascination of language as such and the richness of the Welsh language in particular
- The social foundations of language
- Guidelines on normalising the Welsh language in bilingual/multilingual situations
- The cognitive, social and career benefits of bilingualism for the individual

A course/courses on Understanding Bilingualism should be part of our schools' core curriculum and awareness of the importance of the Welsh language an integral part of the experience of our children and young people throughout their educational career.

In order to continually update knowledge of bilingualism and the position of the Welsh language, a National Institute of Linguistics should be established as a world-renowned centre of excellence.

Mobility of people being such a familiar aspect of life today, the Welsh language should be recognised as a language to be promoted among newcomers.

4 The Policy Fields

The fields that currently influence the Welsh language belong to different Government departments, and are the object of different legislation. Some fields still are the responsibility of the UK Government for continuity of planning and implementation. A National Language Planning Body is needed which will co-ordinate planning in different areas.

Education

Expanding Welsh-medium education is a precondition of growing the language. The growth needs to be accelerated, but this requires an extensive programme of language-training for teachers, prospective teachers and leaders in the pre-school, further and higher education sectors.

Ensuring a sufficient workforce:

- Increase financial incentive for Higher Education students to study in Wales
- Inspire Welsh-medium pupils to pursue a career in education
- Increase Welsh-language training for staff in English-medium schools
- Increase Welsh-language training for leaders of groups in the pre-school sector

Speed up the growth of Welsh-medium education:

- Encourage growth of Welsh-medium pre-school groups, which are the basis of the statutory education system
- Organise a robust system of immersion teaching in Welsh for under-7s.
- Strengthen the promotion of Welsh-medium education among prospective and new parents
- Simplify the transition process which provides for English/bilingual schools to become Welsh-medium schools
- Rearrange buildings in urban areas, so that new Welsh-medium schools can be set up without capital cost

Emphasis on spoken use of Welsh

- More support for parents to learn Welsh

- Introduce a thorough programme of language awareness in the curriculum
- Introduce a Welsh history curriculum that shows the significance of the language in our history
- Place increased emphasis on teaching subjects through the medium of Welsh across the education system
- Financial support for Welsh-language extra-curricular activities

Ensuring continuity between education sectors

- Teaching Welsh as one language; this will strengthen language continuity between all education sectors
- Abolition of transport charges for 16+ education

The English-medium sector

- Encourage a system of transition schools
- Emphasis on daily communication
- Increase the number of subjects taught in Welsh, e.g. physical education and sport, and arrange Welsh-medium extra-curricular activities

Higher and further education

- Strengthen the provision of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to increase Welsh-medium courses in the further and higher education sectors
- Emphasise the use of Welsh in further education courses that cover customer contact and provision of public services
- Establish a system for tracking former Welsh-medium school students so as to facilitate the

creation of a Welsh-speaking workforce

Welsh for Adults

The expansion of Welsh for Adults is essential for teaching the language to parents, and public officials, and for creating a bilingual workforce. Teaching and learning should be in intensive and complete programmes.

Funding for Welsh for Adults needs to be trebled, so that the funding matches the successful example of the Basque Country, so as to:

- Prioritise language training for teachers and public employees
- Provide language training for parents who wish to develop the use of Welsh at home
- Increase work-release programmes to learn the language and improve language skills
- Offer year-long intensive courses and offer up to 1,200 contact hours

Welsh Language Communities

A language is not a living language without communities, whether geographical, networked or institutional, that use it as a first language. In considering the lives of bilingual individuals, there is a need to increase the areas of their lives where Welsh is the first language. This may be at home, at work, in the local community, on social media, in culture and the media and so on.

There are significant economic and demographic threats to the Welsh-speaking communities of tourist areas, and the place of the Welsh language in the social networks of less Welsh-speaking areas has been eroded.

The following need consideration, amongst other fields:

- Inspire prospective and young parents to use Welsh with their children
- A significant economic programme to strengthen communities where Welsh is the main language
- A programme of growing Welsh in areas where 25% of the population speak the language
- Encourage the use of the language in local businesses and high street social locations
- Establish a network of Welsh Language Centres as powerhouses for the language

A Prosperous Economy

The links between language and economy are complex and not easy to manage. However, there is a need to create in mainly Welsh-speaking areas the kind of economic buzzing activity that will enable Welsh speakers to find attractive employment opportunities there.

- Implement an economic plan that will invigorate areas where the Welsh language is strong, namely the Arfor Scheme
- Growth centres in Welsh-speaking areas
- Establish a Welsh-language Business Agency to operate across Wales
- Decentralise national institutions into mainly Welsh-speaking areas
- Promote local procurement policy

Welsh Language Workplaces

One major challenge that is not adequately addressed is the development of Welsh-speaking workplaces. We regard the public sector as key in this regard but the third and

private sectors also merit attention. We need to shift the emphasis from linguistic rights to the creation of workplaces that will give real economic value to the Welsh language.

- Gather data on Welsh-language public workplaces
- Set quotas for increasing Welsh-medium administration
- Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire to administer internally in Welsh, as in the case of Gwynedd
- Set targets for other counties
- Include ethnic minorities in language-learning and use of Welsh at work

Building a Welsh language landscape

We need to do more than offer a bilingual front-desk service. Welsh needs to be a living language in the workplace, and particularly in social spaces. This needs to be supported by a programme for strengthening Welsh as a spoken language more and more in social locations such as cafes, pubs and shopping centres

- An extensive programme to promote first-use of Welsh
- Give prominence to where Welsh can be used, and with whom
- Establish awards for cafes etc. which create a Welsh atmosphere
- Normalise first-use of Welsh by sales and serving staff

Land-use Planning and Housing

We need to do everything possible to secure affordable housing for local people, and to ensure that the planning system does not militate against Welsh speakers.

- Welsh is an essential consideration in planning, with attention to demographics and housing supply
- Identify areas with 25%+ Welsh-speakers as areas of Special

- Linguistic Significance
- Establish a separate planning inspectorate for Wales
- Local Authority and Housing Association housing policy to prioritise social housing that helps local people and young people to remain in their home areas
- Reduce the number of second and holiday homes to ensure the viability of rural communities
- Welsh Language Commissioner to have the power to intervene in housing planning applications
- A points system that prioritises local people

Media and culture

Mass media and social media are increasingly influential areas. Responsibility for all Welsh media and all broadcasting in Wales should be devolved to the Welsh Senedd as soon as possible.

- S4C, BBC Wales and Radio Cymru, as well as all new commercial and new media platforms should be accountable to the democratic will of the people of Wales through a national authority established by the Welsh Senedd.
- We are concerned that the control of our national television channel is currently over-reliant on the British Broadcasting Corporation. We fear that S4C's reliance on BBC funding could inadvertently influence the editorial content of S4C's programmes. We also fear that the BBC's future as a public-service broadcaster is under threat from Westminster politicians,

and that reducing the range of the Corporation's services would undermine S4C's public service for Welsh speakers.

- English-medium services should increase their Welsh-medium and bilingual content, so that the Welsh language is heard by the population as a whole.
- It is the duty of all services and platforms that have the privilege of broadcasting and communicating in Welsh to use good-quality, natural spoken language
- There is a need to significantly increase the use of Welsh across new media platforms, and to ensure that the commercial multinationals expand their use of Welsh to that end. This field should be part of S4C's responsibility
- There is a need to increase Welsh-language provision for young people on television, radio and other media.
- There is a need to ensure adequate support for the creative sector, including Welsh-language theatre companies, performance centres, choirs and performers.

5 Correcting the Deficiencies

Two bodies are currently responsible at the national level for driving policy on the Welsh language.

- (i) *The Welsh Language Commissioner*
The Commissioner has wide-ranging terms

of reference which include promoting the language. Its main function has nevertheless been and remains to strengthen speakers' rights by implementing the system of standards originally put in place by legislation in the Welsh Language Measure that came into force in 2011. We warmly commend the way in which the Commissioner and his staff operate constructively and at the same time speak up about shortcomings in policy and the needs of the Welsh language.

(ii) *The Welsh Language sub-division within the Welsh Government civil service (Prosiect 2050)*

This sub-division inherited overall responsibility for planning the development of the Language following the abolition of the Welsh Language Board in 2012.

In August 2017 the sub-division was re-named as "Prosiect 2050", a "new Language Planning Unit... to drive forward the 2050 Welsh language strategy and increase the focus on language planning within the Welsh Government"¹. The Minister for the Welsh Language, Eluned Morgan, announced that a new head would be appointed. The post was advertised in March, 2020, seven months later. The job-description attached to the advertisement clearly shows

- that this sub-division, under the new head, has the responsibility for leading language planning and realizing the target of securing a million speakers by 2050
- that "increasing the use [not just knowledge] of Welsh in all aspects of life" is central to the intention
- that the Welsh Government has embraced the need for holistic planning across policy areas and government departments

These steps are to be commended.

However, the fact that there has been no public statement regarding the appointment of the Head of Prosiect 2050, or indeed the policy emphasis to which the job-description gives expression, is highly significant. The "Welsh Language Sub-Division", which now has a high-level strategic responsibility, remains concealed in the bowels of the civil service, under the wing of the Education and Public Services Division.

If Project 2050 is to succeed, this has to change.

The Government withdrew its original intention, launched by Welsh Language Minister Alun Davies in 2017, to establish a Welsh Language Commission, an arm's-length body to take responsibility for Welsh-language strategy, following protests about undermining the Language Commissioner's independence.

DYFODOL I'R IAITH is firmly in favour of retaining the post of the independent Commissioner to carry out the duties that it currently has and indeed adding the private sector and Town and Country Planning to its terms of reference.

As to the remit of the sub-division, as defined above, there are in our view two options:

(1) The Best Option: A new Authority or Agency² as an arm's length body accountable to the Welsh Government. This is our preferred approach. Such a body would have a prominent public profile, a Chief Executive and Board, and the ability to be innovative and experimental in a way that is not usual for the civil service.

(2) The second-best option: To elevate the status of Prosiect 2050 into an influential

and powerful unit within the Welsh Government. To be effective, such a unit would have to

- Have a high public profile and be identifiable by the public as well as accountable to the Minister for the Welsh Language in government
- Have first-class expertise in language planning
- Have a Head who would ensure long-term continuity and consistency in strategy and have the status to enable her/him to influence policy across all Government departments
- Be free to take risks, innovate and experiment

We see this option as a short-term solution. The aim in the medium term, and as soon as possible, should be to externalise Prosiect 2050 as an arm's length body as set out in (1) above.

6. Future Arrangements

The following are the commitments that DYFODOL I'R IAITH seeks from the political parties as we look forward to the establishment of a new Welsh Government in May 2021

1 Immediate elevation of Prosiect 2050's status within the Welsh Government along the above lines, then proceeding as soon as possible to establish an arm's length Welsh Language Authority

2 Safeguarding the post of Welsh Language Commissioner and adding the private sector and Town and Country Planning to its remit

3 The new First Minister to deliver a public speech stating that Prosiect 2050 (the project itself, that is) will have a prominent place among the priorities of the new Government and elaborating on the meaning of this in terms of public policy

4 Commitment to support the Project with financial resources commensurate with the challenge and to identify clearly the relevant financial sums in the context of the new Government's first budget

5 Establish a new Arfor as a Development Agency for the most Welsh-speaking areas, with a remit to link strengthening the Welsh language with the economic, social and cultural development of the region

6 Establish a separate planning inspectorate for Wales and Areas of Special Linguistic Significance so that the Welsh language and the needs of local people become an essential consideration in planning.

Notes

1 Advertisement for post of new head of the sub-division March 16 2020

2 DYFODOL I'R IAITH's proposal paper *A Welsh Language Agency* November 2016

TO
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