

A fast track to strengthen the Welsh language

TO
DYFODOL

Manifesto

for the Welsh language
SENEDD 2026–2030

*Dyfodol i'r laith's proposals
for the Welsh Senedd 2026–2030*



DYFODOL I'R IAITH

MANIFESTO FOR THE WELSH LANGUAGE

for the Welsh Senedd
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A FAST TRACK TO STRENGTHEN THE WELSH LANGUAGE

**DYFODOL I'R IAITH'S PROPOSALS
FOR THE WELSH SENEDD 2026-30**

- 1. Increasing the number of Welsh speakers**
- 2. Increasing the use of the Welsh language**
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For the attention of political parties applying for seats in the Welsh Senedd, 2026-2030

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Dyfodol i'r Iaith

- Dyfodol i'r Iaith (A Future for the Language) is a non-political organisation that works for the promotion of the Welsh language.
- Its aim is to exert influence through constitutional means on the substance and content of public policies and legislation in order to promote and nurture the growth of the Welsh language.



Background

While the Welsh Labour Government's *Cymraeg 2050* (2017) has set an ambitious goal of one million speakers by 2050, significant action, as part of a broad and coherent strategy, is needed to realise this.

- The Welsh Education Bill is too weak: it does not mention Welsh medium schools specifically, or targets to increase the Welsh education workforce.
- Although the Government has accepted the need to recognize Welsh speaking areas, no decisions have been made on a number of urgently needed actions, e.g. how to strengthen the economy and how to solve housing problems.
- There is no programme to make highstreets more Welsh or to increase the number of Welsh speaking homes.

The aim of a million Welsh speakers is as far away today as it was in 2017.

We are concerned for several reasons:

- The 2021 Census and other surveys showed that the numbers of Welsh speakers are decreasing.
- The growth of Welsh-medium schools is far too slow.
- A significant number of our young Welsh speakers are attracted to universities outside Wales and then settle outside the country.
- The economic development of more concentrated Welsh speaking areas is still slow.
- Housing in more concentrated Welsh speaking areas is still beyond the reach of young people.

The key question, as the 2026 election approaches, is how to CREATE FAST TRACKS to strengthen the Welsh language. The efforts made so far have not been sufficient to transform the state of the Welsh language. That is why a new impetus is needed to give irreversible momentum back to plans already under way, and to new plans.

1. Increasing the number of Welsh speakers

The 2021 Census showed that there was an increase in the number of Welsh speakers aged

16-40. This is a credit to the Welsh medium schools. However, a significant number of Welsh speakers are moving out of Wales to universities or to get work. A comprehensive, fully funded programme is needed to increase speaker numbers through several methods:

- i. The rapid growth of Welsh-medium schools.
- ii. Learning Welsh for parents.
- iii. Learning Welsh for the workforce.
- iv. Transforming the learning of Welsh in English-medium schools.
- v. Promoting the use of Welsh in the household.
- vi. Targeting newcomers.

2. Increasing the use of the Welsh language

In order to plan and take action on the increasing use of Welsh, detailed information is needed in order to measure any progress.

We want to see a regular survey of the use of the Welsh language in different situations and by different groups of people:

- i. In the family.
- ii. At work.
- iii. In education.
- iv. Socially.
- v. In entertainment and sports.
- vi. On the high street.

Bespoke actions will be able to target these different areas.

3. Promoting Welsh as the main language used by an increasing number of people and in an increasing number of situations

A lot of people choose to use Welsh out of conviction. Many people use Welsh because Welsh is the natural language or the main language in different situations.

The task now is to increase these two groups. In the case of the first group, there is a need to create a sense of growing pride and confidence in Welshness and the Welsh language. This is a task for all government departments, but specifically for the education department. The people of Wales

need to be aware of the history of the country and of the history of the language in order to appreciate that everyone has a personal role. Getting more people to use Welsh in the home will be key.

In the case of the second group, the need is to make the Welsh language visible and audible in an increasing number of situations. Welsh needs to be a language that is increasingly used at work, in entertainment and leisure, and on the high street. This is an issue of considerable importance in areas where Welsh is not a prominent language in the community. Designated Welsh Language Centres are to be welcomed, and we also believe that there is a need to look at alternative ways of promoting venues for people to enjoy using Welsh. It's important to be able to show that the Welsh language is alive in various organisations across Wales.

As Wales receives a relatively significant number of newcomers, having a thorough programme of introducing the Welsh language to these is necessary.

4. Education

The Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill does not give sufficient guidance to Ministers and Local Authorities to increase the role of the Welsh language in schools and the wider education system. It is far from clear that rapid progress will occur. There are not enough teachers nor a qualified workforce available. The expansion of Welsh education is a condition for the growth of the language. Growth needs to be accelerated, but to do this requires a rigorous programme of language training for teachers, prospective teachers and playgroup leaders in the pre-school, further and higher education sectors. There is also a need to incentivize and keep the current workforce from leaving the profession.

Ensuring an adequate workforce:

40% of our students study outside Wales. 70% of students who have been part of the Seren Academy scheme study outside Wales. The Seren Scheme needs to change direction to encourage pupils to study primarily in Wales' universities. This can be done by:

- i. Offering a financial incentive for Higher Education students to study in Wales

(Scotland gives free Higher Education to its students, and Northern Ireland pays half.)

- ii. Offering a curriculum that will motivate more first and second language pupils to study Welsh for A Level.
- iii. Funding universities to promote the study of subjects in conjunction with the Welsh language.
- iv. Persuading Welsh-medium secondary school pupils to study Welsh for A levels and to gain qualifications that will enable them to become Welsh-medium teachers, in areas where there will be a severe shortage for years to come.
- v. Increasing Welsh-language training for English-medium school staff.
- vi. Increasing Welsh-language training for pre-school sector playgroup leaders.

Ensuring faster growth of Welsh-medium education:

- i. Establishing a robust system of immersion education in Welsh for children under 7 years of age.
- ii. Ensuring that all new primary schools are Welsh-medium.
- iii. Accelerating the conversion of bilingual schools into Welsh medium schools.
- iv. In urban areas, rearranging buildings so that there are an increasing number of Welsh-medium schools without capital cost.
- v. Organising a system of late immersion education across Wales.
- vi. Providing transport advantage to Welsh-medium schools where they are further from home than English-medium schools.

Emphasis on Welsh history

- i. Strengthening the place of Welsh history in the curriculum, so that all pupils have a complete background of Welsh history.
- ii. Presenting the history of the Welsh language as an integral part of every school's curriculum.
- iii. Ensuring that the new GCSE History, now postponed until 2026, reflects the importance of learning Cynefin (local history) and ensures that Welsh history is studied in a broad and comprehensive way rather than being limited to short periods

- iv. Encouraging schools to integrate Welsh history more holistically across all areas of the curriculum and ensuring that sufficient resources are available to support this.

Spoken use of Welsh

- i. Giving parents a specific role to use Welsh with their pre-school and primary sector children.
- ii. Increasing emphasis on teaching subjects through Welsh across the education system.
- iii. Providing financial support for Welsh extra-curricular activities.

Ensuring continuity between the education sectors

- i. Teaching of Welsh as a single language route. This will strengthen language progression between all education sectors.
- ii. Providing transport to 16+ education as is done to the statutory education sector.

Further and higher education

- i. Strengthening the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's provision to increase courses through the medium of Welsh in the further and higher education sectors.
- ii. Placing emphasis on the use of the Welsh language in further education courses which include customer engagement and the provision of public services. The Government is increasingly investing in apprenticeships. Support is needed to do so through the medium of Welsh with links to workplaces that can offer work experience through the medium of Welsh.
- iii. Establishing a Welsh-medium school alumni tracking system to promote the creation of a Welsh workforce.

The National Centre for Learning Welsh

In the wake of the Education Bill, it is hoped that the National Centre for Learning Welsh will expand to include language learning for the education workforce, to create a bilingual workforce. Adequate funding is needed for the Centre, due to become the National Welsh Language Learning Institute, so that the funding matches the successful example of the Basque Country, in order to:

- i. Prioritize language training for teachers and public workers.
- ii. Provide language training to parents who want to develop the use of Welsh at home.
- iii. Increase work release programmes to learn the language and improve language skills. Is it possible to offer workplaces and businesses an incentive to do this?
- iv. Provide intensive courses over a year with up to 1,200 contact hours.
- v. Providing a purposeful curriculum and resources for all learning ages.

5. Welsh speaking Communities

Although the Government has accepted the general idea of recognising areas of higher density of Welsh speakers, positive action is needed on all of the recommendations of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities.

There is a need to increase geographical, networked or institutional communities. There are significant economic and demographic threats to Welsh-speaking communities in tourist areas.

Decisive action is needed:

- i. Setting a growth figure in the housing stock in Unitary Development Plans on the basis of local county demand and not on the basis of Government figures.
- ii. Creating a Town and Country Planning regime at all levels that promotes the Welsh language, using statutory instruments such as the overhaul of Technical Advice Note 20. This should include the need to explain how to make a purposeful linguistic impact assessment into the planning system.
- iii. A significant economic programme to strengthen communities where Welsh is a main language.
- iv. increasing intervention in the housing market, so that suitable housing is available to local people.
- v. Limiting the number of second homes and setting a specific threshold such as 20% in each electoral district.
- vi. Providing social housing where needed.
- vii. Giving local authorities the ability to buy empty homes and rent them out to local people.

- viii. A joint purchasing scheme between authorities and local people.
- ix. Including the ability to speak Welsh when considering the definition of 'local connection' in the allocation of social and affordable housing.
- x. Encouraging the use of Welsh in local businesses and high street social spaces.
- xi. Establishing a network of Welsh Language Centres that will be powerhouses for the language.

When considering the life of bilingual individuals, there is a need to increase the areas in their life where Welsh is a first language. This can be at home, at work, in the local community, on social media, in culture and media etc.

6. A Prosperous Economy

The connection between language and economy is complex and cannot be precisely controlled. However, there is a need to create an economic excitement that can cause Welsh speakers to have attractive job opportunities in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

- i. Cynllun Arfor (*'Arfor Scheme'*) is a scheme with potential. Following the initial phase, intensive long-term investment is needed in the scheme in order for it to become an economic boosting body. Arfor needs to be integrated within the economy department of County Councils and regional economic structures.
- ii. The Welsh Government's Economic Department needs to work more proactively with the Cymraeg 2050 Department.
- iii. Aim to establish Economic Growth Centres in more concentrated Welsh speaking areas.
- iv. Continue to fund and promote the Government's Helo Blod Scheme <https://busnescymru.llyw.cymru/heloblod/> and expand its scope.
- v. Placing responsibility on Business Wales to do much more in terms of promoting the Welsh language-
- vi. Recognising and safeguarding the agriculture sector and reversing the lack of financial support, as the sector contributes

hugely to the sustainability of the Welsh language in rural Wales.

- vii. Creating a Welsh Business Agency to operate across Wales.
- viii. Devolution of national institutions to areas of higher density linguistic significance.
- ix. Promoting local procurement policy i.e. Welsh, not U.K.

7. Welsh-language Workplaces

One major challenge that has still not been adequately addressed is the development of Welsh-language workplaces. The importance of using Welsh in workplaces is not adequately discussed or planned from a linguistic planning perspective. For a majority of people outside of Welsh-speaking communities, this is the main opportunity for them to be able to continue using the Welsh language after leaving the Welsh-medium education system.

Gwynedd Council has shown that it is possible to create a workforce that uses Welsh as a main administrative language. There is great opportunity for the public, third and private sectors to create Welsh-language workplaces. There is a need to:

- i. Create favourable conditions for businesses to develop in Wales if we want to develop a language policy that creates Welsh workplaces.
- ii. Collect data on Welsh public workplaces.
- iii. Set a specific quota to increase administration through the Welsh language.
- iv. Ynys Môn, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire to administer internally through the Welsh language, such as Gwynedd.
- v. Set targets for other counties.
- vi. Assimilate ethnic minorities into a language learning programme and working through Welsh.

A certain way to ensure an increase in the Welsh workforce is for the Welsh Language Standards to:

- i. Set targets for counties and public bodies.
- ii. Include the private and third sectors

More is needed than just offering a bilingual front desk service. Welsh needs to be a living language in the workplace, and especially in social spaces. But this must be complemented by a programme that will strengthen spoken Welsh in an increasing number of social centres, e.g. cafés, pubs, shopping centres.

- i. A broad programme to promote the use of Welsh first.
- ii. Making it clearer where the Welsh language can be used, and with whom.
- iii. Creating incentives for cafes, shops, etc to create a Welsh speaking atmosphere and highlight the benefits for businesses being a part of it.
- iv. Making it a habit for sales and serving staff to use Welsh first.
- v. Seeing widespread use of the 'Iaith Gwaith' pack by staff.

8. Town and Country Planning

The Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities Report recommending the designation of Areas of Higher Density Linguistic Significance necessitates that the Welsh Town and Country Planning system, at national and local level, promotes the Welsh language as it does in the field of Conservation.

Whatever is possible needs to be done to ensure a fair share of affordable housing for local people who can speak Welsh, and to ensure that the planning system does not militate against Welsh speakers. Currently, the language is not considered in the system.

- i. Making the Welsh language a vital consideration in planning, so that a suitable housing supply is available to local people.
- ii. Identifying areas with 25%+ Welsh speakers as being of Special Linguistic Significance, as well as those with 40%+ Welsh speakers being of Higher Density Linguistic Significance.
- iii. Establishing an independent and Wales-specific planning inspectorate with an understanding of language planning in counties and communities that are bilingual.
- iv. Housing policy of Local Authorities and Housing Associations to give priority to

social housing which helps local people and young people to stay in their area (it is necessary to ensure that ability in Welsh is a condition when determining the proportionate number of housing for local people in communities).

- v. Limiting the percentage of second homes to a maximum of 20% in any electoral area to ensure the viability of rural communities.
- vi. The Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner to have statutory intervention power in housing planning applications as a statutory consultee.
- vii. Prioritising social housing for local people, e.g. by using a points system.

9. Media and culture

Mass media and social media are increasingly diverse and influential.

Responsibility for all Welsh media and all forms of broadcasting in Wales should be devolved to the Welsh Senedd as soon as possible.

- i. S4C, BBC Wales and Radio Cymru, as well as all commercial broadcasters and all new media platforms should be accountable to the democratic views of the people of Wales through a national authority established by the Welsh Senedd.
- ii. We are concerned that the control of our national television channel is currently over-dependent on the British Broadcasting Corporation. We fear that S4C's reliance on BBC funding could unintentionally influence the editorial content of S4C's programmes. We also fear that the BBC's future as a public broadcaster is under threat from Westminster politicians, and that reducing the range of the Corporation's services would undermine S4C's public service to Welsh speakers.
- iii. The English-mainly services should increase their bilingual content, so that Welsh is heard by the entire population.
- iv. It is the duty of every service and platform that has the privilege of broadcasting communicating in Welsh to do so using the standard natural spoken language.
- v. There is a need to substantially increase the use of Welsh across the new media platforms, and to get the commercial

international companies to expand their use of Welsh to that end. This should be part of S4C's responsibility.

- vi. There is still a need to increase the provision of Welsh for young people on television, radio and other media.
- vii. There is a need to develop the ability to use voice recognition software in Welsh.
- viii. We need to ensure that Welsh language broadcasting is available internationally, as easily as it is in Wales.

Creative culture, museums, libraries and publishing

The cuts seen in these areas throughout the last ten years need to be rectified. Wales spends less on culture than any other European country.

- i. The cuts of recent years have been detrimental to Welsh culture in many areas.
- ii. Cutting funding for the Welsh Books Council has had a detrimental impact on the Welsh publishing world.
- iii. Cuts to the National Library and the National Museum are attacks on bodies that sustain and develop our national memory and heritage.
- iv. Cuts to the creative sector, including theatre companies, performance centres, choirs and Welsh language performers are detrimental to live creativity.

10. Strengthening implementing bodies

There are currently two bodies responsible on the national level for driving policy regarding the Welsh language.

(i) The Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner

The Commissioner has a broad remit which includes the promotion of the language. Its main function, however, has been and is to strengthen the rights of Welsh speakers by implementing the system of standards originally established by legislation in the Welsh Language Bill which came into force in 2011. The way in which the Commissioner and staff act constructively and at the same time raise their voices about policy shortcomings and the needs of the Welsh language is to be commended. But we should oversee the Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner and the *Welsh 2050*

concerned about the Commissioner's lack of influence and powers. We therefore believe that the Commissioner needs to be given powers to have a strategic role and to be a statutory consultee in a number of areas, including education and planning, so that the Welsh language can be a central consideration in these areas. To fully implement these functions, it is key to equip the Commissioner with the necessary resources (human and fiscal).

Dyfodol i'r Iaith is firmly in favour of retaining the position of independent Commissioner to carry out its current duties and strengthen them with the private sector and Town and Country Planning.

(ii) Welsh Language Division within the Welsh Government's civil service (Cymraeg 2050 Project)

This division is responsible for leading language planning and realising the intention to achieve one million speakers by 2050. Its aim to increase the use [not just knowledge] of the Welsh language in all aspects of life is core to the intent. Also ensuring that the Welsh Government embraces the need for holistic planning across policy areas and government departments.

Regarding the work of the Division, we see two options:

- (1) **Best Choice: A new Authority or Agency** - an arm's length body accountable to the Welsh Government, and possessing statutory capabilities. This is our preferred option. 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 typical of the civil service.

The areas that influence the Welsh language at present belong to different departments of the Government and are subject to different laws. Some areas still depend on the UK Government for continuity of planning and implementation. There is a need for a National Language Planning Body which will co-ordinate planning in different areas. We believe that the new Language Authority *Project* as departments within it, with Arfor developing into a Business Department. The

Cymraeg 2050 Project would become the Planning and Education departments, and the Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner would run as the Promotion/Standards department. The Authority would then be a new, stronger version of the old Language Board, which was relatively effective with its various departments. And it wouldn't be costly to set up by reorganizing staff already working in the field.

(2) **The second-best option: Elevate Project 2050 status as an influential and powerful unit** within the Welsh Government but it also needs to be mainstreamed to be part of all Welsh Government departments, such as the Future Generations Act. This can provide a greater platform for policy change that always benefits the Welsh language. To be effective, a unit would have to

- i. have a high public profile and to be known to the public as well as accountable to the Cabinet Secretary for the Welsh language in the Government.
- ii. Possess world-class expertise in language planning.
- iii. Be free to venture, innovate and experiment.

We see this option as a short-term solution. The aim should be in the medium term, and as soon as possible, to externalize the Cymraeg 2050 Project as an arm's length in figure (1) above.

Future Arrangement

The following are the commitments that Dyfodol i'r Iaith wants the political parties to make by the establishment of the new Welsh government in May 2026.

1. Promotion of the status of the Welsh language division - Cymraeg 2050 Project – within the Welsh Government, moving forward as soon as possible to establish an arms-length Language Authority. It is necessary to commit to supporting the Project with financial resources commensurate with the relevant financial amounts of the challenge and to a clear analysis in the wake of the new government's first Budget.

2. Strengthening the position of Welsh Language Commissioner and the addition of the private sector and Town and Country Planning to its portfolio of responsibility. The weaknesses of the Language Act are becoming increasingly apparent in the private sector. The banks, for example, are now outrightly refusing to provide basic services in Welsh, citing current legislation to justify that decision.

3. Financing Arfor significantly for the long term and creating it as a Development Agency for the most Welsh-speaking areas, and linking the strengthening of the Welsh language with County Councils' internal administration, the economic, social and cultural development of the region being central to its remit.

4. Establishment of a separate planning inspectorate for Wales and Areas of Higher density Linguistic Significance so that the Welsh language and the needs of local people are an essential consideration in planning. At the same time, new Welsh Government should commit to implementing the recommendations of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities Report.

5. Establishing a procedure to measure the use of Welsh in different ways, and be responsible for promoting its use through innovative schemes.

6. Cymraeg 2050 project to implement the recommendations of the Welsh Language and Education Bill (Wales), in collaboration with The National Centre for Learning Welsh, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and Estyn, to increase the number of Welsh-medium schools and learning through the medium of Welsh in every school.