



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

Manifesto

for the 2021 Senedd election



Foreword

The 2016-21 government set an ambitious target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050, and the next government will need to take a radical approach to ensure that we are on track to meet the target.

There is already political consensus and cross-party support towards securing a prosperous future for the Welsh language; and all parties seeking to gain seats in the Senedd in May 2021 will need to bring forward policy commitments which will lead to creating more speakers and increase the use of the language.

2050 may feel a long way away, but if bold thinking is not adopted by the 2021-26 Government in key areas such as education, skills and the economy, the goal is unlikely to be realised. One of the main challenges to be addressed in the next five years is to put in place arrangements for the transition between education and the workplace, ensuring that schools, colleges and universities produce a workforce with skills to work through the medium of Welsh.

Alongside any ambitious policy vision, necessary funds and resources must be invested to meet the objectives. This means significantly increasing the budget and resources available for the Welsh language, including the Welsh Language Commissioner and our partners who promote and create opportunities to use the language.

I'm presenting these recommendations in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, without yet knowing what social and economic challenges it will bring. The past few weeks have proved what can be achieved by adopting a bold and innovative mindset; and in looking forward to establishing a 'new normal', I ask the political parties to put this mindset into practice when considering how to safeguard the future of the Welsh language. COVID-19 should not be a reason to abandon the vision; and as parties prepare their manifestos, I urge them to mainstream the vision and objectives of the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy across all commitments.

In this document, I present recommendations for policy recommendations which will lead to creating the climate to reach the target of a million Welsh speakers and double the percentage using the language on a daily basis.

Aletha Roberts.


Part 1: Ensuring the status of the Welsh language

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 was a significant milestone in the history of the Welsh language – for the first time it confirmed the official status of the language and established rights for people to use it. In its report ‘Supporting and promoting the Welsh language ’ (July 2019), the Assembly’s Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee recognised the Measure’s assurances to the public and organisations, and concluded there was not strong enough evidence for the need to introduce new legislation at the time. It is crucial that the next Government commits to providing stability to the structures and rights already in place, and seeks to align, sustain and improve the experiences of Welsh speakers within the existing legislative framework and regulatory powers.

Creating and safeguarding the rights of Welsh speakers

There is clear evidence that the Welsh language standards have led to improving people's experiences when accessing services. The standards have also led to a situation where employees have more opportunities to use the language in their workplace, where local authorities take ownership of promoting the use of the Welsh language and where there is a duty to consider the language in policy decisions.

To ensure that the momentum is maintained and to ensure consistency across organisations, it is essential that the government resumes the process of imposing standards at the earliest opportunity and extends the standards to an increasing number of organisations. Although 122 institutions are now implementing standards, a number of sectors are still waiting to be included in regulations before we can move on to the next stage of imposing standards. They include housing associations, non-ministerial UK Government organisations such as HMRC and ACAS, gas and



electricity suppliers, rail services and bus companies, and some organisations which receive more than £400k of public money.

Recommendation 1: Introduce regulations which will enable the Commissioner to impose standards on all organisations that have already been through a standards investigation process, and also explore further sectors listed in the Measure's schedules for which standards could be introduced.

Recommendation 2: Take every opportunity to impose standards on new entities, organisations and partnerships.

Investing in the infrastructure of the language

There needs to be strategic investment in the infrastructure of the Welsh language to ensure that it is safeguarded and able to evolve to meet the needs of the digital age.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that Welsh language voice recognition technology will be fully developed by the end of the Assembly period.

Recommendation 4: Give statutory powers to the use of standardized place-names in official contexts and explore ways of protecting the historic names of Wales.

Part 2: Creating Welsh speakers

The *Cymraeg 2050* strategy recognises education and training as the primary means of achieving the target of one million speakers. It sets a target for increasing the proportion of learners leaving statutory education who are able to speak Welsh to 70% (25,000) by 2050. It also sets ambitious targets for increasing the numbers of teachers who teach Welsh as a subject and who teach through the medium of Welsh in the primary and secondary sectors.

Although there have been some praiseworthy developments in recent years, they have not been sufficient, and very little progress has been made in reality. To ensure progress, the next government must introduce strategic changes to ensure that the education system creates fluent Welsh speakers. Significant investment is also required to improve the linguistic skills of the current and future education workforce.

Childcare and early years education

Introducing the language to children from an early age is particularly important in order to create speakers who will use it throughout their lives. However, there is some way to go to ensure that childcare provision meets the demand for Welsh-medium education, let alone create more demand. The next government will need to create an early years and childcare system where the creation of Welsh speakers and preparing for Welsh medium education is central.

Recommendation 5: Give support to settings currently offering provision mainly through the medium of English to offer provision in Welsh; and introduce incentives for childcare settings that offer a Welsh-medium or significantly bilingual provision.

Recommendation 6: In order to facilitate recommendation 5, develop a specific and ambitious strategy for developing the Welsh language skills of the childcare and early years education workforce which builds on the current Camau programme and provide funding to deliver the strategy.

Statutory education

While the Government has set out an ambitious vision and targets for education in *Cymraeg 2050*, there needs to be corresponding commitments in terms of funding, strategy and policy. Plans to increase the Welsh-medium education workforce must be bold and radical to reverse the trends of the past 10 years and the growing shortage within the sector. Securing sufficient numbers of teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh is essential to enable the growth of Welsh-medium education, and also to realise the objectives of the new curriculum across schools.

Recommendation 7: Develop a strategy to ensure that initial teacher education training courses develop Welsh language skills for all prospective teachers. As well as improving and sustaining the skills of those who already speak Welsh, teacher training courses need to improve the skills and increase the confidence of those with some Welsh, and to provide basic skills to those who have little or no Welsh at the start of the training process.


Recommendation 8: Create a specific funding programme for realising the objectives of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.

Recommendation 9: Review and revise travel regulations and guidance to facilitate access to Welsh-medium childcare, statutory education and post-16 education, ensuring equity for learners and families who wish to receive Welsh-medium education across Wales.

Recommendation 10: Give guidance and funding towards moving schools along the language continuum, ensuring an increase in the proportion of the curriculum taught through the medium of Welsh.

Post-16 education and skills

There is a danger that pupils who are learning Welsh and studying through the medium of Welsh at school lose their grasp of the language after leaving. This often happens because there are a lack of opportunities to study through the medium of Welsh in further and higher education, and when pursuing apprenticeship programmes. The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol is now responsible for expanding opportunities to study Welsh in the further education and work-based learning sector,



building on its work in the higher education sector. The current investment in the higher education sector needs to be maintained as work in the other sectors progresses.

Recommendation 11: A policy commitment to fully support and fund the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Further Education and Apprenticeship Welsh-medium Action Plan'.

Recommendation 12: Building on the current Work Welsh scheme, develop a comprehensive long-term programme to improve the Welsh language skills of the further education and work-based learning workforce so that a significant percentage of students in key areas learn through the medium of Welsh. The programme should include methods for teaching bilingually and should enable the release of staff for extended periods to master the Welsh language as well as recruiting more Welsh speaking staff to the sector.

Welsh for adults

As the statutory education sector does not currently produce enough Welsh speakers there is a significant reliance on teaching Welsh to adults in order to not only meet the targets of *Cymraeg 2050* but also to enable organisations to comply with the requirements of the Welsh language standards and other legislation. Community based Welsh for Adults programmes need to be maintained alongside the expansion of workplace schemes.

Recommendation 13: A commitment to continue to fund the Work Welsh project with an emphasis on fluency targets and increasing the use of the language in workplaces.

Part 3: Increasing the opportunities to use Welsh

Another crucial target in *Cymraeg 2050* is to double the numbers of people using the language in their daily lives. To avoid a situation where a million people are able to speak Welsh but few actually use it, action must be taken to support the prosperity of Welsh as a workplace language and the default language of receiving public services.

The standards place a duty on public organisations to gather information about the linguistic ability of their workforce. The Government needs to facilitate a common approach to collecting this data. Very few organisations in Wales administer internally through the medium of Welsh, and in order to increase and normalize the use of the language, more organisations need to move in this direction, including entities created through increased collaboration between elements of the Welsh public sector.


Collaboration and internal administration

Consideration should be given to the Welsh language standards when planning formal collaboration between public organisations to ensure that the Welsh language is protected and promoted under any new arrangements. Proactive steps should also be taken to ensure that opportunities to use the Welsh language are not hampered as the public sector moves towards a situation of increased collaboration.

Recommendation 14: Ensure that the strongest commitments in terms of Welsh language administration are adopted when developing statutory duties on public bodies to collaborate.

Health and care

Several versions of the *More Than Just Words* framework have now been put in place to promote the use of the Welsh language in the health and care sector. Welsh



language standards are in place, yet there is no guarantee that people will be able to receive health and care services through the medium of Welsh. Much more action and funding is needed to make that happen, with an emphasis on workforce development.

Recommendation 15: Establish a Welsh language learning strategy for the health and care sector which will ensure that all practitioners leave publicly funded health and care training with appropriate Welsh language skills and language awareness. Alongside this, invest significantly to improve the skills of all health and care workers, building on the current Work Welsh programmes.

Recommendation 16: Undertake a review of how the active offer; people's ability to receive Welsh language services and the clinical need to do so has permeated and how it is implemented among workers involved in the care of priority sectors including children and young people, older people and people with mental health problems.

Recommendation 17: A commitment to place further duties on the primary care sector by introducing regulations before the end of the Assembly term.

Part 4: Housing and work

The increase in migration and developments in the way people contact each other mean that the idea of communities is continually evolving. And this leads to challenges and opportunities in terms of increasing the use of the Welsh language.

On the one hand, a range of economic factors such as employment opportunities and the housing market are likely to affect the sustainability of communities with a high density of Welsh speakers. In particular, there are concerns that these factors may trigger out-migration from communities with a high density of Welsh speakers, especially by young people. On the other hand, the Welsh language can also benefit the economy, for example as a marketing tool or a valuable skill in the workplace.

The importance of the connection between the language and the economy is widely recognized across the political spectrum. However, high-level policy statements in this area have historically not resulted in practical action, and this will be the challenge for the 2021-26 Government.

Planning

The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 established, for the first time, the statutory basis for the need to consider the Welsh language in the planning system; and this was a significant step forward. In reviewing the procedures, however, we found there is no consistency in planning authorities' policies in terms of the Welsh language. This leads to a lack of assurance that the potential impact of developments on the Welsh language is reliably assessed, and a lack of assurance that appropriate steps are taken to mitigate any adverse effects or to identify opportunities to promote the Welsh language.

Recommendation 18: Provide a clear and detailed guidance to the Planning Authority and local authorities on how to assess the impact on the Welsh language and how planning policies should promote the use of the Welsh language.

Recommendation 19: Provide guidance to local authorities on how they can control how many houses are registered as second homes or businesses.

Work

As we leave the European Union and implement the new regional investment frameworks, the next Government will need to be creative in ensuring that the Welsh economy and communities thrive. It is vital that the changes do not lead to a deterioration in the economic situation of Welsh speakers and Welsh speaking communities, and that the Welsh language is seen as a factor that can assist business growth and economic development.

Recommendation 20: Include an expectation for businesses seeking financial support from the Government to identify the Welsh language skills of its workforce and commit to using and developing those skills.

Recommendation 21: Link the objectives of economic development strategies to those of *Cymraeg 2050* by creating opportunities to support new businesses to establish in areas with a high density of Welsh speakers.

Recommendation 22: Create quality public sector jobs in areas with a high density of Welsh speakers by supporting flexible working conditions and / or locations for those areas.



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