

Welsh Language Promotion Plan for Gwynedd 2018-2023

– consultation document

Content

1. Introduction
2. Summary of the present situation and challenges
3. What we would like to see?
 - 3.1 Priority Area 1 – The language of the home
 - 3.2 Priority Area 2 – The language of learning
 - 3.3 Priority Area 3 – The language of work and services
 - 3.4 Priority Area 4 – The language of the community
 - 3.5 Priority Area 5 – Research and technology – setting the right foundations
4. Implementing the Strategy

1. Introduction

The Welsh Language Standards, as enforced on Gwynedd Council in accordance with Section 44 of the **Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011** sets a requirement on the Council to produce a 5 year promotional strategy that will show how we intend to promote and facilitate the use of the language in the county.

Gwynedd Council has a long history of promoting and protecting the Welsh language as a natural means of communication in all of its services. The language is given a prominent place in the strategic plans of the Council, and the Language Policy sets our commitment to the Welsh language by noting that it is the responsibility of **all** staff and council Members to promote the Welsh language in all aspects of their work.

The **Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-23** notes as one of its well-being objectives that it aims to ensure that all residents can live in a community where the Welsh language is a natural part of life.

This Strategy builds on the work carried out on the basis of the Gwynedd Welsh Language Strategy 2014-18, that was led by Hunaniaith, the language initiative in Gwynedd that operates within the language unit of the Council. It notes the opportunities available to promote and increase use of the Welsh language as a natural part of everyday life. The Strategy will also offer ideas on how Gwynedd can contribute towards the **Welsh Government Language Strategy: Cymraeg 2050**, which sets the target of getting a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.

With the Council leading the work on this new strategy, it will also reflect the wider commitments made in relation to the Welsh language in areas such as education, planning a care and social services¹, and complement the priorities noted in the **Gwynedd and Anglesey Well-being Plan and Gwynedd Council Plan**.

The implementation and success of the Strategy will depend on cooperation with many partners, public bodies and community groups, in order to tackle the various challenges and barriers that face the Welsh language across the county.

¹ More than just words.... Follow-on strategic framework for Welsh language services in health, social services and social care <http://gov.wales/topics/health/publications/health/guidance/words/?skip=1&lang=en>

2. Summary of the present situation and challenges

2.1 Vital statistics

According to the 2011 Census 65.4% of the population of Gwynedd can speak Welsh.

There was an increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers in some parts of the county, namely the wards of Waunfawr, Ogwen, Y Groeslon, Llanbedr, Corris/Mawddwy in 2011, and an increase back over the 70% mark in the ward of Clynnog.

But there was a general decline in the number of wards with over 70% of the population able to speak Welsh, with only 39 left according to the 2011 census.

The largest drop in Welsh speakers was seen in the 65+ age group, and the biggest increase amongst the youngest of our population, with an increase from 70.9% to 73.0% in the 3-4 age group and from 91.8% to 92.3% in the 5-15 age group, which suggests that early years programmes and the education system is doing a good job of setting strong foundations for the children and young people in regards to their use of the language.

2.2 Summary of the challenges

In order to find the opportunities to increase the number of speakers and increase the use of the Welsh language, we must also acknowledge and identify the challenges and barriers that stop that from happening. We need to be able to identify those areas or parts of life where people use less of the language during their day to day lives, and understand the factors that can affect the personal language use of individuals.

Certainly the challenge, and one of the most important factors in the prosperity of the language in Gwynedd, is to get people to use the skills and abilities they have in as many situations and circumstances as possible.

More specifically to Gwynedd, the following areas encompass the challenges that we need to consider in trying to strengthen the Welsh language in our communities:

- **Geographical challenges :**

Varying levels in the percentage of Welsh speakers across the county means that different answers and interventions are needed in different areas. The variation in the jobs and services available in some rural areas can also have an effect on the prosperity of the language.

- **Demographic changes:**

Young people moving out of the area to find work and a lower number of families moving in to an area because of a lack of Services can lead to an older population, which can lead to a higher or lower rate of Welsh speakers.

- **Transferring the language within the family:**

Families not transferring the language to the children, which leads to losing the language as a language of the home.

- Losing a number of Welsh speakers after 16 years of age:

No steady progression in regards to language use as young people leave education and stop using the language when they move into work or in their social life as young adults.

- The status of the Welsh language in business:

The language is not given a prominent enough place in business.

- People's confidence in their own ability and skills:

A lack of opportunities to use the language regularly in socialising, and difficulties in accessing Welsh medium services can lead to a lack of confidence, and to less use.

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3. What we would like to see?

Here is a summary of the vision, and what we would like to see happening in Gwynedd over the next few years.

- Families that see a benefit of using the language as a home language
- Schools that give all encouragement and support to developing fluent Welsh speakers
- Young people that see a value to the language as a skill for life and as a means of entertainment and socialising, and which is used in every part of life
- Public bodies that offer Welsh language services regularly and to a high standard
- Private and business sector that gives the Welsh language value and status and that understands it's value as a skill and a business asset
- Community groups given support to maintain the language as the natural means of communication
- The Welsh language given a clear and obvious priority in economic, housing and planning schemes locally in order to ensure that any schemes and developments contribute in a positive way towards the efforts to safeguard and strengthen the Welsh language in our communities
- Residents that are confident in using the Welsh language and show a positive attitude and good will towards it.

In the next part of the document, we will take a closer look at some of the points above under five thematic areas that also reflect the key strategic areas in the Welsh Governments Language Strategy.

We will in due course produce a detail action plan on the basis of these priorities, which will set out how the Council, along with community and public sector partners, will go about promoting the language and increase its use in the county.

3.1 Priority Area 1 – The language of the home

The vision...

- An understanding amongst parents of the value of transferring the language to their children, and of the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism
- An increase in the number of pre-school age children that have access to play opportunities through the medium of Welsh
- An increase in the number of parents who learn a little or some Welsh and use those acquired skills with their families.

The statistics..

90% of 3-4 year old in Gwynedd can speak Welsh if they come from homes where both parents speak Welsh. 63% of 3-4 year olds can speak Welsh when only one parent in the home can speak Welsh.

Even more positively, 35% of children in Gwynedd who are being raised in homes where neither parent can speak Welsh, are noted as Welsh speakers in the 2011 census.

What needs to happen next?

We need to continue to work with other agencies and partners in the early years sector in order to ensure that positive and consistent messages are being shared with parents about the value of the language, not only for the children but for the whole family, and to encourage more parents to learn the language alongside their children.

We also have to ensure that practices and expertise is shared effectively between organisations and providers to ensure we have the widest possible reach and influence.

There are a host of independent groups and providers in Gwynedd, for example, who provide a whole variety of play and social opportunities for young families, like story and song sessions, swimming and keep fit sessions. A large number of childcare providers also provide Welsh medium care, and are in a prime position to influence the language acquisition of children in their care.

There is an opportunity here to influence those providers by offering them language awareness sessions and training tailored especially for them on matters relating to the role they can have in conveying positive messages about the Welsh language to parents. Hunaniaith has already done some work in this area, in partnership with Cymraeg for Kids, and we would like to see that work continued and developed over the next few years.

3.2 Priority Area 2 – The language of learning

The vision...

- Schools that give the language prestige and value by continuing to implement the Language Charter in primary schools and the Language Strategy for secondary schools
- An increase in the number of young people that choose to study and receive qualifications through the medium of Welsh
- More pupils continuing to improve their Welsh language skills in transferring from primary to secondary, and on to post-compulsory education.

The statistics...

According to the 2011 Census, 1,997 or 73% of 3-4 year olds in Gwynedd can speak Welsh and 13,038 or 92% of 5-15 year olds.

According to the data of the Language Charter, only 41.2% of KS2 pupils use the Welsh language “all the time” on the school yard.

The percentage of Welsh speakers in Gwynedd drops sharply when you move from the 3-15 age group to the 16-24 age group, from 89% to 58.6%.

The Welsh Language Strategy of the Welsh Government, Cymraeg 2050, notes that over half of Wales’s learners leave school at 16 years of age, moving on to employment based or occupational further education

What needs to happen next?

Various projects are being implemented by the Councils Education department in relation to this area of priority, with the Gwynedd Educational Language Policy and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan setting the strong foundations for the work being done. In extending the reach and operation of those projects over the next few years, we hope to have a positive effect on the language use and choices of our young people, that will in its turn lead to a better attitude towards the language as they grow older.

The main project for the next few years will be the Secondary Schools Language Strategy, which has been developed as a continuation to the work of the language charter – a project developed under the previous Gwynedd Language Strategy. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that the Welsh language is an effective medium for school life and work in all its variations, and to have a positive influence on the language used by young people in a curricular and social context.

Every school will implement the Secondary School Welsh Language Strategy, and work towards ensuring that all school stakeholders are a part of the scheme.

Post compulsory education

We will also be working to try and reduce the number of natural Welsh speakers we lose in Gwynedd as they leave the influence of the school environment.

There is a strong link here with the use of the Welsh language in business and work, and the need for young people to see the value of the language as an asset and a skill. We will therefore be working with post compulsory education providers to strengthen the link between occupational courses and the work opportunities and employers, in order to ensure that the skills and abilities needed in the local workplace is provided through the education system.

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3.3 Priority Area 3 – the language of work and services

The vision...

- An increase in the number of residents who use the Welsh language in work and in using services – face to face and online
- An increased awareness amongst business owners and managers of the benefits of Welsh language skills in the workforce and the benefits of offering Welsh medium services
- A better understanding and awareness of the opportunities provided by technology and resources to increase the use of the Welsh language and confidence in doing so within the workforce
- The Welsh language being given a central place in regional arrangements for cooperation and strategic planning.

The statistics...

According to the National Language Use Survey of 2013-15, 85% of the fluent Welsh speakers in Gwynedd use the language every day. This has decreased from 90% in the 2004-06 survey.

Over 90% of Gwynedd Council staff can speak Welsh.

What needs to happen next?

We will be working to ensure that seeking Welsh medium services does not become a struggle for the residents of Gwynedd, and that it is as easy and as accessible as possible.

This will mean using our influence in the Public Services Boards to increase the use of the Welsh language within public bodies in the county to ensure that consistent and high quality services are provided to the public.² This will mean encouraging service users to use the Welsh language in their first contact with the public bodies, as well as developing an understanding amongst the bodies themselves of best practice in relation to greeting service users in that first contact.

In ensuring that workforces have the necessary ability and skills, and that businesses understand the need to give the Welsh language status in recruitment practices, we will increase the opportunities for people to use the Welsh language while seeking services.

Over the next few years, the Council as an employer will develop a varied programme of language training in order to develop the skills of the workforce, to provide more opportunities for learners to practice in order to lead to a positive change, and to try and deal with the issues of confidence in written skills. We will also work on behavioural change models in order to try and have a positive influence on the linguistic practices of the workforce, and the wider public.

² Links to the commitment made in the Well-being Plan for Gwynedd and Anglesey

We will need to find new ways of encouraging people to use Welsh language services, online and face to face, as well as ensuring that the Welsh language is promoted and highlighted as part of co-providing contracts or outsourcing services.

In setting and agreeing on strong conditions with partners and external providers, and insisting that working contracts stick to our principles and standards, we can improve the quality of the services provided to the public.

In accordance with the commitment in the Council Plan, we will need to work with local private sector businesses, and especially so in the tourist and leisure sectors, in order to provide clear guidance on giving the Welsh language skills (and multilingual skills) a prominent place in their recruitment policies. This would raise the profile of the language as a working language, as well as raising its profile amongst international visitors and contribute towards the sense of place for tourists.

We will be encouraging more businesses and bodies to adopt the active offer principle, and to realise that linguistic courtesy and respect towards the language choice of users can create a lot of good will.

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3.4 Priority Area 4 – the language of the community

The vision...

- An increase in the percentage of the population that consider themselves fluent Welsh speakers.
- Community groups given support to organise and put on activities that actively promote the Welsh language.
- The Welsh language visually apparent, in activities and in advertising on social media, ensuring at the very least a bilingual and inclusive ethos to community events.
- Young people being encouraged to be community leaders by organising events that influence the language use of their peers and increase opportunities to socialise naturally through the medium of Welsh.
- Different social and community factions, including less willing speakers of the language, being made to feel a part of the “Welsh community”.
- The Welsh language given a clear and obvious priority in economic, housing and planning schemes locally in order to ensure that any schemes and developments contribute in a positive way towards the efforts to safeguard and strengthen the position of the Welsh language in our communities.

The statistics...

The National Language Use Survey of 2013-15 (Welsh Government and Welsh Language Commissioner 2015) shows that 85% of fluent Welsh speakers in Gwynedd use the language every day, which is a high percentage, but it also shows that it has fallen from 90% in the same survey conducted in 2004-06. The same survey shows that an increasing number of people consider themselves Welsh speakers, but not fluent speakers, with that number increasing from 13,800 in 2004-06 to 19,400 in 2013-15.

What needs to happen next?

The menter iaith (language initiative) in Gwynedd is Hunaniaith, and it is a part of the Council, and as such the work carried out by them and their partners will be crucial in implementing the vision in this specific area.

Hunaniaith will continue to develop projects that will provide new opportunities for people to use the Welsh language naturally in new and varied contexts. They will also look for new opportunities to develop the use of the language in technology.

They will continue to work closely with external partners and community organisations to encourage confidence and provide practice opportunities to those who are less willing to speak or use the language, or who are new speakers, in order to integrate different factions of our communities more effectively.

They will offer support to voluntary groups and community representatives and work to increase awareness and understanding of the role each and every one of us has to play in maintaining the language, and to increase the pride in it as a living language.

They will also offer support to ensure there are varied opportunities available to people of every age to use the language in their communities, but especially to young people, who are at a very vulnerable and influential stage of their lives.

We will need to work alongside many community partners in this area, as well as community councils and businesses who are responsible for organising activities in our communities. Raising the status of the Welsh language within some of the high profile large events, and seeing organisers giving Welsh language providers and entertainers the right stage would show young people especially, and the community as a whole, that there is value to the language in all fields.

It will also be very important that the language is given the proper priority and attention in policies and strategic plans that have an effect on communities, and especially so in the context of planning.

The Welsh Language Unit of the Council will continue to work closely with the Planning Unit in order to develop expertise in that specific area that will in turn strengthen and protect the linguistic interests within the planning process.

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Priority Area 5 – Research and technology – setting the right foundations

The vision...

- Developing a better understanding of people's habits in using the Welsh language.
- Finding new ways of influencing people's use of the language.
- More people ready and willing to use the Welsh language in the context of technology.

What needs to happen next?

We will try and use our unique situation, and the large concentration of Welsh speakers in the county in order to better understand the habits and trends of people in using the Welsh language, and to try and increase their use of the Welsh language while using technology.

We will strive for a better relationship with the universities of Wales in order to identify opportunities to contribute towards research in the field of language planning and behavioural change that will in its turn help us to better understand how people use the language in different contexts and how we can adapt to those changes.

We will try and offer more work experience opportunities for students that will give them a better understanding of the practical elements of language planning, and in order to contribute towards developing expertise in the area.

We will develop projects that will encourage more people to use the Welsh language on the internet, on social media and in using self-service.

5. Implementing the Strategy

As this Strategy is being led by the Council, it will concentrate mainly on those areas where it has direct influence. However, as there is close working with other bodies and agencies across many of the strategic areas, we will also be referring to the role partners and community organisation can play in promoting the Welsh language across the county.

In working across Gwynedd and Anglesey, for example, the Public Services Board can influence other bodies like the Health Board and other bodies who provide services to the public.

Maintaining effective relationships with organisations like Cymraeg i Blant, the Urdd, and many others that receive funding through the Welsh promotion grant distributed by the Welsh Government, will also be crucial in order to ensure there is no duplication of work, and that our efforts to protect and promote the language is going in the same direction.

Our intention is to fulfil the main elements of this Strategy in cooperation with some communities, and by working strategically to mainstream the Welsh language and language planning, and ensure it is an integral part of plans, strategies, programmes, policies, projects and activities provided and organised in Gwynedd.

This means that the Welsh language, and the promotion of its use, becomes a natural part of policy and the implementation of economic and regeneration plans, planning, housing policy, education and integration. All this alongside the numerous campaigns to promote the Welsh language that are implemented directly by communities themselves.

The Strategy will need to measure to what extent we succeed in weaving together these differing elements, how other policies contribute towards the prosperity of the Welsh language, and how we identify and influence on policies when they hinder or boost the Welsh language.