

MEETING	Language Committee
DATE	24 April 2023
TITLE	Economy and Community Department Report
PURPOSE	To present information about the Department's contribution to the Language Policy
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1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report was prepared in response to the Language Committee's request for information on the Economy and Community Department's contribution to Gwynedd Council's Language Policy. The report focuses on the progress made over the last year and a copy of the 2022 report is attached for information - [Language Committee Report 7 April 2022](#)
- 1.2 The following table was created in response to the Committee's specific questions and examples we wish to highlight of the Departments services have been included.

2. RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE'S QUESTIONS

Question 1. Promoting and advancing

How does your department go beyond offering bilingual services and contributes to the objectives of the county's language strategy (what activities and projects have been carried out during the past year which raise the status of the Welsh language and ensures opportunities for people to use Welsh in the community)?

The Council's language strategy sets priorities for promoting the Welsh language in five fields:

1. Language of the family,
2. The Language of Learning,
3. The Language of Work and Services
4. The Language of the Community
5. Research and Technology

The current strategy can be viewed here:

<https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/cy/Cyngor/Dogfennau-Cyngor/Strategaethau-a-pholisiau/Cynllun-iaith/Cynllun-Hybu'r-Gymraeg-yng-Ngwynedd-2018-2023.pdf>

Answer:

The Department has collaborated with partners to submit a bid to the Welsh Government to fund the Arfor programme over a period of 3 years. £11m has been earmarked for expenditure between January 2023 and March 2025 on a package of projects to promote the Welsh language.

The purpose of the Arfor programme is to support communities which are Welsh language strongholds to thrive by means of economic interventions that will also contribute to increasing opportunities to see and use the Welsh language on a daily basis. There are 4 main objectives:

1. Create opportunities for children and young families (≤ 35 years old) to remain or return to their native communities
2. Create enterprising communities within Welsh-speaking areas
3. Maximise the benefits of activity by collaborating
4. Strengthen the identity of communities with a high density of Welsh-speakers

We have reached agreement on the 5 projects to be funded and the Department will manage and implement these projects over the next 2 years:

1. Llwyddo'n Lleol
2. Cymunedau Mentrus (Enterprising Communities)
3. ARFOR Challenge Fund
4. Strengthen the identity of ARFOR communities
5. Learning from the ARFOR Programme

Economy Development (Business Support) - when preparing to open a series of new grant funds, we refer applicants to undertake the Welsh Language Commissioner's language assessment. We have also included questions to ensure that we collect data about the linguistic profile of every company that applies for a grant.

Tourism, Marketing and Events Service: The Service has been collaborating with the Council Departments and the National Park Authority to establish the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035. One of the agreed principles for the future is: Celebrate, respect and protect our communities, language, culture and heritage and a priority will be given to promoting local ownership and to developing opportunities to highlight the Welsh Language, in our culture and heritage. Work is progressing on developing new comprehensive measures for the visitor economy and discussions are continuing with Bangor University to identify sensible methods of researching the impact (positive and negative) of the visiting economy on our language in our communities.

Pilot research will be undertaken with Bangor University in the Dyffryn Ogwen area, one of the components of the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales World Heritage Site.

Museums and Arts

The Service has reviewed the arrangements for running the café space at Storiell, taking into account Storiell's broader role as a community hub. By collaborating with Menter Iaith Bangor, baby café sessions are held in the space as well as sessions to encourage chats over a cuppa informally between Welsh-speakers and new Welsh-speakers.

Gwynedd Community Arts continues to provide bilingual sessions across Gwynedd to encourage creativity and well-being in the communities of Gwynedd through the arts. Through the Strategic Grants to the Arts, support is given to arts organisations and companies in Gwynedd to reach every part of the county and offer a Welsh and bilingual provision. Specific support has been given to Theatr y Ddraig, Barmouth recently to expand the Welsh language offer available there.

In art activities that are led by a non-Welsh-speaking Artist, the Service uses a Welsh-speaking assistant who supports the Artist to learn, and to provide a Welsh language service to attendees and the parents.

In the Craft for Well-being project, there was a mix of Welsh- and English-speakers at the activities - and the feedback was very positive about this opportunity for people to learn Welsh in a relaxed and supportive environment. According to the artist who was holding the activity:

'Welsh-learners discovered that being in a group of mainly Welsh-speakers was a great help for them to learn more Welsh. They said that the language used was easier to follow and more relevant (about crafting) to them than what they had learnt before in Welsh classes.'

The Service offers therapeutic arts activities through the medium of Welsh, e.g. the 'Llannerch Lleu' project (creative intervention with year 6 girls mainly, with sessions for year 6 boys and school staff). This was an opportunity for attendees to gain access to art therapy that is normally available through the medium of English

Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales

The Welsh language is a cross-cutting theme within the Management Plan and is addressed at each Partnership Board meeting. Discussions have been held to identify opportunities to monitor any impacts that could derive from projects developing from the designation on the Welsh language. By acknowledging the development of the National Heritage Lottery Fund application, we are discussing with communities across the slate areas to identify opportunities and activities to promote the Welsh language, and an understanding of our heritage and culture. Collaboration with Bangor University on initial research in Dyffryn Ogwen is an important step forward so we can have a baseline to monitor any impacts on the Welsh language and the confidence of our communities following the UNESCO World Heritage designation.

Archives Service

The Archives and Museums Education Service provides materials and activities for schools across Gwynedd in order for them to understand their communities, the importance of the Welsh language and local identity.

Libraries Service

The majority of workshops for children and families, and adults held in Gwynedd Libraries are either Welsh-medium only or with Welsh as a central part of them. We believe that by giving people an opportunity to hear and chat, and participate through the medium of Welsh, that the Welsh language will be seen as a community, living language.

This is a quote from an attendee - "The story sessions are the only exposure I have to Welsh nursery rhymes and Welsh stories."

On one occasion in Pwllheli recently, two Welsh-learners, who happened to be in the building without children whilst a session was being held, asked to join the session in order to improve their Welsh skills. They were welcomed to listen to the story, join in with the singing and movements and participate in the craft activity that followed. They had learnt about body parts that week at their Welsh lesson, and they genuinely appreciated being able to take part and have the opportunity to practise their Welsh.

Stories like this show that there is added value in holding the sessions in the main Library so that the public can hear the language being used in a fun way which gives children and babies an opportunity to have new experiences and a valuable opportunity for parents and others to socialise and support each other.

As a consequence of this, we have started to collaborate with the Canolfan Dysgu Cymraeg and offer a space in the Libraries for tutors to hold Welsh learning courses. On the tail of these courses, it is possible to refer people to the Paned a Sgwrs sessions (an opportunity for people to discuss Welsh books/poems/resources led by Library staff), and successful groups are currently being held at the Libraries in Cricieth and Barmouth, with further sessions to follow at other libraries.

By means of our collaboration plans with the North Wales Society for the Blind and Y Lolfa, we are able to produce audio book resources and audio e-books, and bold print books, in Welsh, with these resources available at Gwynedd Libraries and Libraries across Wales. Without our intervention, these resources would not be available.

We are collaborating with Cymraeg i Blant to hold sessions for children and families at specific Libraries.

The interface of the majority of systems is available in Welsh including our on-line catalogue, the self-service system and Borrowbox.

Regeneration Programmes Service

The Service is drawing up an Equality Assessment Plan as part of implementing a programme that succeeded in a funding application through the Llewyrch o'r Llechi, Levelling Up Fund. An assessment will be carried out of the programme and of all individual plans. The individual plans will be implemented by a range of partners, and they will be required to complete the assessment. Linguistic matters are an important part of the assessment.

Question 2. Policy and Standards Matters

- i. Staff language skills - number of Welsh-speakers and learners within the department (latest Language Designations data).
- ii. Barriers - are there any barriers to your ability as a department to offer a full service in Welsh (i.e. act on the requirements of the Language Policy and Welsh Language Standards)?
- iii. Compliments and Complaints - provide information on any compliments or complaints that the department has received during the year about Welsh/bilingual services.

Answer:

80.5% of the Department's staff had completed a language self-assessment in September 2022. 39 members of staff had not submitted a language self-assessment, but because collecting information from casual and front-line staff can be challenging, we have been focusing recently on collecting assessments from line managers in order to note whether the individuals meet the language designations of their jobs or not.

This means that only 3 members of the Department's staff had no language assessment at all, and those individuals have been targeted.

The assessments show that 94.5% of the Department's staff have met the language designations of the job.

Of the 9 members of staff who do not meet the language designation of their job, none is following language training at present and this matter is being addressed.

The ability of the Museums and Arts Service to attract Welsh language or new speakers as volunteers continues to be challenging and we are considering the best methods of attracting and managing volunteers for the service.

Barriers:

In terms of the Museums and Arts Service, it is not always possible to work with Welsh-speaking artists - if this is the case, we support them to conduct the activities with Assistants who speak Welsh and give the artists who are new speakers an opportunity to use Welsh if they are confident to do so. Support is available through the Arts Council for Wales for artists to learn Welsh, but it may be an idea to offer more support through Cyngor Gwynedd.

It is challenging at times to share information on social media, which is relevant to the arts in Gwynedd, unless they are available bilingually.

Complaints:

The Department has received observations from Howard Huws from Cylch yr Iaith about the Council's work on the development of the Visitor Economy Plan and on the development of the Llewyrch o'r Llechi programme. More information about these complaints will be shared with Members in the Committee.

Some complaints have been received about staff at Neuadd Dwyfor and Storiell speaking English amongst themselves. A discussion has been held with staff in order to encourage them to speak Welsh together and to assess any needs or support they require to communicate naturally together in Welsh.

Question 3. Development Opportunities

Do you have ideas about new ways we can promote the Welsh language in the county's communities - either in your own services or by collaborating with others?

Answer:

The Museums and the Arts Service could offer broader activities within our communities to support well-being, creativity, cultural understanding and linguistic skills - but there is a continuous challenge of securing additional funding in order to fulfil this work and there is no core budget available in the Service to deliver more than what is already done.

Through the projects of the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales World Heritage Site, there are opportunities to promote the Welsh language as the community language across the slate areas. The projects in the pipeline offer opportunities for us to build on these opportunities as we attract additional funding to fulfil the Action Plan and develop the National Heritage Lottery Fund project.

By using the conclusions of the Service, the Archives Service could offer activities in our communities and in our records offices to promote the Welsh language. Depending on the activity, this could either be achieved with the Service's staff or in collaboration with others.