

(April 2022 - December 2023)

Question 1. Developing and promoting

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

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

1. The 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 seen here:

<https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Council/Documents---Council/Strategies-and-policies/Language-and-equality/Welsh-Language-Promotion-Plan-for-Gwynedd-2018-2023.pdf>

Reply:

Menter Iaith Gwynedd Activities

Menter Iaith Gwynedd resides in the Language and Scrutiny Unit, which is a part of the Democracy and Language Service, and they have been leading on increasing the community use of the Welsh language, mainly focusing on the areas of Bangor/Dyffryn Ogwen, Y Bala and Pen Llŷn.

April 2022 - March 2023

During the period in question, the focus was on attracting new grants and increasing the income, improving the community connection, attracting more community members to the Strategy Group and working towards becoming an independent entity. The initiative was a part of a national application of the network of Welsh language initiatives, Summer of Fun. It was succeeded to attract £12,000 to Gwynedd and with the money, 24 events for children, young people and their families were held with over 350 attending. The highlight was an event for families from Ukraine in Glan-llyn. Support was also given to learners by arranging opportunities to socialise and support for communities to host social groups for their own learners. 14 walks were arranged for new speakers as well as other ongoing activities such as 'peint a sgwrs,' 'paned a moidyr' and a running club in Bangor.

The collaboration with the education department was strengthened, including giving presentations to the parents of pupils who are in immersion centres and introducing them to Gwynedd's language and culture. By now, the initiative is also an integral part of Cymunedoli, a new network of Gwynedd community enterprises network, and leads on support with the Welsh language for community groups/organisations. There was also an opportunity to collaborate with Menter Môn and the Aqua marketing company to create a 'Use Welsh in Your Business' packages for businesses in order to provide businesses with guidance on why and how to use the Welsh language.

April 2023 - December 2023

Arrangements to change the language initiative continued by registering Menter Iaith Gwynedd as a not-for-profit company with the Companies House with 4 volunteers from the lead group as

directors of the new initiative. The new-look language initiative was launched at the Llŷn and Eifionydd Eisteddfod in August 2023.

A digital "Community Integration" event was held to try and attract more Welsh speakers to take the time to support learners in their communities. The initiative supported the Cymunedoli (Gwynedd Community Enterprises network) stall at the eisteddfod and secured funding for them from the Welsh Government. It also supported the National Eisteddfod by hosting a business breakfast for businesses in Pwllheli and going around the businesses in the Eisteddfod area with the 'Use Welsh in Your Business' package.

The initiative has been a part of various funding applications to the Arfor challenge fund collaboratively with MSparc, Llety Arall and Menter Felinheli and intends to develop an application to the WCVA Volunteering fund. The collaboration with the education department continued by co-arranging visits to secondary and primary schools in Pen Llŷn to consult with staff and pupils in order to plan interventions to increase the use of the Welsh language.

The Mynydd Llandygai community was supported to increase the use of the Welsh language in the area by collaborating with the community hall's committee to create a programme of events that will attract newcomers to the Language. Attention was also given to increasing the opportunities of socialising through the medium of Welsh for young people by collaborating a 'community officer' post with the youth department and the Urdd (employed by the Urdd). The Officer has focused on starting new households for secondary-age children and young people in Caernarfon, Felinheli and Blaenau Ffestiniog and plans are underway to do so in Bangor, Bala and Pen Llŷn.

Protection of Place Names Project

The aim of the Protection of Place Names project is to respond to the concern that Welsh native place names are disappearing from Gwynedd's landscape as a result of a lack of using the Welsh names and the increase in renaming places in English. Over the past year, attention has been given to the names of the Council, Houses, Streets and on influencing others. Guidance was also given by the Leadership Team to specifically look at changing Gwynedd street names in order to get rid of English names. Following the guidance, a successful financial bid was submitted in November to fund the cost of changing the signs. A long-term work programme was drawn up to map the steps that need to be considered for the street names element and changing signs, including establishing an understanding of the legal situation, checking the street name register records and how many streets currently have no signs. As a result of further research on changing street names in two pilot areas, many complexities have been highlighted. Before continuing, legal clarity is needed on a range of matters, as well as discussion with other departments associated to the work from the perspective of resources and further action.

A Language Policy was adopted which includes many new clauses relating to the protection of Welsh names and gives guidance to staff to only use the Council's Welsh names and the Welsh names of streets and villages when corresponding. The occasional light snippets were published about place names in social media posts and many short articles entitled 'Enw a'r Hanes' on the staff's intranet in order to raise awareness of the meaning of local names. Attention was also given to the project through discussions on Radio Cymru. Guidance was also given to **43** applications to change a house name during the year. A review of IT systems had started to check that each system that automatically sends correspondence can only use Welsh addresses and create.

The work of populating a place names map continued with nearly 550 local names on features recorded by the end of March 2023 and 9 workshops held with local schools. Many meetings were

held with key partners, including discussions with the Ordnance Survey, the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner regarding place names. Consequently, a piece of legislation now gives villages and towns the right to have a Welsh only 'Croeso' sign for the first time and a national forum was established, led by the Welsh Government.

Scrutiny Investigation

The Language and scrutiny unit have been leading on the scrutiny investigation entitled 'What is the Welsh-medium provision in our secondary schools and what plans are in place to increase the provision in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 in Gwynedd'.

Prosiect 15

A work programme was drawn up for Prosiect 15, a plan encouraging more people to discuss the world around them through the medium of Welsh. It was decided to focus on trying to increase children and young people's use of the Welsh language on social media and creating Welsh content. A temporary assistant project officer was appointed and to raise the project's profile among young people, and an effort was made to contact and offer to collaborate with a number of partners involved with children and young people such as the Youth Service, Young Farmers, secondary schools and student unions.

A variety of activities and competitions were hosted, including some relating to the National Eisteddfod. Rugby World Cup, Freshers' Week, Innovative Wales, Interesting Facts and Christmas. They also succeeded to host a workshop on creating Welsh digital content for social media for 70 secondary pupils in year 9 and one youth club.

Other activities

- Establish a Gwynedd Language Forum
 - Following a workshop with representatives from establishments and organisations across the county, the Gwynedd Language Forum was established.
 - The Forum's main aim was to collaborate in order to increase the use of the Welsh language in the county and avoid duplicating.

- Welsh Medium Activities Map
 - A Welsh medium digital activities map was launched that is available in Gwynedd.

- Llŷn and Eifionydd National Eisteddfod
 - Events were arranged and coordinated in the Cyngor Gwynedd tent under the theme Welsh Gwynedd. The menu of events included discussion panels looking at place names and the connection between the economy and Language, an inspirational women panel session, art workshops, Prosiect 15's 15 second video clip competition, Cyngor Gwynedd's local names map and Welsh medium digital activities map sessions.

- Collaboration and Research
 - The unit has been collaborating with Bangor University on two pieces of research. One of these is a small-scale pilot study, investigating the community, economic and linguistic development in the context of the recent designation of the slate areas as a World Heritage Site. The aim is to get an initial insight into some of the challenges, and the opportunities, that may arise following the designation on the sustainability of the Welsh language communities. The other looks at the language choice of the public and the attitude towards the Welsh language when using

public services. As the Council is a part of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board's Welsh Sub-group, there was also an opportunity to be a part of a project that looked at the language choice of the public in different receptions across both counties and investigated potential interventions in order to encourage more people to use our service through the medium of Welsh.

- **Standard DBS check applications**

- The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has developed a Welsh-medium online electronic form for the Standard check. This development gives the opportunity for everyone that needs to complete a Standard-type check to be able to complete the form in Welsh.

- **Supporting qualified apprentices through the medium of Welsh**

- A lack of quality bilingual training provision remains to be a barrier for our **Apprenticeships**, particularly for higher apprenticeships. This local Plan within the Council is extremely successful, offering work experience opportunities through the medium of Welsh. 27 apprentices are currently a part of the Council plan, and all of them signed the 'Declaration of Welsh Language Ambition,' as well as the providers. As part of the Plan, officers from the Learning and Organisational Development service are trying to persuade and encourage apprenticeship providers to offer as much of their provision as possible through the medium of Welsh. Work has happened to assess the situation in terms of the educational provision of language medium offered, and a work programme will be drawn up to address some of the matters that have arisen.
- As an example, an apprentice came to us through her manager this year concerned that she could not follow her course through the medium of Welsh at Coleg Llandrillo Menai. To begin with, she had a tutor who could not speak Welsh and the course resources were not available in Welsh, and there were no translations of them - contrary to what was promised. We took the case to a Work Based Learning Director and by now the apprentice has had all of the elements through the medium of Welsh. We are committed to keeping a detailed eye on the situation to ensure that the apprentice receives what is owed to her, which is studying completely through the medium of Welsh.

- **Language Designations**

- **Promoting the use of the Welsh language within the Council's Services** is continuous work, and we are aware that there is a need to continue to maintain our staff's language skills. The language designations project has come to an end since the end of March 2023, but the work of collecting staff's language self-assessments continues. This work is now part of day-to-day work and is now self-sufficient to a large extent as systems and arrangements have been put into place to ensure that staff across the Council complete the self-assessment. The language designations forum continues to meet on a quarterly basis. It is an opportunity for each Department to share and note any challenges.

- The work of arranging and providing training for staff continues. A number of external courses are available for Council staff to develop their language skills and gain confidence to use Welsh in the workplace. Staff members who do not reach the language designations of their posts will be given priority, as well as front-line staff. Further attention will also be provided to developing our internal language training.

Question 2. Policy and Standards Matters

- i. Staff language skills - number of Welsh speakers and learners within the department (latest Language Designations data).
- ii. Obstacles - are there any obstacles that prevent you as a department from offering a full service in Welsh (i.e. acting on the requirements of the Welsh Language Policy and Welsh Language Standards)?
- iii. Praise and Complaints - provide information about any praise or complaints the department has received during the year about Welsh/bilingual services.

Reply:

Impact Assessment

By now, an integrated impact assessment template is used for the Council's main decisions and projects as a result of the Equality Advisor and the Language Advisor's work. There is a specific piece about the Welsh language in the template.

Language Policy

An amended version of the Language policy was adopted in October 22 to reflect those action methods and the Council's current ambition in terms of promoting the use of the Welsh language in its services. There was a feeling that some parts of the Policy did not provide a clear and firm enough guidance to staff, and that it did not cover all the situations that services deal with from day to day.

The general Objectives and Principles were adapted and strengthened at the start of the policy and new clauses were added, including one about using the Council's Welsh name only, and one highlighting the Council's responsibility to assess the impact of decisions. Changes were made to section 5, Digital services - website, apps and self-service in order to give staff better guidance about the use of the Welsh language in the different ways that technology is used in the Council's work. The Standards, and consequently the previous Policy, gave scant guidance on the use of the Welsh language in technology, and because the Council has been developing more online services and relies more on IT systems, the policy needed to be adapted to reflect this. A number of new clauses have been added to section 6 - signs to reflect the objectives of the Council's priority project – Native Welsh Place Names Project, and the Council's commitment to protecting Welsh place names. As a result of substantial work made with the Language Designations project to develop language skills assessment arrangements across the Council, section 14 was adapted - advertising Jobs and the advertising process. A new section was also added, i.e. section 15 -

accountability for noting clearly who is accountable to the policy and what is the responsibility of Elected Members and the Language Committee members.

Gwynedd Language Strategy 2023 - 2033

A new Language strategy was adopted in December 2023. The work of drawing up and developing the work programme will be undertaken hand-in-hand with heads of departments during 2024 and anything that will be delivered is subject to resources.

Praise

The Democracy and Language Service received praise for the ability to continue to hold formal and informal hybrid meetings completely bilingually and for the service's standard.

Staff Training

The following number of staff have attended language skills training over the year.

- Courses **Learning Welsh North West** and **Nant Gwrtheyrn**: 46
- **Commissioned courses: Language Skills Certificate** (Refresher level - internal): 16
- Llys Cadfan Home Staff, Tywyn (Entry level): 10

To support those learning Welsh, the Council is offering a friends scheme, which is a Welsh 'buddy' scheme where nine fluent staff members volunteer their time as mentors to help staff who are learning.

The Council leads the way on the provision of Welsh-medium training for staff in a range of fields and continually push the boundaries. An example of this is the E-Learning Health and Safety modules that have been developed internally. They are modules of a high quality that have been developed in Welsh. Not only is there a commitment for all members of Council staff to complete these modules, but also the Council now receives queries by external organisations to buy these for their staff and organisations, as they are the only ones available in Welsh. What better advertisement than the fact that no one less than the Welsh Language Commissioner has just invested in the modules for all the staff in their organisation. The Health and Safety modules are a part of a much wider pack of E-Learning modules that have been developed internally and they are by now being offered commercially to other bodies. This will help to improve the quality and promote the use of the Welsh language in organisations across Wales.

There are numerous examples where the Council pushes the boundaries and persuades external training providers to develop Welsh training packages. An example recently came up in the field of Scrutiny for Elected Members training where work was undertaken jointly with the WLGA to find a solution to the lack of Welsh training providers in the field.

Despite this, it is very important to highlight the barrier that often emerges is the fact that some fields that are so specialist in their nature, and that some of those are completely essential fields, there are **no** Welsh training providers available despite our best efforts.

Question 3. Development Opportunities

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

Reply:

We intend to develop training on the robustness of using Language to staff, children and young people and community groups in the future. It is also hoped that there will be an opportunity for partners who are a part of the Gwynedd Language Forum to develop a new project of the next year that will help to increase the use of the Welsh language.