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Education and Public Services
Welsh Government
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27 September 2016

Dear Sir / Madam,

Gwynedd Council appreciates and is grateful for the opportunity to submit the following observations on the consultation document 'A Million Welsh Speakers by 2050'. These observations are submitted in a positive spirit and we hope that they will be of assistance to the Welsh Language Unit when drawing up the final document.

General Observations

We welcome the fact that the intention of this strategy is to increase the number of Welsh speakers; and believe that setting an ambition for the strategy is essential. Nevertheless, setting an ambition, namely a target of a million speakers by 2050, is a very generalised aim and as is it located so far into the future, it would be completely irrelevant and something for which nobody would be accountable. Also, no milestones have been set to assess progress and growth over such an extended period of time.

The Office for National Statistics has informed us, based on existing population shift - that there will be more in-migrants than Welsh people living in Wales within 70 years, therefore, we question the significance of the million, in the context of the likely population of Wales by 2050. In other words, if a million Welsh speakers is achieved, what will be the equivalent figure and percentage in terms of non-Welsh speakers? Also, we must rationalise and consider the value of counting all Welsh 'speakers' if they exist in virtual communities and voids across the world.

The strategy is different to *A Living Language: A Language for Living* as it places much more emphasis on education and the growth of Welsh-medium education as the main medium for realising the ambition. Consequently, the document could be considered as an education strategy for the south-east only. This change of emphasis also undervalues the key contribution made by geographical areas that are the traditional strongholds of the language - areas that were given focus and recognition for their contribution towards maintaining the number of speakers to date in *A Living Language: A Language for Living*. Undoubtedly, the growth of Welsh-medium education is *one* way of realising the ambition; however, there is a substantial risk from overly focussing on increasing *numbers*, without balancing that with the **number** who *use the* Welsh language every day and area where the **density** of Welsh speakers means that this is the main language of the majority of the residents of the community, and in turn, the language is a part of the fabric of those communities. Without a doubt, there is a need for linguistic planning interventions to focus on areas that continue to be strongholds for the Welsh language such as communities in Gwynedd and Anglesey and Uwch

Aled in Conwy, in order to maintain the linguistic health of the communities and prevent a pattern of linguistic decline that is already afoot in a vast number of areas across Wales.

Except for this change of emphasis in education, this strategy generally reflects what is already taking place in Wales in the linguistic planning field, and reflects some of those traditional fields where action is already being taken.

The document also reflects fields that the Government's Education Department and Public Services are directly responsible for. This shows that the strategy fails to ensure that the Welsh language and responsibility for promoting the language and realising the ambition has not been main-streamed throughout the Government's range of work and departments, fields such as: business and the economy, culture and sport, health and social care, housing and regeneration, people and communities, and planning. Unless these core fields are included, you will be left with an education strategy to be used as a mechanism to create a million Welsh speakers that does not have any correlation with key catalysts that contribute to that, such as employment opportunities in jobs where Welsh language and bilingual skills are required, housing, etc.

With the exception of the strategy's ambition, the expectations noted are vague at best, and the lack of detail regarding the methods of measuring the impact and progress against the strategy's requirements and vision makes the task of ensuring that the ambition is realised very difficult. Considering that the document is a consultation on how to realise the ambition, one of the strategy's basic weaknesses is a lack of information and solid commitment that explains 'how' this will be achieved. Indeed, one could argue that failing to include short and medium-term milestones is a fundamental weakness considering the ambitious long-term targets noted in the strategy. Therefore, it is essential to include robust requirements and measures alongside any action plan created to accompany this strategy, in order to ensure that the vision is realised. Nevertheless, what you actually need to achieve the ambition of a million speakers by 2050 is nothing short of a revolution!

At present, there is no basis to the Strategy's number planning projections and this leads to the conclusion that the target of a million Welsh speakers is not valid or achievable. Furthermore, in light of the linguistic findings of the 2011 Census, where a drop was seen in the numbers and percentages of Welsh speakers, and the failure to achieve a number of targets of Iaith Pawb; it is fair to ask on what grounds was such an ambitious target for the future set?

Development field 1: Planning and language policy

It is acknowledged that main-streaming is essential, and key in terms of Welsh-language promotion as it is an incredibly effective way of rooting linguistic planning as an integral part of plans, policies and strategies; however, it is acknowledged that this is not the only means of linguistic planning.

Although there are opportunities available to disseminate the message about the Welsh language and take advantage of a broader workforce to promote the language, there is an obvious risk with main-streaming also, as the Welsh language will be secondary to the main work of any occupation that the Welsh language is main-streamed into; e.g. midwifery, health visitors, Flying Start and Families First schemes.

One of the consistent messages heard from discussions with professionals and community representatives when drawing up the Gwynedd Language Strategy 2014-2017 was the importance of the relationship between the economy, housing and the Welsh language. Welsh Government, through its policy guidance in the fields of the economy, planning and housing, has a key role to play when promoting the Welsh language and to mainstream the language to national plans. However, from some of the major economic programmes in the past, such as Objective 1 and Convergence it

appears that the Government at the time was not progressive to give a central place to the Welsh language in these fields. In order to realise the target of a million Welsh speakers, it must be ensured that similar opportunities in the future are not lost.

In order to ensure the success of the main-streaming, there is a need to set clear expectations and ensure a robust accountability procedure in order to ensure that the Welsh language is central to every development, project and programme. The inclusion of clauses such as 'consideration to the Welsh language', and 'influence' do not provide a sufficiently robust vision and guidance for the strategy, and leads to ambiguous expectations, and provides an open door for people not to give the Welsh language a central place, and undermines the challenging and firm ambition of reaching a million speakers by 2050.

Continuing to undertake and commission quality comprehensive research to increase our understanding of factors that influence the Welsh language is key, and there is a need to ensure substantial investment in this field in order to ensure that the interventions implemented are fit for purpose.

Development field 2: Normalisation

We welcome the vision where the Welsh language is a completely normal part of everyday life, and that there is goodwill towards the language and a will to use the language. Nevertheless, the steps intended to take towards realising the vision in this section are very vague, and it could be argued that those elements relating to accessing and using Welsh-medium services would tie-in better in development field 6: Rights, as the availability of Welsh-medium services, the right to Welsh-medium services, and the use made of them go hand in hand. It could also be argued that normalisation is a horizontal theme or aim, rather than a development field.

We welcome the intention and commitment to gain a better understanding of what influences linguistic attitudes and choices, and initially focus on linguistic identity and the psychology of using the Welsh language. Gwynedd is offered as a relevant and interesting sample for this research.

In addition, evidence-based linguistic planning is extremely important in the current climate where we are required to prioritise our efforts on those things which will make a real difference to the situation of the Welsh language and the use made of the language.

Development field 3: Education

The proposal to strengthen strategic planning processes for each education and training stage in order to ensure growth in Welsh-medium education is welcomed. Nevertheless, reference should also be made to bilingual education in this context, in order to acknowledge the value of an education policy such as Gwynedd's policy which has the following aim: *'ensure that all of the County's pupils have well-balanced and age-appropriate bilingual skills to enable them to be full members of the bilingual society of which they are part.'* Indeed, should this not ultimately be the objective of this part of the strategy?

We also welcome the proposal to move away from the concept of 'second-language', and in order to realise that in the areas considered to be strongholds of the Welsh language, it is essential to ensure commitment to substantial investment in immersion plans, and a provision for latecomers in the primary and secondary sectors. This will be essential in order to achieve the aim of ensuring an increase in the number of Welsh speakers, and ensure that the existing provision is not weakened by

inward migration, which, according to the Office for National Statistics, will increase over the lifespan of this Strategy and beyond.

In terms of developing a new Curriculum for Wales, and embedding some of the essential components of the Language Charter firmly in that Curriculum, it is integral that language awareness for all education stages becomes a core part of the new curriculum. The best way of achieving this would be through the medium of the Literacy Framework; global citizenship; PSE; or the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Ensuring a Welsh-medium and bilingual provision in itself will not lead to the necessary growth in numbers who follow Welsh-medium courses. Consequently, a comprehensive plan will be needed to encourage learners to follow Welsh-medium and bilingual courses; in particular in Further Education and Higher Education, similar to the bursaries offered by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and some Universities, to ensure appropriate linguistic continuity through the whole education and training system.

This would be a means of overturning the trend of a substantial drop in the numbers who follow Welsh-medium and bilingual courses between each key stage, and onwards to further and higher education. It is felt that there is a need to ensure that further and higher education are included as a key part of the commitments made in this section. The availability of Welsh-medium and bilingual vocational courses is key in order to normalise the Welsh language and ensure a natural Welsh and bilingual path from education to employment. This should also be linked with employment, training, apprenticeships and employability in order to plan a chain of linguistic continuity from statutory education to employment that will subsequently further influence the language of adults, who will, in turn, become parents themselves. In this context, there is ambiguity regarding how Welsh Government intends to realise its objective of improving continuity rates, in particular in the following context: *'Develop innovative opportunities to enable new speakers to become confident to use Welsh in the workplace, socially and in the home.'*

There is a need to include targets and a detailed timetable to realise this, if Welsh Government is serious about achieving the ambition of a million speakers by 2050. In terms of methods to measure the impact of that, the following measures are suggested as a starting point:

- Number of Welsh-medium and bilingual schools
- Number and % of learners receiving Welsh-medium and bilingual education
- Number and % of Yr2 learners being assessed in the medium of Welsh
- Number and % of learners following Welsh-medium and bilingual courses in the secondary sector
- Number and % of learners following Welsh-medium and bilingual further education courses
- Number and % of learners following Welsh-medium and bilingual higher education courses

In terms of encouraging young people to use the Welsh language in informal and social situations, we appreciate the Government's commitment and investment in disseminating the Language Charter nationally - a plan that was originally developed for Gwynedd schools. We are incredibly proud of this relationship with Welsh Government and are confident that the commitment will continue, as the contribution of the Language Charter is key in the challenge of converting speakers who receive a Welsh-medium/bilingual education into speakers.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the objective noted in this part of the strategy is restricted to education establishments and, despite ensuring that the investment in education creates speakers, it is key that Leisure Centres, youth provisions and sports clubs similarly become a part of this

strategy. This raises a broader question regarding the relationship of this strategy with the requirement on Local Authorities themselves to draw up Welsh language promotion strategies.

In addition, with a number of Local Authorities externalising services such as leisure and youth services and the ambiguity regarding whether or not the trusts established for this purpose are covered under the Language Standards, it has never been so important to ensure that these fields, which are so influential in terms of the informal language of children and young people, are included in the strategy and that they are accountable for that. In this context, the Language Initiatives have a key role to play on a county, regional and national level also.

Development field 4: People

It is believed that this section should include a greater focus on the role of parents and the family as a key sphere for language transfer.

According to the 2011 Census, it was seen that 90% of 3-4 year olds in Gwynedd could speak Welsh when two parents speak Welsh in the home. This percentage drops to 82% in the homes where a single parent speaks Welsh; and drops further to 63% when only one of the two parents speaks Welsh; there is a further drop to 35% in homes where there are no Welsh speakers at all. The above-mentioned percentages convey the need for direct and substantial intervention in language transfer in areas that are Welsh language strongholds, such as Gwynedd.

Despite the proposal to main-stream elements of TWF's work field to midwives and health visitors; there are further opportunities to influence language transfer in the field of child care and as part of national programmes such as Flying Start and Families First, as well as a part of an education system that targets prospective parents. It must be ensured that Welsh language promotion and messages about the advantages of bringing up children bilingually are embedded as the core responsibility of these intervention programmes, coupled with methods of measuring this work.

To this end, language transfer rates in areas such as Gwynedd also convey the greatest potential to increase the number of speakers, as households with one of two parents speaking Welsh, and households with a Welsh-speaking single parent already possessing Welsh language skills, choose not to use the language. There is a key role for the Language Initiative (in the absence of TWF and Cymraeg i Blant) to plan specific intervention in response to this.

It is acknowledged that what is now considered as a 'community' has changed, evolved and that it is a difficult concept to define; however, we must not underestimate the value and significance of a 'geographical' community that brings people together through the medium of Welsh. This is where the foundations of Welsh speakers' identities and values are set, where community leaders are nurtured, and where Welsh speakers are empowered to offer a range of activities and modern and attractive events that normalise the Welsh language in an informal and pleasant context. In other words, live life mainly through the medium of Welsh.

Also of significance to a 'geographical' community that is essential to the viability of the language is the fabric of the Welsh language community that is located in the language's strongholds across Wales. A high number of Welsh speakers are produced in these areas; and in turn, this has been responsible for the growth in the number of speakers in other areas of Wales, such as Cardiff. The importance of these areas - which was so apparent in *A Living Language: A Language for Living* - has been completely lost in the new strategy. One cannot overstate the utmost importance of the Welsh language strongholds in order to ensure the viability of the language in the future. To reiterate this, a number of worldwide linguistic planning experts acknowledge the significance of communities

where over 70% of the population speaks the language. This is the reason why we believe that this Strategy needs to set targets, a focus and emphasis on appropriate and balanced linguistic planning in these communities in Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy with the Language Initiatives acting as a strategic lead and co-ordinator of linguistic interventions at grass-roots level.

A specific strategy and substantial investment is therefore needed to maintain and strengthen the strongholds as areas that act as a catalyst for the growth of the Welsh language across Wales. To this end, every department within the Government will need to acknowledge the particular significance of these areas and prove how any schemes they have will affect the strongholds and the Welsh language. To achieve this, we believe that 70%+ communities should be designated as areas of special linguistic significance.

Development field 5: Support

We welcome the Government's proposal to invest, develop and influence in order to ensure a firm infrastructure for the Welsh language in the fields of corpora, dictionaries and terminology resources, along with technological and digital developments to ensure the availability of various and relevant Welsh language mediums.

It is very important that the Welsh language is a part of new technological development and that there is room for the Welsh language in these developments. This is extremely important in terms of influencing the psychology of children and young people and their use of the Welsh language, and is a way of making the language relevant to all life contexts.

However, further information is required regarding the steps intended to be taken in the short, medium and long-term to realise this, along with the level of investment in order to achieve the aim, and the measuring methods that will be in place and who will be responsible for its delivery.

Development field 6: Rights

Gwynedd Council is an organisation that already embraces the Welsh language and the impact of its language policy in terms of its internal administration is far-reaching. As a result of the policy, the Welsh language has been normalised as a natural working medium, and enables thousands of staff members to work through the medium of Welsh every day. The side effect of this is that the majority of the county's residents now contact the Council through the medium of Welsh completely naturally, and the influence of the Council as an employer can be seen in the growth of Welsh communities such as Llanrug.

This is proof indeed that the ambition cannot be realised through legislation and rights alone, but rather through commitment, a strong political vision and bravery, as was experienced when implementing Gwynedd's language policy since 1996, and previously in Dwyfor District Council. Disseminating this language policy to other counties is what is likely to achieve Welsh Government's ambition of creating a million speakers by 2050. After all, in Gwynedd, we have the rare opportunity of being able to profess and make more comprehensive and regular use of the range of Welsh language skills (speaking, reading and understanding written Welsh) from the cradle to the grave.

Ensuring real opportunities for as many people as possible to be able to live and work through the medium of Welsh is the way to realise the ambition of a million speakers by 2050. This means, within the next 5 years, that Local Authorities in the North and west, Anglesey, Conwy, Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire need to commence the process of planning, adopting and

implementing a policy that notes that the Welsh language will be the internal administrative language of the organisation.

There is a risk for the existing standards system to become burdensome in terms of its administration with nothing added to the user's experience, and that they will not encourage compliance through a regulatory process alone. Encouragement and promotion is needed to achieve the aim. Therefore, we agree with the need to develop a better balance between promotion, legislation and regulatory, providing clarity regarding the roles of key stakeholders. However, it is unlikely that achieving this will directly contribute towards reaching the million. A specific and comprehensive strategy is required to support and empower people to feel confident to use the Welsh language when accessing services, that the experience and availability of those services encourages and facilitates the use made of the Welsh language, and in turn, that this becomes something completely natural. This cannot be realised without planning and delivering a purposeful bilingual public sector workforce.

No reference is made to the private sector and third sector in the strategy and this may be the most suitable place to include them. Indeed, businesses need to be encouraged to be proactive in developing the use of the Welsh language, and clarity is needed regarding the roles of the Commissioner, the Government, the Language Initiatives and business support agencies in this respect.

Indeed, seeing businesses making visual use of the Welsh language is a way of rooting key messages about the Welsh language and its value in the subconscious, and thus influence people's psychology regarding the language. However; people's ability to engage with each other at work, with colleagues or customers, through the medium of Welsh is of key importance to the ambition.

To this end, more opportunities are needed for those who are able to speak Welsh to use it at work - in their engagement with each other, their customers and with their employers. We spend a very large percentage of our lives in the workplace, therefore, opportunities to use the Welsh language at work are extremely important, and it is unlikely that giving the individual an opportunity to do that in itself, will achieve the aim. There is a need to develop Welsh language workplaces, Welsh language internal administration and normalise the Welsh language in the workplace. Enabling the workforce to use the Welsh language at work (and not through rights alone), will lead to an increase in the general use made of the Welsh language. In this context also, there is a need to increase awareness of the Welsh language as a skill and increase the workforce's pride of the skills they have in the Welsh language. Therefore, having linguistic Skills Strategies that will plan and create a bilingual workforce that will be able to provide services for the public in accordance with the statutory language standards will be integral. We know that this is not currently the case as the majority of public bodies have an insufficient supply of bilingual staff to provide Welsh-medium services.

In the current economic climate, which will unavoidably lead to an increase in commissioning services from the public sector, and less provision of services directly, it is extremely important that the private sector locally and nationally in Wales can and have to respond positively to the increasing demand for some services, but also that they can provide those services wholly through the medium of Welsh.

Similar to the private sector, there will be opportunities for the third sector to benefit from outsourcing some public services and there will be a need to identify the key players in this context, and to work closely with them to enable them to deliver services through the medium of Welsh over

a period of time. Nevertheless, the procurement culture and expectations in terms of following linguistic requirements has existed since the Welsh Language Act 1993 but that there is still room for improvement to improve the supply of Welsh language services that are externalised to these sectors. This is why there is a need to emphasise the role and contribution of both sectors - as an employer and service provider - within this Strategy.

Section 5 - Action in the short-term: the first five years

It is acknowledged that the education system and ensuring that the Welsh-medium and bilingual education provision is extended is **one** method of increasing the numbers of people who are *able to* speak Welsh. However, the education system alone is unlikely to produce speakers, as stated in *laith Pawb* previously: *A language which is confined to the educational sector is not a living language*¹

Consequently, the Welsh language must be rooted in the communities around every Welsh-medium and bilingual school across Wales in order to ensure sufficient opportunities to turn the learners of the education system into speakers, and take advantage of intensive social and community opportunities to use the Welsh language beyond school. Again, this is a key role for the Language Initiatives and other partners across Wales and a comprehensive strategy and investment is needed to achieve this, in order to ensure that the substantial investment in Welsh-medium education bears fruit and realises the aim of producing additional skilled Welsh *speakers*, who can then contribute to realising the ambition of reaching a million speakers by 2050.

We welcome the reference to extending the Language Charter to schools across Wales as a medium to support the Welsh-medium/bilingual education system to produce Welsh *speakers*. Methods of measuring the impact of the Charter's intervention by means of the language web produces annual data about the attitudes and use of language of children and young people across Wales. Therefore, the language web will be an important tool over the next five years (and beyond) as a way of measuring the likelihood of realising the ambition of a million speakers by 2050. However, as we are aware, a substantial number of people leave the Welsh language behind as they leave school at 16 and so, failing to include further and higher education and employment within the strategy leaves it incomplete.

Welsh Government has certainly set the challenge of reaching a million speakers by the middle of the century. The greatest challenge for the Government (and for us all), is *how* this will be realised, and *ensure* that it is realised.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these observations on the Strategy: A million Welsh speakers by 2050. Hopefully they will be useful as you draw up the final document.

Yours sincerely,

Dyfrig Siencyn
Deputy Council Leader

1 *laith Pawb: A National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales, Welsh Assembly Government 2003.*