



A Policy Statement
by the Welsh Assembly
Government



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Bilingual Future

Cover photograph by Phil Boorman for the Welsh Language Board

A BILINGUAL FUTURE – DYFODOL DWYI EI THOG


Foreword by the First Minister and the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language

The Culture and Education Committees have now concluded their reviews of the Welsh language and the final report has now been published. These reviews have enabled Committee members and observers to gain a greater appreciation of the current state of the language and the issues and problems that it faces. There is clearly much more to be done. It is now for the Assembly Government to consider the Committees' report and to take matters forward.

The Welsh Assembly Government is wholly committed to revitalizing the Welsh language and creating a bilingual Wales. The Welsh language is an important part of our national identity and creativity, and awareness of the educational, cultural and social benefits of bilingualism is growing. Bilingual, and even multilingual, cultures are the norm rather than the exception in much of Europe and across the world. That is why the Assembly Government believes that languages should be seen as providing opportunities and economic benefits for Wales.

This initial statement of the Welsh Assembly Government's policy on the Welsh language will be followed by an Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales by the end of the year following the budget planning process.

The Assembly Government will provide strategic leadership to sustain and encourage the growth of the Welsh language within a tolerant, welcoming and open Wales. The Welsh language will be mainstreamed into the work of the Assembly Government and its agencies. Positive support for communities, including primarily Welsh-speaking communities, will be provided by pursuing policies which seek to create economically and socially sustainable communities. We will ensure that we have effective structures in place to enable individuals to acquire or learn the language. We will place greater emphasis on promoting language use and enabling individuals to use the language in all aspects of everyday life. The Welsh Language Board and the Assembly Government's main delivery organisations will need the capacity to find out what works best and then ensure effective implementation. This can only be effective if individuals, families, communities and all sectors in society are actively engaged as well. Positive action and co-operation at all levels will help to realise our vision of a bilingual Wales.



Rhodri Morgan AM



Jenny Randerson AM

WHERE ARE WE AND WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE

The current state of the Welsh language provides cause both for optimism as well as concern. The 1991 census indicates a stabilisation of the overall numbers able to speak Welsh, after decades of decline – around 18% of the population of Wales. The 2001 census details are imminent and will provide a more accurate picture of the current state of the language. Whilst there has been a fall in the number of older speakers, there have been increases in the numbers of school-aged children recorded as being able to speak the language. The education system is assisting the re-emergence of the language in anglicised areas of Wales. The language's official status is far more secure than at any point in the recent past, due to the 1967 and 1993 Welsh Language Acts and other positive measures.

Status has important legal and administrative implications, but the actual use of the language in everyday situations is in decline. While more young people have the ability to speak the language, social opportunities to use that skill might become increasingly confined to the school and home if those communities where Welsh is the normal social language decline in number. The Assembly Government, and all partner organisations, will do their best to provide the basic conditions to stabilise the position of the language in these communities and across Wales. Facilitating the acquisition of the language

through the family and the education system, and promoting its use in everyday life, in work and in leisure, are crucial if our vision of a truly bilingual Wales is to be realised.

The Welsh Assembly Government's first strategic plan, Betterwales.com, set out the Assembly's vision of fostering Wales' unique and diverse identity and the benefits of bilingualism. Our vision, shared by the Assembly's Culture and Education Committees, is that:

"in a truly bilingual Wales both Welsh and English will flourish and will be treated as equal. A bilingual Wales means a country where people can choose to live their lives through the medium of either or both languages; a country where the presence of two national languages, and other diverse languages and cultures, is a source of pride and strength to us all.

Realising this vision will require considerable further positive action and support for the Welsh language – English, as the dominant, majority language can hardly be said to need such support. While there is considerable scope for additional, and better focused, institutional action in support of the Welsh language, there is a limit to what institutional support can achieve. The Assembly Government will strive to create the right conditions in which the Welsh language can grow and flourish in all aspects of Welsh life, but it is ultimately the choice of the individual, and society in general, as to whether the use of the language expands or declines.

This policy statement is therefore divided into three priorities:

- An Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales
- Language and Community – Promoting Economically and Socially Sustainable Communities
- Language and the Individual - Supporting Individual Rights and Responsibilities

TOWARDS A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR A BILINGUAL WALES

The Assembly Government is currently preparing what will be the first national action plan for the Welsh language. This plan will detail action in support of the language across a range of Ministerial portfolios and will tie in with the National Assembly's budget planning process. The Assembly Government is clear about some of the key underlying principles for this plan:

- The Assembly Government is positive about the Welsh language and the benefits of bilingualism. We will provide clear strategic direction and political leadership on Welsh language policy and provide the appropriate financial support.
- The Assembly Government's plan will be national in its approach and apply to the whole of Wales. Everyone in Wales should have the same basic opportunities to acquire and use the language, irrespective of where they live.
- Local flexibility will be a key element of the action plan because what is suitable for Maentwrog is unlikely to be appropriate for Monmouth. The Assembly Government will offer strategic leadership but local partnerships will decide what is appropriate for local circumstances.

The action plan will involve **mainstreaming the Welsh language** across the Assembly's Ministerial portfolios. This will ensure that we look holistically at how our policies impact on the Welsh language, enabling us to provide more effective and better directed support for the language. Remit letters to all Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies will mainstream Welsh language considerations into their policy development and programme delivery structures. A **Welsh Language Unit** will be established within the administration of the Assembly Government to oversee the process of mainstreaming across all Assembly Government Departments. We will work closely with a number of public bodies and the Welsh Language Board to expand the range of statistical indicators in relation to the language, so as to assist policy development and evaluation processes. The desire to support and develop bilingualism is by no means unique to Wales and our policies will continue to be informed by the practice and experiences of other countries.

The **Welsh Language Board** will remain the main language planning body for Wales and maintain a strategic overview of Welsh language issues. The Board will be central to delivering much of the Assembly Government's action plan. We will expect the Board to continue to monitor compliance with the Welsh Language Act, and we will continue to identify further organisations that can be required to operate Welsh Language Schemes as part of our policy of using the current legislation to its full potential. We will expect the Board to become more regional in its approach and focus increasingly on promoting and developing the language at community level,

through Mentrau Iaith and Language Action Pilots. We will also expect the Board to build on its work in the areas of language transmission, and marketing and promoting the language in different settings. And as the main language planning body for Wales, we expect the Board to conduct research into language trends, evaluate its policies and programmes in support of the language and take innovative approaches where appropriate. We will expect the Welsh Language Board to work closely with language organisations to evaluate policies and contribute to policy development.

The Assembly Government will also be considering proposals to establish a [language forum](#). This would be an opportunity for the Assembly Government to meet key delivery organisations to discuss issues in relation to Welsh language policy, to disseminate good practice and contribute to the development of an effective language strategy. We will be considering further details over the coming months.

LANGUAGE & COMMUNITY

PROMOTING ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The reduction in the number of primarily Welsh-speaking communities is clearly one of the most serious threats to the future of the Welsh language. The reasons for the reduction are complex: they include a shift in social attitudes to speaking Welsh, a lack of economic opportunities for youngsters coupled with the decline of traditional industries which had a high proportion of Welsh speakers, as well as the inward migration of non-Welsh speakers. The situation is aggravated in some areas by inflated house prices.

- The Assembly Government believes that the solution for these, and other disadvantaged communities in Wales, is to create economically and socially sustainable communities. The Assembly Government's policies will focus on enabling individuals within these communities to continue to live and work there if they so wish.
- The linguistic character of communities will be taken into account in planning and housing policies and decisions.

Economic Development – A sustainable economic base and providing economic opportunities are essential to **creating sustainable communities**. The Assembly Government believes that the bodies, structures and mechanisms for developing indigenous businesses and increasing the business birth rate

are already in place. The Assembly Government supports entrepreneurship and business development through mechanisms such as the Entrepreneurship Action Plan, Business Connect, Assembly Investment Grants and the nascent Community Development Financial Institution, and bodies such as Finance Wales and Menter a Busnes. Our priority is to ensure that this support is clearly targeted, easily accessible and increasingly integrated with developments at community levels.

Farming is the economic backbone of a large number of Welsh-speaking communities. The Assembly Government will continue to support agricultural diversification, through programmes such as Farming Connect, and other measures which promote the development of a sustainable rural economy and rural regeneration.

The Welsh language and Wales' bilingual culture identify Wales as a separate and distinct part of the UK and are unique selling points. The Welsh language is a powerful lead into other cultural and social aspects that makes the tourism offering in Wales so distinctive and provides competitive advantage over other parts of the UK.

We will ensure the European Union's structural funds programmes in Wales include linguistic consideration in the mainstream of forward planning and we will seek to further develop the role of Mentrau Iaith on Local Partnerships. The Assembly Government will continue its work in ensuring that

all of Wales, both urban and rural, will benefit in full from developments in information and communication technology.

The Assembly Government's *location strategy* will aim to develop a meaningful physical presence outside of south-east Wales, with the aim of benefiting economically disadvantaged communities. We also expect the Assembly's agencies to do the same.

Mentrau Iaith and Language Action Pilots – It is vitally important that communities take ownership of, and responsibility for, the language and the Assembly Government will look to provide additional support to *Mentrau Iaith*, which are instrumental in developing a bottom-up approach to language revitalization. The *Mentrau* have had a positive impact on the use of the Welsh language at community level, and been successful in preventing further linguistic fragmentation. We will also look to the Welsh Language Board to establish *Language Action Pilots* to ensure that we secure greater co-ordination of local initiatives on a number of fronts, particularly in communities experiencing substantial language shift and where the language is used less and less by young people. These pilots will tie together economic, social, cultural and community development structures, along the lines of the work currently undertaken by *Menter Môn*, *Antur Teifi* and the work being piloted by the Welsh Language Board in Fishguard. There will be no uniform approach - it is crucial that the particular circumstances of a community are reflected in the action plans for that area. *Language Action Pilots* will not mean additional structures or new layers of bureaucracy – they will instead

ensure greater collaboration and co-operation between all key stakeholders, and make the language central to the future development of these communities.

Housing & Planning policies – The Assembly Government, through guidance to local authorities and appropriate financial support, will continue its policy of **facilitating access to housing** to ensure the sustainability of communities. The Assembly Government will continue to provide advice and guidance to assist people into home ownership and we will encourage and advise local authorities to use all the tools currently available to them to achieve this. We will consider providing additional financial resources if local authorities demonstrate the need for such financial assistance, and will give due consideration to the outcome of the research into the Homebuy scheme. We will continue to support the provision of ‘Welcome Packs’ to incomers to core areas of the language, which serve to emphasise the linguistic profile of the community and encourage incomers to respect and learn the language. We will seek to widen the provision of the **Welcome Packs** to the whole of Wales in the near future. We will encourage local authorities to conduct thorough housing needs assessments so as to gain a more accurate assessment of housing requirements at community levels.

We will ensure that **planning decisions and developments** are sensitive to the ability of different areas and communities to accommodate their development without eroding the position of the Welsh language. The Assembly Government, in its recent publication *Planning Policy Wales*, has stated that in

assessing planning developments, all local authorities in Wales should consider the use of the Welsh language at community level, and take it into account in the formulation of land use policies. All Unitary Development Plans will need to include a statement of how the needs and interests of the language have been taken into account in the preparation of the plan. Local planning authorities should provide for a broad distribution and phasing of housing development to ensure that different areas and communities can accommodate the development without eroding the position of the language. We are committed to reviewing the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy in the near future. The Assembly Government will be issuing a strengthened Technical Advice Note 20 to ensure effective guidance for unitary authorities of the new content within Planning Policy Wales. We will also give careful consideration to the outcome of the research into second homes in Wales.

LANGUAGE & THE INDIVIDUAL

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

If Wales is to be a truly bilingual country, we must ensure that we not only enable individuals to learn Welsh but that we also maximise opportunities to use the language. The Assembly Government can work to create the right conditions but the language will only flourish if individuals pass the language onto their children and use it in the widest possible variety of social settings. It is essential that Welsh society takes full ownership of the language and finds it natural and appropriate to use the language in all social settings.

- The Assembly Government's policies will largely be based on encouraging individuals to learn and use the Welsh language. We wish to see Wales evolve into a truly bilingual country, and we will actively promote the benefits of bilingualism.
- The Assembly Government is committed to empowering individuals so that they are able to make a genuine choice as to the language, or languages, through which they wish to live their lives.

- We will work to extend entitlement to Welsh-medium education, and ensure that support for young people in Wales is structured around an entitlement for all young people to a range of services in the language of their choice.

Language acquisition and Education - The key reason why minority languages wither and die is that parents who are fluent, for a combination of reasons, do not pass on the language to their children. **Family language transfer** is therefore a key component to maintaining Welsh as a family and community language. The Assembly Government will ensure that the Welsh Language Board has the appropriate resources in order for it to develop its work on family language transfer – the Twf project - and to make parents aware of the benefits of early bilingualism.

Along with family language transfer, the Assembly Government will promote the benefits of pre-school **bilingual nursery education** and ensure that provision keeps up with demand on a community level. At this age, children acquire rather than learn the language, and we share the Culture and Education Committees' view of the critical importance of bilingual education for this age group. We will work closely with local authorities to increase the provision of Welsh-medium nursery education, and, through the Welsh Language Board, will continue to support the work of the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.

The growth in the number of young people able to speak the language is largely due to Welsh-medium and bilingual **primary**

and secondary education. The Assembly Government is anxious that the education system is more flexible to those wishing to learn Welsh and we will seek to develop a second entry point into the Welsh-medium education system. We will expect local authorities to ensure that the provision of Welsh-medium education keeps up with demand and we shall assist them in this task by preparing guidance to improve coherence between the various planning mechanisms which currently exist. We will also look at ways of increasing the numbers of teachers both teaching Welsh and teaching through the medium of Welsh. It is also vitally important that there is effective teaching of Welsh as a second language at both primary and secondary level, and that the curriculum is challenging and fulfilling.

The Assembly Government will encourage adults to learn the language, especially incomers to predominantly Welsh-speaking communities. We will, in conjunction with ELWa, ensure that there is effective and consistent delivery of adult education courses throughout Wales.

We also want the further and higher education and vocational sectors to be responsive to the needs of individuals. Over time we want Welsh-medium provision to be viewed as part of the mainstream provision. We have commissioned a report into current levels of supply and demand, projected future trends and steps that can be taken to stimulate demand. In the longer term we will consider funding a pilot language learning sabbatical scheme to meet demand for Welsh language lecturers.

Language use – Alongside policies to help individuals acquire or learn the language, the Assembly Government will work to ensure that there are opportunities to use the language in all aspects of life. In the first instance, this means safeguarding and promoting the **rights of individuals to use the Welsh language**. Welsh is one of the official languages of public life in Wales and we will expect all organisations and bodies named under the Welsh Language Act to comply with their language schemes and provide their services through both English and Welsh. We will continue to impress the importance of being able to deliver services in the service users' language of choice in key service areas such as health and social care, and we will work with the service delivery organisations to help them achieve this aim.

If Welsh is to flourish, young people need to develop a sense of ownership for the language, and see it as their language and not simply the language of the school and the establishment. We need to ensure that we maximise the opportunities for our young people and teenagers to use the language in everyday leisure and social situations. The Assembly Government, through the Welsh Language Board, will **market and promote the language** in all aspects of Welsh life. Ability to speak Welsh should be seen as an important skill and the Assembly Government will be enthusiastic in championing the language and promoting the benefits of bilingualism. We will also expect the Welsh Language Board to build on successful schemes for promoting the Welsh language, such as the Welsh in the Workplace scheme and the bounty packs for new mothers.

The Assembly Government's Welsh Language Scheme will aim to increase the use of Welsh within the Assembly Government Administration and ensure that we can provide an effective bilingual service to the general public.

We will seek to promote use externally through projects aimed at standardising written and spoken Welsh, and by looking to the Welsh Language Board and translators to develop a standard qualification for translators to ensure consistency. Many organisations and businesses in the private and voluntary sectors are already providing services in Welsh, or are taking steps to do so. We will not seek to legislate to compel these sectors to deliver these services through the medium of Welsh - but we will strongly encourage them to take it upon themselves to develop and provide bilingual services and take advantage of the Welsh Language Board's advice and expertise in this area. We will also work to **develop new opportunities to use the language**. We need, for instance, to ensure that the language is promoted on the internet and in new IT packages. Broadcasting is of crucial importance to promoting language use, especially amongst the young – we will be looking to broadcasters to consider ways in which they can contribute to the goal of true bilingualism.

The Assembly Government is committed to offering a genuine linguistic choice to individuals. We will seek to promote the use of the Welsh language in all aspects of life in Wales: at home, at work, at play and at leisure.

NEXT STEPS

This policy statement has underlined the Assembly Government's positive commitment to the Welsh language and detailed the general principles that underpin its Welsh language policies. This, however, is only the start of the process.

- The Assembly Government will ensure that the Welsh language is mainstreamed across Ministerial portfolios, and within all Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies. Each Assembly Government Minister will take responsibility and ownership of the language within their own particular policy areas.
- The Assembly Government will publish an Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales by the end of the year. The plan will involve a blend of policies across the range of Assembly Government Ministerial portfolios, and will contain concrete measures in support of the language.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to revitalizing the Welsh language and will provide political leadership and offer strategic direction – we expect the public, private and voluntary sectors to respond positively to this. We will do our utmost to create sustainable communities where the language can flourish, and enable individuals to use the language in all aspects of their lives. There is a positive future for the Welsh language if all parties, at all levels, embrace the benefits of bilingualism and help to create a truly bilingual Wales.

Further copies

Further copies of this document are available from:

Rhun ap Iwylm
Culture, Sport and Welsh Language Division
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Tel: 029 2082 8275

e.mail: dyfodol.dwyieithog@wales.gsi.gov.uk