

WRITTEN EVIDENCE PAPER TO THE CULTURE, WELSH LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Minister for Lifelong Learning & Welsh Language: September 2016

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out my priorities for the Lifelong Learning & Welsh Language portfolio. The portfolio is wide ranging. However, with respect to the elements of it which are of interest to the Committee, my priorities as set out in the Labour Party manifesto include:
 - Setting an ambitious target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050 with key milestones for the decades leading to this.
 - Continuing to support the planned expansion of Welsh medium education in our schools.
 - Recognising the importance of the media and will press for fair funding of both Welsh and English language broadcasting in Wales.
 - Extending the availability of free online education resources so that more Welsh learners can access Massive Open Online Courses.
2. These priorities have clear synergies, and will be taken forward in line with my wider portfolio activities (which includes Establishing a Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys) and with the work undertaken by colleagues across Government. I look forward to proactively engaging with the Committee in delivering on these priorities.

The Welsh Language

Consultation on draft Welsh language strategy – a million Welsh speakers by 2050

3. At this year's National Eisteddfod in Abergavenny, the First Minister and I set out a new ambition to reach a million Welsh speakers by 2050. We are currently consulting on what needs to happen so we can meet this ambition. The content of the final strategy will set our direction of travel from April 2017.
4. We have proposed six development areas – each containing specific goals and actions – as a basis for deliberate action over the long term to realise the ambition of a million speakers:
 - Planning and Language Policy
 - Normalisation
 - Education
 - People
 - Support
 - Rights

5. Over the course of this Assembly term, we will develop detailed policies to drive the strategy, targeting specific areas highlighted as priorities during the consultation.

Reviewing Welsh Language Legislation

6. In his statement at the beginning of this Assembly, the First Minister said that the Welsh Government will seek to amend the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. At present, it is too early to set out the details. I am keen to ensure that the legislative basis for the Welsh language is appropriate, up to date and makes the process for imposing standards less bureaucratic.

Welsh Language Standards

7. I am committed to making further Standards regulations for other sectors which come under the Welsh Language Measure. I issued a written statement on 12 July providing an update in this respect.

Education Planning

8. If we are to increase the number of Welsh speakers, the education system has a crucial part to play. I want local authorities to plan for growth in Welsh-medium education. My officials have already been in discussions with local authorities to refine the guidance on preparing Welsh in Education Strategic Plans for the next three years, with the aim of ensuring timely action that leads to that growth.
9. Work has already begun on designing a new curriculum for Wales, which will include one continuation of learning for the Welsh language.

Cymraeg i Blant (Cymraeg for Kids)

10. We launched Cymraeg i Blant in April this year to encourage and support parents and prospective parents to use the Welsh language with their children. As well as practical support locally, we will make sure that parents receive information about the benefits of Welsh-medium education at key points throughout the journey of bringing up their child.

Young People

11. We will continue to develop the “Welsh Language Charter” across Wales, with the aim of supporting and encouraging informal use of Welsh amongst children and young people. We will also work with young people and business to emphasise the importance of Welsh as a skill for the workplace.
12. We want Welsh to be relevant to the younger generation. We can raise the profile of Welsh and engender a sense of pride in the language by

making sure that young people's passions such as music, technology and sport are central in our promotion work.

Welsh for Adults

13. We are starting a new period in the planning and delivery of Welsh language learning opportunities for adults. New structures are in place that will lead to innovative opportunities for learners to gain confidence to use it in the workplace, socially, and in a family setting. We established the National Centre for Learning Welsh in 2015 and the Centre published its strategy for the period 2016-2020 at the National Eisteddfod. It is clear that there is a commitment from the sector to move forward, and contribute to the overall aim of creating many fluent and confident Welsh speakers.

Promoting Use of the Language

14. It is essential that we support people across the country who speak Welsh every day. We want to make it relevant to everyone, whether they speak Welsh, English or any other language; to make sure that future generations can speak Welsh and use it; and ensure that more places exist where it is completely obvious that Welsh is the natural language.

Businesses

15. We will work with our partners to help the private sector incorporate more bilingualism in services. The excitement surrounding the national football team has given us a new opportunity to prove the value of the Welsh language in marketing, and this represents a golden opportunity upon which to capitalise.

Broadcasting

BBC Charter Review

16. Through our Memorandum of Understanding with the UK Government and the BBC, the Welsh Government will continue to be fully involved in the BBC Charter Review process. The renewal of the BBC Charter has potential implications for BBC Cymru Wales, S4C and the independent production companies across Wales. We have been very clear that the BBC should invest additional funding into the services it provides for Wales and to ensure programming that truly reflects the lives of people in Wales.

S4C

17. It is also vital that S4C has sufficient funding, as well as having editorial and managerial independence. We welcome the UK Government's intention to carry out a comprehensive review of S4C, which we have continually pushed for and was originally promised in 2010. However, this should take place in parallel with the BBC Charter Review rather than after

it. It should also be part of a broader, more fundamental review of the Public Service Broadcasting needs of Wales. We expect to be fully involved in the review of S4C, including the development of the terms of reference.

ITV Cymru Wales

18. Ensuring plurality of English language television in Wales is vital, in news and also general programming aimed at Welsh viewers. ITV Cymru Wales therefore continues to have a vital role to play as an alternative to the BBC for news and non-news programming. We do not view the existing level of provision on the Channel 3 licence as appropriate, or even adequate. Work will be undertaken to address this.

A Vibrant Sector

19. A vibrant broadcasting sector is an essential component of a modern democratic society. As a nation with its own language, culture and political institutions, a strong media is essential to provide a comprehensive service that informs, educates and inspires the people of Wales. The Welsh Government will continue therefore to stand up for maintaining full services in the Welsh and English languages at a national and local level.

20. This Committee, as well as the Welsh Government's new Independent Media Forum, will be an important platform to discuss the urgent issues relating to broadcasting and the media in Wales

Digital Strategy for Education

21. The Welsh Government's *Digital First* strategy sets out a framework approach for digital transformation across the Welsh Public Sector. In response to *Digital First*, my officials are developing a *Digital Strategy for Education* which will specifically focus on helping transform the education sector in Wales by modernising and improving the way it operates. As a "digital transformation" strategy it will outline the principles and actions the education sector in Wales can pursue to make better use of technology to modernise and save money.

22. I envisage the strategy improving the way the sector operates by digitally transforming the sector through new ways of working and thinking using digital, social, mobile and emerging technologies. It will explore improving leadership, encouraging innovation and considering different thinking and new business models. It will also propose a specific focus on incorporating digitisation of assets and increasing the use of technology to improve the experience of the education sector – from learners and practitioners, back office administration activities to front line teaching.

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