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Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1207
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/11086/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

11 October 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter concerning a petition calling on the Senedd, and other bodies, to start referring to Welsh cities and towns by their Welsh names. Although the petition refers to the Senedd specifically, I take it for granted that it also refers to Welsh Ministers and the Welsh Government.

To answer the first point, in relation to increasing the use of Welsh, the Welsh Government is committed to growing the language. Our *Cymraeg 2050* strategy, which sets out how we want to see the Welsh language developing and expanding, has established itself, and our targets to increase the number of speakers to a million and double daily use of the language, drive policies across the Government. In that sense, the strategy has done much to change the discourse surrounding the language, and to make the narrative a positive one.

Turning to the comment in relation to place names, our most recent Programme for Government contains a commitment that we will: Work to protect Welsh place names.

As you know, this is a complex area, and includes a number of layers which all need to be approached differently. As a rule, we separate place names into 3 different parts:

1. Settlement names
2. Topographical features and historic names
3. House names

These three layers are being taken forward jointly by Cadw, the Welsh Language Division, and the Welsh Language Commissioner, with Cadw responsible for historic place-names policy, and the Commissioner standardising the Welsh names of cities, towns and villages. My predecessor as Minister responsible for the Welsh language appeared before the Committee in January this year, and provided a paper outlining the issues in this area. Our

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

work in this respect continues, and we are exploring options for how best to protect Welsh place-names.

However, the petitioner goes into slightly different territory in asking us to use only Welsh names for towns and cities.

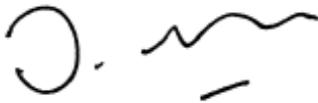
In some examples, where the pronunciation of the Welsh and English names for a town or city is so similar that there's a strong argument for having only one spelling, I think it can make sense to stick with the Welsh spelling. In these cases, I would support the principle promoted by the Welsh Language Commissioner, namely that we should aim for one spelling when there are only a few letters of difference between the Welsh and English versions. In this context, our draft policy on Welsh Language Linguistic Infrastructure (a consultation on the policy ended in July) noted the need to promote and raise the status of place-names which have been standardised, and to raise awareness of the List of Standardised Welsh Place-names which is maintained by the Commissioner.

But things get a little more complicated when a town or city has different names in Welsh and English. Every town, village or city has its own unique history, and that history will have influenced how its name or names have taken root, developed and changed over the course of centuries.

As an example, the petitioner refers specifically to Cardiff, a city whose name shows how complex the issue can be. The modern Welsh name for the city, *Caerdydd*, comes from the mediaeval Welsh form, *Caerdyf*, which in English has developed into the modern spelling of *Cardiff* (with the Welsh 'f' (or v) becoming 'ff' in English). By discarding the modern 'English' name, one could argue that we're also erasing the connection with the city's mediaeval Welsh name.

These are very often local issues, and although I wholeheartedly support the practice of using "Senedd" exclusively in everyday language, in English and Welsh, as well as how the Football Association of Wales use "Cymru" when communicating in both languages, in the case of place-names, I think they need to find a way of reflecting the wider range of perspectives and implications which exist, as the previous paragraph insinuates.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a circular mark followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke.

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