

CYPE(6)-01-23 - Paper to note 12



Sent via email to
Children and Young People in Education Committee

20 December 2022

Dear CYPE committee members,

CYPE Committee 8 December - follow-up information request response

Thank you for the opportunity to present our Annual Report and answer questions on it at the evidence session on 8 December 2022. We understand that the Committee had an additional question and also wanted to provide us with the opportunity to provide more information in areas where we were short on time in the evidence session. Thank you for the opportunity to provide more information on our work.

We have structured this response around the questions raised in the email received from the Committee's Deputy Clerk on Monday 12 December.

Q: How well prepared do you believe you are for becoming subject to the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act from April next year?

The Well-being of Future Generations Act and its 'ways of working' already provide a framework for how we deliver our functions. Although we are not currently subject to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (FG Act), our role and work are congruent with its aims. We have therefore voluntarily adopted its principles since our inception. It is, after all, a natural way for us to work, given that education and qualifications planning requires a long-term view.

Our Well-being of Future Generations objectives are focused on where we can maximise our positive impact on the well-being goals. They contribute to a prosperous, sustainable and resilient Wales while supporting the well-being of our employees.

• FG Objective 1: Supporting employers

We will align our strategies for vocational and general qualifications to the future skills needs of Wales. Through vocational sector reviews, we will ensure that qualifications support the development of the knowledge and skills that employers in Wales require – both now and in the future.

• FG Objective 2: Qualification content

Qualifications Wales
Q2 Building, Pencarn Lane
Imperial Park,
Newport
NP10 8AR
☎ 01633 373 222



Cymwysterau Cymru
Adeilad Q2, Lôn Pencarn
Parc Imperial,
Casnewydd
NP10 8AR
☎ 01633 373 222

Where we commission or introduce new qualifications, we will consider whether there is benefit in encouraging awarding bodies to incorporate knowledge and understanding of sustainable development.

• **FG Objective 3: Supporting our workforce**

We will provide a working environment, and support a culture, that encourages healthy employee lifestyles and long-term well-being.

• **FG Objective 4: Collaboration**

We will work with partners across the public sector, both to support the qualifications system and to make use of opportunities for greater efficiency or effectiveness.

As we already voluntarily adopt the principles of the Act and incorporate the ways of working in how we carry out our functions, we feel we are well prepared to be formally subject to the requirements of the Act. We [publish our objectives and progress reports](#) on our web-site. We also work collaboratively, because we are one part of the whole education system in Wales.

While we have many of the foundations already in place, we know that additional work will be needed over the coming year. In particular, we will be preparing a well-being statement and reviewing our objectives to ensure we fully comply with the legislative requirements. We will also work with our Board to review our current 10-year vision for the qualification system with the aim to develop an even longer-term vision, extending to 20 years or more.

We are already engaging with the Commissioner's office to ensure that we can be fully compliant with the requirements of the FG Act and have a session planned in January where a representative from the Commissioner's office will present to our Board.

Q: What are the main points from the annual report you would want to draw the Committee's attention to about how you are contributing to, and supporting, the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 agenda?

We know that the education sector will be instrumental in helping Wales achieve the ambitious targets set out in Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers. We also recognise that qualifications and the Welsh qualification system have an important part to play. To support this, and to promote the option for learners to take qualifications in the language of their choice, we published our Choice for All strategy - a five-year strategy which clearly sets out our commitment to the Welsh language and to increasing the availability of Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications to learners in Wales.

In this strategy, we set out four strategic areas:

- identifying and prioritising qualifications to be made available in Welsh
- strengthening support and capacity in the system
- revising our Welsh Language Support Grant, and
- improving information for learners, their schools, and colleges.

We are committed to working with a wide range of key stakeholders in the education sector to help achieve the goals of Cymraeg 2050. More specifically, as the independent regulator for non-degree qualifications in Wales, we do have an interest in the publication of the new 10-year WESPS, in as much as we anticipate and work towards a qualification market that is responsive to an increase in demand for Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications. WESPs report on this area under 'Key Outcome 4: More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh' .

We believe we can make, and are making a contribution to a number of Cymraeg 2050 outcomes and targets. Our work to secure a new range of qualifications to assess Welsh for 14 to 16 year-olds; our commitment to securing bilingual qualifications for 14-16-year-olds that relate to the new Curriculum for Wales as part of our Qualified for the Future work, and increasing the range of post-16 qualifications that are available bilingually will have a significant effect on Welsh Government's aims.

While currently having taken the decision to create two new distinct Welsh language GCSEs for learners in different educational settings to support the Welsh language continuum, we recognise that those Welsh language qualifications will need to adapt and change to future circumstances. We also see the introduction of a new, small additional qualification to provide stretch and challenge for learners in English-medium settings who are ready to progress further and more quickly in their Welsh language skills as an exciting and important development.

An increase in demand for Welsh-medium qualifications as a result of policy decisions is likely to result in the need for additional grant funding to awarding bodies. This is something that will need to be supported in the funding that Welsh Government makes available to us. We will monitor the demand for grant funding and discuss funding needs with Welsh Government.

While we are working with awarding bodies to increase the availability of qualifications through the medium of Welsh, the commercial viability of qualifications in a relatively small market, as well as changes to qualifications policy in England, will continue to be a challenge for the Welsh qualification system.

We have a range of regulatory and policy levers available to us, and both hard and soft powers will need to be utilised if we are to achieve our aims. Whether qualifications are Made-for-Wales, adapted for Wales, or simply adopted in Wales, there are often ways of addressing the issues that will be encountered, but it will take a collaborative and concerted effort across the education system to do so.

Expectations in relation to our role as the regulator are changing and there is an increased focus and emphasis on closer management of the qualification system, beyond market regulation and intervention to prevent or address market failure. These changing expectations will require additional funding and resources if they are to be met. We are already in discussion with Welsh Government over our future funding needs, some of which will be dependent upon the outcome of Welsh Government's VQ Review.

We hope that a greater focus on Welsh language provision, driven by the new Welsh Education Bill and improved planning within the WESPs for 2022-2032, will allow an environment for better identification of qualifications needs that we can then work to address. The importance of working collaboratively and strategically to deliver the targets set out in the WESPs and, beyond those, in achieving the outcomes of Cymraeg 2050 cannot be overstated. This is particularly true of the post-16 sector.

To aid cooperation and target interventions, we recently established our Cymraeg Stakeholder Group with representatives including further education colleges, schools, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Estyn and others to work together to consider ways of increasing the availability of qualifications through the medium of Welsh. We are also committed to working with, and strengthening our relationships with key partners, including the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and, once established, the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER).

Finally, increasing workforce capacity and retaining learners in Welsh-medium settings are systemic challenges that will require collective solutions. The work that the Coleg is undertaking to strengthen staffing capacity through its Towards Cymraeg 2050 Action Plan, the National Centre for Learning Welsh's recent commitment to provide Welsh language learning to teaching staff and the Welsh Government's Welsh in Education Workforce Plan will be critical in that regard. We look forward to working with partners across the education sector to address these challenges.

Q: Have you had any discussions with the Welsh Government about your required budget in 2023-24 and how confident are you that you will have sufficient resources to deliver on your objectives?

We recognise the challenging budget context as it is. We are in regular discussions with Welsh Government about our resource requirements and these discussions are ongoing.

We receive separate project funding for our work on Qualified for the future in preparing for the Curriculum for Wales. These additional resources will need to be maintained to deliver these reforms and support early implementation – for example resourcing rapid reviews of the new qualifications early in their lifecycle. We therefore need funding to continue beyond the current step change reduction in 2025 and to see a small increase in staffing. We have asked Welsh Government to consider this request and to reflect the pay award pressures.

Depending on the outcomes of the Welsh Government funded review of post-16 Vocational Qualifications and recommendations for Qualifications Wales, we will need to assess the impact and any extra resources required to deliver these. However, it is important to note that when looking further ahead it is probable that we will require more resources as the pressures to develop and regulate Made-for-Wales qualifications are likely to increase.

I hope the above information helps to close any gaps from the evidence session and if you need any further information please do not hesitate to get in touch. A copy of our Strategic Priorities document for 2022-27 will be with you before the Christmas holidays.

Thank you for your continued support and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Gyda diolch

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Jones". The letters are cursive and fluid.

David Jones OBE DL
Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Philip Blaker". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Philip Blaker
Chief Executive