



Your ref: MA/KW/0704/21

Bethan Sayed MS
Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

24 February 2021

Dear Bethan

Thank you for your letter of 29 January following the budget scrutiny session attended by the Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and the Welsh Language on 14 January. I have provided below an update on the areas of interest raised by Members on budget allocations for the Welsh language within my portfolio.

Increasing the number of Welsh-medium teachers

Increasing the number of Welsh-medium teachers is essential if we are to see more learners in Welsh-medium education. During the first five-year period of implementing *Cymraeg 2050*, the data shows that we haven't made as much progress against the targets as anticipated, particularly in the secondary sector. There could be many reasons for this including that we're simply not recruiting enough student teachers or that we haven't got enough of a pipeline of Welsh-medium undergraduates wanting to progress into teaching. Ultimately entering the teaching profession is a decision for each individual, and our aim is to make teaching an attractive and rewarding career in Wales.

I am acutely aware of the need to develop a short, medium and long-term strategic approach to address the shortage of Welsh-medium teachers, in order to meet the *Cymraeg 2050* targets. We are already working on some short-term actions such as the primary to secondary conversion course. A separate letter from the Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Welsh Language to the Committee outlines all our current interventions in this area, therefore, I haven't repeated in this response.

There is no quick solution and we need to work with a range of stakeholders, including schools and prospective teachers, to co-construct the strategy. I had positive meetings with the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to discuss their respective suggestions and we agreed to continue to work together moving forward. This is an area of work that involves a number of stakeholders, including EWC, Cydag, schools,

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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.

ITE providers, local authorities, regional consortia, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the Welsh Language Commissioner, and they all need to be involved in the work to develop a 10-year plan which will take us up to the next *Cymraeg 2050* targets in 2031.

The aim of the Sabbatical Scheme is to upskill the current workforce to support them to improve their Welsh language and language teaching methodology skills in order to teach Welsh in English-medium schools or to teach more confidently through the medium of Welsh. Although the Scheme does create more confident Welsh-speaking teachers, this doesn't always translate to an increase in the number of teachers in Welsh-medium schools. The teachers who access the foundation, intermediate and Welsh in a Year courses will largely remain in English-medium schools and will play a crucial role in improving the way that Welsh is taught, to enable all our learners to be confident speakers by the age of 16.

The evaluation of the Scheme has unfortunately been delayed due to Covid-19 but will now be published in March. We will then consider how we move forward with any recommendations to ensure that the Scheme can continue to deliver professional learning to the current workforce.

Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

With the publication of the ambitious post-16 action plan, I'm pleased that I have been able to provide specific grants for strategic projects, resources, training and support for apprenticeships for the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Since the Coleg extended its remit to include the post-16 sector, it continues to make significant progress and established new structures in full partnership with the further education and apprenticeship sectors. There is much more that needs to be done, and the post-16 action plan reflects my commitment to ensuring there are linguistic progression routes for young people when they leave school, which is so important when we plan towards achieving *Cymraeg 2050*.

In 2020-21 the Coleg has received over £604,000 towards implementing projects in colleges, resources for priority areas, apprenticeship initiatives and training for the vocational sector. Most recently I have provided an extra £155,000 in 2020-21 for the Coleg to implement three additional projects. I have every confidence in the Coleg's ability to plan its resources efficiently and effectively and I am fully committed to supporting the Coleg to deliver its vision in post-16 and indeed the higher education sector, to enable learners to undertake more of their learning through the medium of Welsh and bilingually year on year to support *Cymraeg 2050*.

Welsh Language project in Patagonia

The Welsh Language Project in Patagonia is funded from the Research, Evidence and International BEL within my portfolio which has a budget of £574,000 for 2021-22, of which £55,000 is earmarked for the Welsh Language Project.

The Welsh Language Project has been funded by Welsh Government and administered by the British Council since 1997 and my officials meet regularly with the British Council to receive project updates. The project provides for three teachers from Wales teaching annually in the three bilingual schools in Patagonia (from February to December), community Welsh for Adults classes, and administers a network of local Patagonian Welsh Tutors who also act as teaching assistants in the schools and the Welsh speaking communities.

Last year, three teachers began their placements in February, but two returned to Wales in May due to Covid-19 and completed their placements teaching remotely from Wales. The Welsh for Adults tutor remained in Patagonia teaching remotely until December last year.

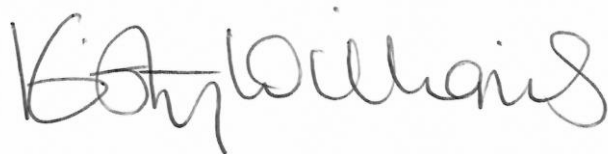
Due to Covid-19, no recruitment for the three placements beginning in February 2021 was undertaken. The Welsh for Adults tutor will be contracted for the 2021 academic year, teaching remotely from Wales until she is able to return to Argentina later this year. Currently Argentina's borders are closed to all foreign nationals and there is no indication as to when the tutor will be able to return.

The British Council and the Welsh Language Project Committee are currently looking at options to provide Welsh teaching in the bilingual schools in Patagonia. Schools in Argentina are currently closed until at least July 2021 so any provision would be remotely from Wales. Views from stakeholders both in Patagonia and Wales are being sought, along with the contractual implications of the teachers working from the UK instead of Argentina. We hope to have a clearer picture of this shortly, at which point a decision will be taken on whether remote teaching will be possible during 2021.

Moving teaching online this year has been very successful in extending the reach of Welsh teaching and cultural awareness outside Patagonia and into other regions of Argentina, and even North America. Conversely, digital teaching has also excluded students in rural or less advantaged areas, so the importance of face to face teaching is recognised, and a blended approach will be introduced into future Welsh Language Project teaching.

I trust that you will find these responses helpful to enable the completion of your scrutiny of the 2021-22 Draft Budget.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

Kirsty Williams MS
Minister for Education

29 January 2021

Dear Kirsty,

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2021-2022

At the meeting of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee on 14 January, Members undertook scrutiny of the Minister for Mental Health, Well-being and the Welsh Language on the budget allocations that support and promote the Welsh language. During our discussion with the Minister, Members raised issues about budget allocations for the Welsh language that sit within your portfolio.

Members were interested in efforts to increase the numbers of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh, and why targets for increasing their number, as set out in the Cymraeg 2050 strategy and action plan, have not been met. The Minister for Mental Health, Well-being and the Welsh Language acknowledged there was a particular problem in trying to recruit secondary school teachers. She told the Committee that you have had very positive meetings with the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to discuss plans for increasing the number of Welsh-medium teachers and supporting all teachers to develop their Welsh language ability.

Please can you update the Committee on the discussions you had with both organisations, and any actions agreed? In particular, we are interested in the £3.65 million expenditure on the sabbatical scheme. I understand an evaluation report of the scheme is due to be published before the end of February. Can you comment on how you will be using the findings of the report to increase participation? Are there any plans to review the targets for this scheme in light of the participation rate so far?

The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has contacted me directly to note that it has not received any additional funding to provide develop Welsh-medium provision in the post-16 sector. To enable them to make the difference needed in increasing provision, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has suggested an investment of £800,000 from the Government's Further Education budget for 2021-22, increasing this each year thereafter (£1.4m 2022-23, £2.5m 2023-24 and £3.2m in 2024-25). Can you confirm that the funding it has is sufficient to implement the action plan you as Minister launched in 2018 to develop Welsh-medium provision in the FE sector?

Finally, can you comment on the challenges facing the Welsh Language Project in Patagonia, and the current status of the Welsh Government's funding allocation to support the project in partnership with other key stakeholders? What conversations are you having with the delivery partners to ensure the scheme continues or adapts during the uncertainty over international travel?



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In order to inform the work of the committee and the Plenary debate on the Draft Budget I would be grateful if you could respond by 2 March.

I will be copying this letter to the Chair of the Finance Committee to inform its scrutiny of the Draft Budget.

Yours sincerely,

Bethan Sayed.

Bethan Sayed MS

Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

