

**Policy Briefing Report:**

**The strength of the Welsh language in the  
community and the economy**

**The Welsh Language and Public Policy Seminar Series  
organised by the  
Institute of Welsh Politics  
Aberystwyth University, Spring 2014**

### ***Seminar series context***

A series of three seminars was arranged in Spring 2014 with the objective of providing a forum to discuss in detail a number of significant reports and policy recommendations published from mid-2013 onwards relating to the Welsh language.

It was deemed timely to organise a seminar series organised under ‘Chatham House’ rules bringing together policy makers, academics and representatives from civil society. The aim was twofold, first, to provide an opportunity to reflect on current policy developments. Second, as an initial stage in forming a network bringing individuals from the above sectors together to discuss key developments relating in the area of language policy and planning, including government policy initiatives, academic research and other relevant developments.

We are very grateful to the Institute of Welsh Politics for their financial support in facilitating the seminar series and to Gwenan Creunant for her highly effective organisational support. We are also grateful to the participants, presenters and attendees, for their willingness to be part of an endeavour to generate detailed and in-depth discussion on policy developments relating to the Welsh language.

### ***Introduction***

The third seminar discussed three reports relating to the Welsh language’s potential community and economic role.

The first to be discussed was ‘Report of the Welsh Language and Economic Development Task and Finish Group to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport’<sup>1</sup> (*Adroddiad y Grŵp Gorchwyl a Gorffen ar yr Iaith Gymraeg a Datblygu Economaidd i Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth*). Its origins was the Welsh Government’s aim as discussed in the Welsh Language strategy to develop ‘a clear strategy in relation to how benefit could be gained from the Welsh language as an economic asset.’<sup>2</sup> Dr Rhodri Llwyd Morgan, one of the groups’ members, presented the report at the seminar with a formal response by Llyr Roberts, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the University of South Wales.

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<sup>1</sup> The full report can be viewed here:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/det/publications/140130wleden.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government 2012, *A Living Language: A Language for Living – Welsh Language Strategy 2012-2017*, page 34.

The second report discussed was 'The Potential of the Welsh Language to Contribute to realising the aims of the European Funding Programmes 2014-2020' (*'Potensial y Gymraeg i gyfrannu at wireddu amcanion Rhaglenni Ariannu Ewropeaidd 2014-2020'*) published by the Welsh Language Commissioner in November 2013.<sup>3</sup> It was produced as part of the Commissioner's response to the census results with the aim of identifying potential policy interventions as part of the 2014-2020 European Funding Programmes that could result in economic and linguistic benefits. The report was presented to Welsh Government Ministers. In the seminar Wynfford James, Welsh Language Commissioners' office, discussed the report. Nerys Fuller-Love, a lecturer at Aberystwyth University's School of Management and Business gave the formal response.

The final report discussed was 'A Review of the Work of the Mentrau Iaith, Language Action Plans and the Aman Tawe Language Promotion Scheme' (*'Adolygiad o Waith y Mentrau Iaith, y Cynlluniau Gweithredu Iaith a Chynllun Hybu'r Gymraeg Aman Tawe'*) that was commissioned by the Welsh Government and produced by the Language, Policy and Planning Research Unit, School of Welsh, Cardiff University, and Sbectrwm Consultancy.<sup>4</sup> The independent review's aim was to consider the methods used by the Mentrau and their activities, the structures and funding provision, the potential to develop their role, and any duplication with the work of other organisations. The Government's formal response to the report was published in March 2014. During the seminar, Cefin Campbell, Sbectrwm who contributed to the research process, presented the report and Dr John Glyn gave the formal response. The seminar was chaired by Dr Huw Lewis.

## **Part 1 – Key issues arising from the discussion of 'Report of the Welsh Language and Economic Development Task and Finish Group to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport**

### ***General views on the report***

The report was considered as useful and realistic having the potential to raise the interrelationship between the Welsh language and the economy higher on the agenda. It was commended for making effective use of an economic language and approach in order to market the commercial and economic benefits of the Welsh language in a way that was not considered adequately developed to date. The report was supported in drawing attention to the need for data identifying the economic benefit of the Welsh language. Its series of recommendations that were practical and could be implemented were a strength.

### ***The relationship between language and economy***

Whilst there was a strong welcome for the report for some attendees, feelings amongst others were more mixed. To some, it was important in establishing the agenda, particularly given the reluctance within government to discuss the subject. To others, whilst the report provided a basis for subsequent discussions, it raised as

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<sup>3</sup> Available at:

[http://www.comisiynyddygymraeg.org/English/Publications%20List/20131112%20DG%20%20Ariannu%20Ewropeaidd%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.comisiynyddygymraeg.org/English/Publications%20List/20131112%20DG%20%20Ariannu%20Ewropeaidd%20(2).pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/130130-adroddiad-y-mentrau-en.pdf>

many questions as it addressed and it had missed an opportunity. Whilst appreciating that the task of considering language and economy is substantial given that it is a wide-ranging area, more could have been done to deconstruct the issues and interpret more clearly the issues under consideration when discussing language and economy. At one extreme, it could include all matters relating to the Welsh language and to the economy. At the other extreme, it could be limited to usage of the Welsh language in economic matters. It would have been valuable to clarify and concretize the issues in a way that would facilitate the task of public or private sector organisations officials to understand different facets of the interrelationship and ways in which to act to the benefit of the economy and the Welsh language.

### ***Language and economy levels of development***

The report could have discussed in more specific terms the levels of action and which factors require prioritisation: transport infrastructure, investment in industries or entrepreneurship at a local level?

Related to this, different spatial elements that would influence economic development and the language were discussed. The idea of 'economic language zones' recommended in two of the recent reports (this report and the report on the areas of higher language speaker density) was considered. Whilst this was an extremely interesting idea that had potential, it was also important to learn from past experiences. In addition, there were some questions as to the political willingness to make challenging and controversial decisions in deciding on 5-6 clusters rather than spreading investment more thinly with less impact.

It was also suggested that the report did not adequately respond to current Welsh Government economic initiatives. It could have discussed in greater depth the implications of the city-region developments, particularly as the Swansea city-region that extends to Carmarthen thus requiring greater recognition of the implications of this development for the Welsh language. The government's enterprise zones attention could also have been given further attention, particularly how they could be integrated into consideration of Welsh language-economy initiatives. In order to consider the latter in a meaningful way, a stronger analysis was required of economic activities that would benefit the Welsh language and economic benefits from promoting the Welsh language.

In addition to these spatial elements, consideration of sectoral developments was encouraged, particularly considering specific interests relating to the language and the economy, such as technology and the Welsh language.

### ***Outward migration***

Whilst appreciating that this is a sensitive and challenging political issue for the Welsh Government, it was noted that the recent reports had only given limited consideration to how to address outward migration and to encourage people to stay in their areas. Whilst this particular report recommended reinstalling the Llwybro project, outward migration was viewed as a critical issue for language planning and to strengthening the connection between employment and the Welsh language.

### ***Mainstreaming: the challenge for the Welsh Language***

The perception was that the main challenge for the Welsh Government was how to coordinate and mainstream Welsh language policy considerations in a policy area as challenging as the economic sphere. The need for a cross-government approach was highlighted and for drawing together staff from key sectors in new combinations; ministers and officials in the Welsh Language Division, economic development and skills counterparts located in the education department.

### ***Research and Evidence***

With the exception of some academic pieces, producing the report had faced a lack of research and evidence. Whilst recognising this problem, it was argued that some relevant pieces of research existed that hadn't been fully analysed from the perspective of the Welsh language. It was also noted that an opportunity had been missed to develop a long-term statistical analysis of Welsh-language speakers, their economic status and the economic sectors in which they worked. Initial work was developed in analysing the 1981 and 1991 censuses but this was not continued for 2001 and 2011.

In the context of the need for greater high quality evidence, the discussion extended to the types of research required for this area. The preference was for a situation similar to more developed policy areas where a range of quantitative measures can be considered as a basis for identifying which areas require further investment in qualitative research to develop a fuller analysis. The Welsh language had been peripheral to such developments to date. As a backdrop to the data limitations, the lack of research conducted on Wales in business schools in Wales was noted, along with the way in which the priorities of research councils do not encourage research of this type on Wales.

Alongside the demand for further research and evidence, the need for a balanced consideration of the practical situation was stressed. The rationale for gathering specific data should be clear, including a clear idea of which data would be most appropriate to deal with particular challenges, for instance data evaluating the value of progression / continuity in Welsh-medium education.

## **Part 2 - Key issues arising from the discussion of 'The Potential of the Welsh Language to Contribute to realising the aims of the European Funding Programmes 2014-2020'**

### ***General views on the report***

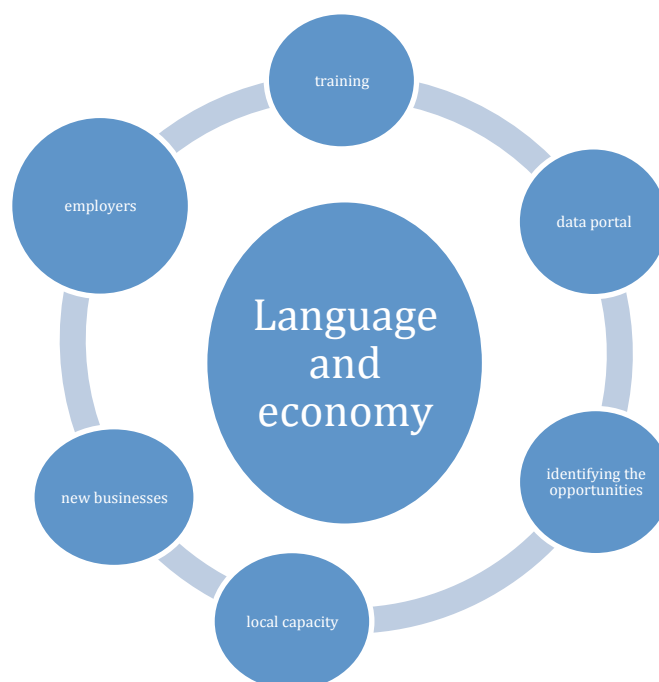
The report was considered important in view of the need to ensure that European funds were utilised to promote the economy and the Welsh language. Appreciation was shown to the document's recognition of the association between the Welsh language and economic development, particularly in identifying the specific areas with the greatest overlap between both fields and where it would be possible to develop joint economic and linguistic benefits (See 1.7 in the document). This discussion was viewed as a valuable framework that responded to the lack of a similar discussion in the first report discussed.

### ***Sectoral coverage***

The report's focus on those business sectors that are extremely relevant to the Welsh language: tourism, agri-food and cultural industries. The implications of prioritising cultural industries were discussed as given its current challenging circumstances. However, the potential for clusters in that sector was noted for instance in the context of the Swansea city-region development. The question of whether adequate attention had been given to developments like Wylfa power station on the Welsh language was raised, and whether it could be possible to consider it alongside developments in European programmes.

### ***Joint economic linguistic benefits and advantages***

Given the challenge of generating a deeper understanding of the inter-relationship between language and economy, Wynfford James proposed the following framework as a means of drawing together the various elements. It could provide a potential basis for a work programme related to specific European programmes and to the recent reports published relating to the Welsh language that referred to the language and the economy. The framework was considered to be useful in the seminar and could be extended as a tool to communicate these issues more widely.



*Diagram: with the permission of Wynfford James*

### ***Possibilities for the Welsh language in European funded programmes 2014-2020***

The proposals for the development of a Welsh Language Labour Market were discussed. It would be cross-sector and would focus on those sectors where there is a particular demand for the Welsh language, related to the nature of the provision or where the sector's development is important to a particular areas and could provide employment for people in their milieu. The work is being led by some of the

‘mentrau iaith’ and its development raises capacity challenges along with questions as to match funding arrangements.

The suggestion that one of the 2014-2020 programmes in which the Welsh language was central could be a substantial advantage as it would have some influence on other programmes. The other scenario would be more limited spending on the Welsh language across different programmes thus making it more difficult to promote good practice.

### ***Achieving Mainstreaming***

It was argued that once again, this report exemplified the challenge of mainstreaming the Welsh language, thus generating the need for mechanisms to realise this. Whilst the Welsh language as a crosscutting measure is one of the assessment criteria in any application for European funding, the view was that the current arrangements hadn’t ensured meaningful consideration for the Welsh language. Greater consideration of the Welsh language in assessments was deemed necessary, for instance assessing staffing plans that outline Welsh language skills requirements. However, given that the current arrangements have had a lengthy existence, changing them could be difficult with the risk of the persistence of the ‘tick-box exercise’ tendency of considering the Welsh language.

Different possible mechanisms and means of strengthening consideration of the Welsh language were discussed. One example was replicating the appointment of a WEFO officer responsible to considering the impact of European programmes on rural areas to the case of assessing the impact of programmes on the Welsh language and how they could take advantage from the potential of the Welsh language to achieve programme aims. Another recommendation was to compare the situation of the Welsh language with that of women and economic development in previous programmes. Effective lobbying had ensured that the latter was a priority in European programmes with dedicated funding. Commonalities with the situation facing sustainable development also made it an area that could provide guidance on how to deal with the ‘wicked problem’ tendencies of the Welsh language.

At a higher level, drawing together the different facets relating to the Welsh language was viewed as a core problem facing the Welsh Government. Whilst it is formally coordinated through the First Minister’s Welsh language portfolio, practically, it continues to be a substantial challenge. In addition to the sub-division relating to the Welsh language, so many departments operate in ways that influence the Welsh language. Steps could be taken to identify the mechanisms within government to ensure that the language is taken into account in the decision making of those departments. Similar mechanisms to those in operation relating to equality issues were highlighted as worthy of consideration.

To conclude, whilst the report highlighted the opportunities, the perception of the challenges was for partnerships and consortia to develop the work further. In parallel, a dialogue needs to be developed with civil servants and officials working in different relevant government departments and at a regional level in attempts that the programmes are formulated in ways that consider and engage with the Welsh language in a meaningful way.

### **Part 3 – Key issues arising from the discussion of ‘A Review of the Work of the Mentrau Iaith, Language Action Plans and the Aman Tawe Language Promotion Scheme’**

#### ***General Comments on the Review***

The review had made a substantial effort to identify the Mentrau’s strengths and weaknesses and exemplified a willingness to reflect critically and constructively on the weaknesses and stimulate the Welsh government’s response. The recommendations were considered as a valuable pathway in the Mentrau’s development. However, the impression was that there was little interest in challenging the ‘status quo’ position which deems that supporting the mentrau is the appropriate vehicle with some organisational changes that will enable increasing their effectiveness and impact. The implementation of some of the recommendations regarding more robust coordination was considered challenging. It was argued that there was a particular challenge for the Welsh Government underlying the report’s recommendations if it is really serious in its desire that the Mentrau Iaith make a substantial contribution. There is a need for strategic leadership through a holistic and coordinated national Welsh language strategy that takes into account the impact of other government policies on the Welsh language.

#### ***Local authorities – the implications of re-organisations and Language Standards***

It was anticipated that re-organising local authorities in Wales as a result of the Williams Commission review of public services would have direct effects on the mentrau. There was some concern that this could have a negative impact on the mentrau, particularly given the report’s ambivalent position towards local government.

Similarly, it was envisaged that the language standards would create statutory requirements on different providers, particularly relating to promoting and providing services. One issue raised was that the standards could mean the mentrau could be called on to respond to some of the duties and responsibilities placed on local authorities. Another issue was if standards weren’t implemented there may be a greater emphasis on enforcement. Consequently, a context could be created where statutory service providers would respond differently to the Welsh language given the potential consequences of not doing so.

#### ***Retaining the current number of mentrau or restructuring?***

In response to the recommendation of regional arrangements that will be influenced by any likely reorganisation of Welsh local government, the arguments for and against retaining the current number of mentrau were discussed. From the perspective of the literature on entrepreneurship and creating change, the growing emphasis on the value of the micro and local level was stressed resulting in their effects being diminished in the context of regionalisation. To some therefore, vales and valleys are the level for language revitalisation and action and local volunteering is a key strength of the mentrau. As a result, there is a need for particular caution when discussing re-structuring and regional structures to avoid losing these features and the expertise and micro level understanding that exists within the mentrau.



For others, whilst recognising the important work that has been undertaken by the mentrau since their establishment, there is scope for restructuring and establishing a clearer framework for their work. From this perspective, re-structuring shouldn't necessarily decrease the capacity for operating on a local basis. Proposals such as the city regions were discussed and the way in which it could be appropriate to have a menter iaith that operates across a city region area. Indeed, if restructuring the mentrau were to be associated with discussions of local government reorganisation, it would also be valuable to discuss it in the context of city region developments.

Restructuring could also be a means to respond to some of the other issues raised in the review, for instance consistency of service, quality and skills and resulting in strengthened high-level leadership that would hopefully be in a stronger position to develop and retain expertise that would bolster the strategic positioning of the mentrau.

### ***The functions of the mentrau***

There were different opinions regarding the core functions of the mentrau. To some, their main function is to influence the strategies and policies of other organisations of greater influence in the public policy field, such as local authorities. Exerting this type of influence was considered as the way in which mentrau with limited numbers of staff could be powerful vehicles in driving language planning forward. It was noted, however, that receipt of funds from the government or local government could directly affect on the ability of the mentrau to influence and intervene thus affecting their capacity to undertake that role.

In terms of service delivery, some considered the mentrau playing that role as an interim measure until an appropriate organisation (e.g. local authority) had developed the capacity, competence and responsibility to provide the service in Welsh. Some argued that the provision would not be available unless it was provided by the Mentrau. In some cases, even if they succeeded to get an organisation to commit to providing a service in Welsh, the menter often had to return to providing the service themselves.

Attention was drawn to broader tendencies in outsourcing a high number of local authority services to third sector organisations or private companies in the context of a change in the model of service delivery associated with the contraction of the public sector. In this context, whilst nearly all services have been outsourced, the risk was that companies and organisation in England would be contracted to provide services without consideration of the Welsh language. Whilst the language standards should ensure that authorities have to demonstrate recognition of the language in their services, it was deemed important that the mentrau position themselves to be able to respond to these new opportunities. Securing that appropriate training and a Welsh labour market were in place would be important to be able to provide services.

Given the contraction in public funding, it was important to recall experience of the enterprise agencies. In their experience, withdrawal of core funding would require a greater focus on commercial activities that would provide an income base, but would deter from more strategic planning for the benefit of the Welsh language.

## **The Welsh Language and Public Policy Seminar Series**

**Organised by the Institute of Welsh Politics, Aberystwyth University, Spring 2014**

### **Seminar 1**

**Title: Welsh Language Communities and the Implications of the Williams Commission review of Public Sector Governance and Delivery for the Welsh language**

**Location: Visualisation Centre, Aberystwyth University**

**Date: Friday, 14 February 2014**

#### **Programme**

*Part 1: Increasing the number of communities where Welsh is the main language*

- Presentation: Dr Rhodri Llwyd Morgan, Aberystwyth University
- Formal Response: Gareth Iwan, IAITH Cyf
- Discussion

*Part 2: Williams Commission on public services: the implications for the Welsh Language*

- Presentation: Nerys Evans, Deryn Consulting
- Formal Response: Dyfed Edwards (WLGA Spokesperson on the Welsh Language)
- Discussion

### **Seminar 2**

**Title: Strengthening education's contribution to regenerating the Welsh language**

**Location: Temple of Peace, Cathays Park, Cardiff**

**Date: Monday 17 March 2014**

#### **Programme**

*Part 1: One language for all: Review of Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4*

- Presentation: Prof. Sioned Davies, Cardiff University
- Formal Response: Meirion Prys Jones, NPLD
- Discussion

*Part 2: Raising our sights: review of Welsh for Adults*

- Presentation: Dr Haydn Edwards
- Formal Response: Heini Gruffudd
- Discussion

### **Seminar 3**

**Title: The Welsh language's potential in the community and economically**

**Location: Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University**

**Date: Tuesday, 20 May 2014**

#### **Programme:**

*Part 1: Report of the Welsh Language and Economic Development Task and Finish Group to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport*

- Presentation: Dr Rhodri Llwyd Morgan, Aberystwyth University
- Formal Response: Llŷr Roberts, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
- Discussion

*Part 2: The Potential of the Welsh Language to Contribute to realising the aims of the European Funding Programmes 2014-2020*

- Presentation: Wynfford James, Welsh Language Commissioner
- Formal Response: Dr Nerys Fuller-Love, Aberystwyth University
- Discussion

*Part 3: A Review of the Work of Mentrau Iaith, Language Action Plans and Aman Tawe Language Promotion Scheme*

- Presentation: Cefin Campbell, Sbectrwm
- Formal Response: Dr John Glyn
- Discussion