Welsh language linguistic infrastructure policy: impact assessment

Assesses the long-term impact of the policy on several areas.

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When we speak of 'linguistic infrastructure', we mean the resources which help us use the Welsh language from day to day, such as dictionaries, terminology resources and corpora, and all the research and standardization work that enables these resources to grow and develop. In the case of the Welsh language, this field has developed in a responsive manner over a number of decades, without anyone keeping a strategic eye on the bigger picture.

It is not unusual in other administrations with minority languages (Ireland, Canada, Catalonia and the Basque Country, for example) for the government, or an agency acting on behalf of the government, to have an overview of linguistic projects. Until recently, when a linguistic infrastructure unit was established in the Welsh Government, no one has taken the lead in this field in its entirety in Wales.

This situation has led to some duplication in some areas (e.g. several Welsh versions of a word available in different resources, in which case, which one should the Welsh speaker be using?) or a lack of provision in other areas (e.g. recently, in conjunction with Bangor University, Cymraeg 2050 Division officials coordinated a process to standardise Welsh language race and ethnicity terminology, which included consulting with key stakeholders and individuals to create an contemporary list of terms for this area).

In the context of the target of having one million Welsh speakers, it is possible that a lack of coordination and leadership in this area has hindered people in using the Welsh language, not only causing confusion for confident Welsh speakers, but also hindering new speakers who don't know where to access authorised resources.

Long term

The 'Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' requires public bodies throughout Wales named in the act to work towards achieving seven well-being goals, including 'A Wales of vibrant culture and a thriving Welsh language'. The Welsh Government has a duty to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language and to work towards achieving the well-being goals.

The 'Cymraeg 2050' strategy states that creating favourable conditions, by providing appropriate infrastructure and context, is key to realising the targets of creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050, and increasing the percentage of the population who speak Welsh every day and who are able to speak more than a few words of Welsh to 20% by 2050.

One of the strategy's aims is to 'ensure the continued development of Welsh language infrastructure (dictionaries, terminology, the translation profession) as integral to the delivery of this this strategy'. In order to create the right conditions to make it possible for the number of Welsh speakers and users to increase, it notes that a solid infrastructure and long-term investment is needed to continue to ensure a solid foundation for the future. It can be argued that dictionaries and termbases are essential for any modern, viable language, and are essential for them to remain living, contemporary languages for the future.

The Welsh Linguistic Infrastructure Policy also includes a section on protecting place names, which is one of the Welsh Government's main priorities, as set out in our 2021 to 2026 Programme for Government and our Cooperation Agreement with Plaid Cymru. Welsh place names are crucial elements of the cultural, linguistic and historical landscape of Wales, both locally and nationally. Welsh place names are particularly important to the aural and visual character of Welsh areas and communities, and we recognise the need to value, maintain and promote these names.

Prevention

These proposals will ensure that everyone has better access to linguistic infrastructure resources over a period of time, contributing to the 'Cymraeg 2050' objectives. The aims of the policy are:

Making it easier for the user: People who want to use Welsh often say that it can be difficult to find resources and answers. The number of terminology resources and dictionaries available can be confusing, and users can find it difficult to know which one has priority. Creating one unit to be responsible for making the different resources work together better, and providing guidance on their use, and access to them through one website, is a way of getting to grips with this.

Creating a consistent experience for the user: A number of nations and languages have official bodies or academies of different models, which are responsible for coordinating work on linguistic infrastructure, and which are an obvious starting point for anyone with a question about the language. In the case of Welsh, a person's experience will depend on what the user already knows about the resources which are available.

We will aim to create a consistent experience for everyone who uses Welsh linguistic resources. In order to achieve that, we will look again at the way resources are commissioned and coordinated, and market them with the aim of giving users confidence that the answers they find are authoritative.

Avoiding duplication and filling gaps in provision: There are several dictionaries and terminology databases available with different people and organisations responsible for producing them, with no specific coordination between them. The Welsh Government already provides funding for several of these projects, so we see this as an opportunity to play a coordinating role in order to further develop provision.

Horizon scanning: One obvious gap in the present provision is the lack of strategic planning concerning future requirements.

The linguistic infrastructure unit within the Welsh Government will be responsible for scanning the horizon for policy developments and large public projects which are in the pipeline, and for ensuring that appropriate experts are responsible for proactively producing and standardising the necessary terminology, without duplicating efforts. This is especially important in the case of technical terms, to ensure that they're conceptually correct and appropriate for specialist use, be that in education, science, health or any other field.

Responding to the need for urgent terminology: As well as planning for the long term, the unit will also establish a way of helping with high profile terms that arise without warning, but for which there is a pressing need. We believe that helping to coordinate terminology in cases such as these will lead to more consistency, and make it easier for users to recognise, understand and begin to use new terms.

Coordinating for the benefit of all: The unit will work with translation services of all kinds, as well as Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru (the association of Welsh translators and interpreters). Close collaboration will ensure that the different areas are joined-up in an appropriate way, so that any developments in one area are considered in others, whilst maximising the benefits for all.

Integration

Coordination of resources is essential to all policy areas. For example, we have just consulted on a White Paper which contains proposals that will form the basis of a programme of work, including a Welsh Language Education Bill. At the core of the White Paper are proposals to improve the linguistic outcomes of learners aged 3 to 16, but it also proposes expanding the role of the National Centre for Learning Welsh to be a specialist organisation that supports the

acquisition and learning of the Welsh language for learners of all ages in Wales. Of course, ensuring that coherent, easy-to-use dictionaries and terminologies are available to learners of all ages, as well as to teachers, pupils and parents, is crucial to the success of these proposals, and the success of the Curriculum for Wales in its entirety.

We have also established a new company called Adnodd, which will maintain an overview of the provision of teaching and learning resources, and commission resources that are suitable for the Curriculum for Wales and the new qualifications. These will be suitable for use by teachers and learners in the classroom, as well as at home for self study and revision. We need consistent terms for these education resources so that they can be published simultaneously in Welsh and English. The relationship between the unit, the Language Technologies Unit at Bangor University which is responsible for the Termiadur Addysg project (Education terminology), and Adnodd will be crucial in this regard.

We have already been in discussions with officials in several policy areas to discuss how the new set up could help with terminology in those fields. Together with Bangor University, we have also coordinated the process of standardizing terms in relation to racial and ethnic equality, carrying out a process to consult stakeholders and key individuals in the field to create an up-to-date list of terms. These are just examples. This will continue, and expand, as there is not a single area that does not have its own terminology needs.

Collaboration

The Welsh Government has been developed the Welsh Language Linguistic Infrastructure Policy with input from key stakeholders, leading users of the resources, and the public through their contributions to consultation. When moving on to the action stage, the organisations responsible for the resources, local authorities (in the case of Welsh place names) and stakeholders will play a

key role in supporting and implementing the interventions.

The stakeholders include:

- organisations that run infrastructure projects (dictionaries, termbases, corpora)
- officials from local authorities
- Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru (the association of Welsh translators and interpreters)
- members of the Standardisation Panel for the Welsh Language
- the Welsh Language Commissioner
- the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
- colleagues in Welsh Government policy areas such as health, culture, law and Cadw

This list is not exhaustive, but shows the range of internal and external partners we work with.

Partners will play a significant role in the Welsh Linguistic Infrastructure Policy. To all intents and purposes, they will drive the work attached to the policy, with officers from a new unit in the Welsh Government helping to coordinate the work to ensure that opportunities to collaborate are not lost, and that there is no duplication. They will also provide feedback and recommendations, and will influence future policy work during the implementation period and when planning linguistically for the future.

Involvement

The important role played by key stakeholders in the development of the policy was acknowledged by including a number of them (e.g. representatives from Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru, the Language Technologies Unit at Bangor University, the Welsh Language Commissioner, the translation services of the

Senedd and the Welsh Government) as members of a Task and Finish Group. These members played an important role in the process of drafting the draft policy that was consulted on in 2021. In that regard, we were able to respond to a number of concerns that these stakeholders had early in the process.

Because we are already funding a number of the main projects that produce the resources, we are in close and regular dialogue with them. That will continue as the work to realise the policy goes ahead.

During the consultation itself (which took place between 16 March 2021 and 6 July 2021), we targeted a number of groups to ensure that we received representative comments from important users on the resources in question. These groups included Welsh learners (in the form of a focus group of new speakers within the Welsh Government, and a focus group held externally by the National Welsh Learning Centre), translators (in the form of a focus group organized by Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru), and organizations that standardise terms (Food Standards Agency, Amgueddfa Cymru).

Impact

As stated in the consultation, there are many resources available, but there are times when that becomes a barrier rather than making it easy to find a solution. It means that it is not always clear which resource is most suitable, and that it is necessary to jump from one website to another to search for a word or term. Some users are increasingly turning to resources like Bing and Google Translate, and whereas these are useful in some situations, the answers we get from them are not always reliable.

We have many projects of the highest calibre in Wales that can help all of us who use the Welsh language. For example, experts have been developing the University of Wales Dictionary since 1921, and it has developed into the foundation for all other work on words and terms in Wales. Other resources,

such as Bangor University's Terminology Portal, and BydTermCymru in the Welsh Government, have arisen more recently in response to gaps in the provision and demand for contemporary terms. These termbases are now extremely influential. But the field is still responsive, with terms being commissioned if there is great demand, and no one keeping a strategic, high-level eye on future needs.

There has been a lot of thought and discussion about the future of the field for a few years, and the final policy document builds on the work of the Welsh Language Board and the Welsh Language Commissioner. The main issue that needs attention has remained constant: confusion for the user as a result of a number of different sources for words and terms (people said in the consultation that they don't always know which to turn to, others are not aware that some of them exist at all), and that those sources can offer suggestions that contradict each other. We want to help change that.

Until we recently established a new unit, there was no single body or team responsible for having an overview of the provision of the Welsh language infrastructure as a whole. The Welsh Government provided funding for a number of different projects, but there was no formal co-ordination.

It should be emphasized that the actions in the policy build on foundations that have already been laid, rather than starting from scratch.

Costs and Savings

We are already funding a number of the projects that will be key to achieving the aims of the policy, e.g. Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru (University of Wales Dictionary), Y Termiadur Addysg (Education terminology), Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru (the association of Welsh translators and interpreters).

We emphasize in the final published document:

> " *Our aim is to maintain the funding which at present is distributed to various linguistic infrastructure projects. Any funding provided for the unit's work, and for further developing the field more generally (for example, developing the offer in relation to dictionaries, creating a website) will be new funding for this area.* "

Mechanism

No legislation is proposed. The document includes a series of actions, in order to help coordinate the existing resources better, and make sure that everyone who uses the Welsh language can access words or terms easily.

Conclusion

Welsh Linguistic Infrastructure Policy exists not only for the benefit of Welsh speakers, but for anyone who wants to know what a word or a term is in Welsh. The target audience, therefore, is extremely broad.

A 16 week consultation was held between 16 March and 6 July 2021. It asked for people's views on the draft policy's aim of making it easier for people to use Welsh language resources, under 6 headings:

1. Dictionaries
2. Terminology
3. Corpora
4. Standardisation
5. Creating a central website
6. Creating a new unit to coordinate work

As well as written responses, 4 focus groups were convened with the following people:

1. Representatives from Welsh Language units in Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales) and the Food Standards Agency
2. Freelance Translators
3. Welsh tutors from the National Centre for Learning Welsh
4. Welsh Government staff members who are, or who have been, learning Welsh

We received 88 responses from individuals and organisations, including: lobby groups for the language, Welsh learner representatives, representatives of children and young people, local authorities, education organisations, public bodies and providers of infrastructure resources.

In terms of place names, the policy proposals were first included in the Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan. Welsh Government held a consultation on these proposals between 23 November 2021 and 22 February 2022. Everyone from the communities impacted, and throughout Wales, were encouraged to respond, whether they lived in these communities, ran businesses, owned property, or provided public services there. A total of 776 responses were received.

We will continue to consult as we move forward with work to develop the new website which is a fundamental part of the policy, with a particular focus on children and their representatives, people with protected characteristics and Welsh speakers.

Summarise the most significant impacts for the people, culture and Welsh language, economy and environment of Wales, expected as a result of the proposed action. Describe the themes that emerged from involving people. Refer to the seven well-being goals and the Welsh Government's well-being objectives. Contrast with the impact of current Welsh Government action if

appropriate.

The Welsh Language and cultural well-being

Cymraeg 2050's target to reach a million Welsh speakers by 2050, and double the daily use of the language, is a clear narrative in terms of the language's policy trajectory in Wales. 'Cymraeg 2050' recognises and appreciates the role Linguistic Infrastructure plays in ensuring the success of Theme 3 of the strategy, creating favourable conditions. Creating favourable conditions is essential to supporting the strategy's other themes, which are:

- Theme 1: Increasing the number of Welsh speakers
- Theme 2: Increasing the use of Welsh

The actions identified in the Welsh Linguistic Infrastructure policy are new ones (excluding those in relation to placenames, most of them were already published in the Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan), as no body or unit has existed before now to coordinate all the different aspects of Welsh language infrastructure. In that regard, as is noted earlier in this assessment, the potential positive effects of this policy are:

- making it easier for the user
- creating a consistent experience for the user
- avoid duplication and filling in the gaps
- scanning the horizon
- responding to the need for urgent terminology
- coordinating for the benefit of the field as a whole

During the consultation, most of the responses received supported the policy, and generally, the steps being proposed. 70 (86.4%) of the respondents noted that they agreed with the method we proposed, and showed a desire for Welsh Government to take steps to make it easier for people to get answers in Welsh,

and be assured that the answers they do get are suitable for them.

The responses mentioned that the nature of the present provision means that people need to cross-reference between a number of sources in order to find words, and this calls for a good understanding of the sources and of factors like the status and purpose of specific resources. This was as relevant to people in their work as it was to members of the public.

In addition to that, as many of the organisations that are responsible for maintaining the resources in the Welsh Linguistic Infrastructure policy are based in areas where there is a higher percentage of Welsh speakers, the policy will support the objective of maintaining and increasing the number of specialised jobs in those areas.

The impact of the actions in terms of place names have been considered in the context of the Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan, and specifically in terms of the Welsh language and cultural well-being, the economy and the countryside. Protecting place names, which is also part of the Welsh Linguistic Infrastructure Policy, is one of the aims of the Programme for Government and the Cooperation Agreement with Plaid Cymru.

The Welsh Linguistic Infrastructure Policy outlines a number of steps to improve how dictionaries, termbases, corpora and standardisation work are being coordinated to help people use the Welsh language. It also sets out the initial steps being taken to protect Welsh place names. There's a clear connection between these aims and two of the seven well-being aims outlined in the 'Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015'.

A prosperous Wales, which develops a skilled and well-educated population, decent work, a low carbon community, promoting local projects and skills for the future

The policy proposes to coordinate a number of projects, many of which are located in mid and west Wales which have a higher proportion of Welsh speakers. This will not only mean that we continue to invest in these projects, but that specialist work is available in these areas that calls for a specific skill-set. By proposing to explore how we can further develop the workforce in these areas, the policy contributes towards the goal of developing a skilled and well-educated workforce.

Furthermore, it goes without saying that coordinating and developing what's being offered in terms of dictionaries, terms and corpora, all of which help people learn and use the Welsh language, contributes to the aim of developing a skilled and well-educated workforce. For example, the Termiadur Addysg (Education Terminology) resource is fundamental for the curriculum and educational material in Wales.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Wales needs to create communities that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language. The steps outlined in this linguistic infrastructure policy, that form a key part of 'Cymraeg 2050' strategy, helps to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of Welsh resources like dictionaries and termbases, and that they know how to use them and which are suitable for them. There will be a particular focus in this regard on school-aged children, their parents, and Welsh learners, to support them to acquire and use the Welsh language.

Furthermore, that part of the policy covers place names, and outlines the steps

being taken to protect Welsh and historical place names, which are recognised as being a fundamental part of our culture and heritage, as well as being important elements in ensuring that the Welsh language is being seen and heard on a broad level.

Promoting and marketing the resources available and helping people to find out how they can protect Welsh place names in their areas, will be vital to the success of the policy. We will put a plan in place to ensure that we market the resources as widely as possible.

In terms of the website's success and the marketing steps, we will analyse the website's usage data, looking specifically at to what extent we send additional traffic to the infrastructure resources that exist on other websites. People will be able to contact the unit responsible for the website through a mailbox.

We will occasionally commission work to monitor the effectiveness of the policy.

With regard to monitoring how new terms take root, we will commission work to do so e.g. once the race and ethnicity equality terminology has been in the public domain for a period of 18 to 24 months, we will commission work to trace if and how these terms are being used and to learn lessons.