

Language Investigation Report - The Visibility of the Welsh Language

Investigation Members

Councillor Craig ab Iago (Chair)
Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd
Councillor Charles Wyn Jones
Councillor Elfed Williams
Councillor Gweno Glyn

Others invited:

Dr Rhian Hodges, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Bangor University
Dr Cynog Prys, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Bangor University

Officers

Hawis Jones (Lead Officer)
Arwel Ellis Jones (Lead Officer - meeting 6 July 2016)
Ann Elizabeth Roberts (Support Officer)

Gwynedd Council
Shirehall Street
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
L55 1SH

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1. Context

When Councillor Craig ab Iago submitted the Language Investigation Report - The Use of the Welsh Language at Meetings Language Committee meeting on 22 October 2015, it was agreed to note a desire to look at the field of how visible the Welsh language is, and work on a brief for an investigation. The officers were authorised to move ahead with the investigation.

2. Purpose of the Language Investigation

- 2.1 The Council's Strategic Plan states that the Council wants to see a situation where Gwynedd "continues to be a stronghold for the Welsh language, and that it is an everyday language that is heard and spoken naturally by children, young people and adults across the county."
- 2.2 The purpose of the investigation was to consider to what degree the language visibility in names, signs and notices across the county is important in terms of the language's status and residents' confidence using it as a natural part of everyday work. It will also consider the degree of influence the Council has over that visibility and whether there is a need for the Council to do more.
- 2.3. This was done by:
 - a) Considering the latest research and evidence from the Linguistic Planning field for the importance of the visibility of the language and linguistic landscape.
 - b) Considering the fields where the Council could ensure an influence over the county's linguistic landscape, including:
 - The Council's management of its own property and lands
 - The Council's procurement arrangements
 - Grant conditions and support that the Council distributes
 - The degree of influence the Council has on signs placed on roadsides
 - House and place names
 - c) Considering the value of a possibility of a "Welsh area" to trial the effect of regular visibility of the Welsh language.
- 2.4 The investigation aimed to form a series of simple and cost-free recommendations to the Cabinet Member, sharing them with the Language Committee before they are implemented.

3. Main Activity of the Investigation

- 3.1 The investigation met with a number of managers from the Council who were responsible for day to day services that impacted the visual image of the language in Gwynedd. A list of those interviewed is included in Appendix 1.

As the investigation work progressed, it became apparent that there is a need to focus, in the first instance, on what could be achieved within the Council, and that this would be a realistic ambition within the investigation's time limits.

Although the investigation was eager to continue to consider the value of the possibility of a "Welsh area" to trial the regular effect of the Welsh language, the members were eager to achieve improvements across the Council in the first instance. Therefore, the investigation agreed not to investigate further into 2.3c) above during the current investigation remit. A pilot area could possibly be considered, on a low cost basis, as a piece of work for the future.

- 3.2 Experts in the field were invited in order to advise members, namely Dr Rhian Hodges and Dr Cynog Prys from the University of Wales, Bangor as they had evidence to assist the investigation's work. The opportunity for them to contribute towards the group's discussions was welcomed, and they were included throughout the work.
- 3.3 A discussion was also held with Durk Gorter, a Research Professor and an expert in the linguistic landscape field from Ikerbasque.net, namely a Basque Country establishment in science (Appendix 2). This was in order to set an intellectual foundation to the investigation's work. In addition to this, his paper, 'Linguistic Landscapes in a Multilingual World' was discussed by members of the group.
- 3.4 A discussion was held between the investigation's support officer and Ann Hopcyn, Caernarfon Town Council, regarding that council's work promoting the visibility of the Welsh language in Caernarfon town through early correspondence with businesses that wish to establish in the town.
- 3.5 During the investigation's discussions, other relevant matters came to the members' attention, such as the findings of the Audit of the Welsh language's situation within the Council, and the Council's practices in relation to planning arrangements.

4. Main Findings and Recommendations

- 4.1 The members of the investigation acknowledged that a number of methods are available to promote the use of the language apart from increasing visibility, but that visibility is the remit of this investigation.

4.2 As a result of the discussions held between the Council's managers and experts in the language field, it was found that a number of cultural aspects are important to change behaviour in order to increase the use of the Welsh language:

- Creating a homely environment, ethos, and atmosphere which encourages using the Welsh language
- Increasing staff confidence and encouraging them to use the Welsh language in all aspects of their work
- Creating a safe environment to use the Welsh language amongst fluent speakers and people who are learning the language
- Welcoming everyone to use the language
- Collaborating across the Council to share good practice, and to make the best of the Council's expertise in the language field in order to have influence on an increase in the visibility of the language in Gwynedd communities

4.3 That Gwynedd's unique culture and linguistic landscape is something to celebrate and promote amongst people that decide to come to the area to visit as well as to trade.

4.4 There are a number of examples of good practice in the visibility of the Welsh language field within the Council's services, and those services should be encouraged to share their experiences, and sell software translations e.g. Property, Communities First, Storiell, Leisure.

4.5 Following Gwynedd's success with the Language Charter project across North Wales, it was identified that there is a possibility for the Council to use its expertise to assist other councils in the field of the Welsh language and that would be a way of attracting income.

4.6 Department representatives could have an impact through early intervention and having a conversation regarding the expectations when it is identified that a supplier does not adhere to a contract's language terms.

4.7 By having a discussion with Professor Durk Gorter, it was understood that there is no robust evidence to show that increasing the language's visual image, e.g. signs, increases the population's use of it. However, it is possible to work on the presumption that increasing the visibility of the Welsh language leads to an increase in people's awareness of the language.

- 4.8 Nonetheless, it became apparent that it is possible to achieve a number of simple small steps in order to realise improvements in this field.
- 4.9 It is essential that the investigation's recommendations support the Council's language audit action plan and also Ffordd Gwynedd's culture of putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do.
- 4.10 Lastly, a theme that arose consistently throughout the investigation work was that there is a need for the Council workers to use the Welsh language first every time, thinking of the Welsh language first and by default being pro-active.
- 4.11 Therefore, in the investigation's opinion, the Council should:
- Normalise the use of the Welsh language first
 - Be pro-active and promote the Welsh language
 - Be ambitious and push boundaries
- 4.12 The investigation's findings on specific subjects are noted below, with a note of the evidence behind that finding, and then the investigation's recommendation to follow.

<p>1. Subject The visibility of the language in the Council</p>
<p>2. Findings We presume that everybody is aware that they are welcome to speak Welsh with all of the Council's staff. However, this should not be taken for granted, and it should be acknowledged that the Council can do more to display this.</p> <p>Some further steps could be taken to increase the visibility of the Welsh Language in Gwynedd Council.</p>
<p>3. Evidence It was reported from Bangor University representatives that people who are learning Welsh report that they are more likely to use the language if they see officers displaying the orange logo stating they speak Welsh. Evidence of this is found in a research study carried out on behalf of Welsh Government: Hodges et al., 2015. Welsh Language Use in the Community: Research Study. Cardiff: Welsh Government.</p> <p>Siop Gwynedd has already displayed 'iaith gwaith' signs in their locations, and every member of staff uses a language lanyard and badge.</p>

4. Recommendations

- A1 Ensure that all of the Council's services are available in Welsh first, be it a machine, form or a discussion. Ensure that the Welsh comes first. A message should be sent out to all staff noting the expectations.
- A2 That more use should be made of staff that are willing to think in the Welsh language at all times, including them in the work of planning and promoting the language.
- A3 That every manager has to come to know their staff's language, taking steps to ensure that everyone receives training to improve their Welsh language skills and understand the need to communicate in the Welsh language first.
- A4 That the Council's staff are encouraged to wear a Welsh logo lanyard for the card that opens doors.
- A5 Place signs above every foyer in the Council and Leisure Centres' buildings, 'Siaradwch Gymraeg yn Gyntaf' ('Speak Welsh First').
- A6 Revise the Council's signs and establishment addresses, e.g. is 'Cyngor Gwynedd Council' necessary.
- A7 That the Language Committee revises the work's progress on the Language Audit's Action Plan in order to ensure the results are achieved.

1. Subject

Promoting the Welsh language

2. Findings

That examples had arisen during the recent language audit where practice and behaviour needs to be improved across the Council. This involved the need to use the Welsh language first every time.

In addition to this, a discussion with the Council's Registration Service has suggested that there are some constraints on what can be done through the medium of Welsh but that there is reason to suggest that more could be done to promote the Welsh language. Currently, it is possible either to register bilingually, or in English only. If an individual wishes to register a birth, marriage or death through the medium of Welsh, the individual who is registering must select to register bilingually. In addition to this, only if the individual who is presenting the information understands Welsh can he or she register bilingually.

3. Evidence

Language Audit

Interview with Joanne Parry, Manager of Siopau Gwynedd, Galw Gwynedd and the Registration Service.

Information provided by the General Register Office.

4. Recommendations

A8 Hold regular contact between the Council and the University.

A9 Consider whether there are opportunities to share the Council's expertise in the language field and increase income.

A10 Ask the University to share information with the Council on how to influence others and behavioural change methods.

A11 Use the Language Charter's data to promote the use of the Welsh language.

A12 Ask the Registration Service to encourage those who are registering events to take the opportunity to do so bilingually.

A13 To bring pressure to bear on the General Register Office to allow individuals who do not understand Welsh to register events bilingually.

1. Subject

The Council's procurement arrangements

2. Findings

Although officers that set contracts in the Council are aware of the Language Policy requirements, there is room to promote this and change mindsets and boundaries.

New companies need assistance with understanding the Council's Language Policy, and the need to provide a service in the Welsh language to Gwynedd residents.

Language requirements need to be strengthened and it should be acknowledged that there will be a need to monitor, rather than police.

There is more the Council could do by setting contracts with external providers because linguistic conditions are not clear enough in the contracts.

3. Evidence

Interviews with the Council's managers and solicitor (Appendix 3).

The language audit's results.

Confirmation was received from the Council's solicitor that it is possible to include a condition in a tender process that the writing on external provider vehicles are in Welsh, as long as it is justified on the basis of promoting the contract's social value. It could be argued that promoting the visibility of the Welsh language is part of promoting the health of the Welsh language in the community, and therefore contributes to cultural wealth, and therefore the community's social wellbeing.

Confirmation was also received that the Council could make it a requirement that departments who commission work to be tendered to explain why the Welsh language is not essential to a specific external contract. The Council's arrangements already ask commissioning departments to justify any linguistic requirements with specific contracts, and this question could be framed in a negative or in a positive way.

4. Recommendations

A14 That the Procurement Unit, via the category management teams, ensures that the Welsh language receives attention from the services where a language element is relevant to the specifications and sub-contracts e.g. add the requirement for bilingual signs on external companies' vehicles.

<p>A15 Intervene early if it is seen that the supplier does not adhere to the contract's language conditions.</p> <p>A16 That the procurement documentation asks departments to explain why including the Welsh language is not essential in the specifications and sub-contracts</p>

<p>1. Subject Roadsides and pavements</p>
<p>2. Findings The service's ability to regulate signs placed on the Council's roadsides or along the pavements is limited and the situation could be managed from a safety viewpoint only. Bilingual signs could also be encouraged.</p> <p>A number of events that are advertised on roadsides and pavements are events that are arranged by companies that are not local ones.</p>
<p>3. Evidence The service's limited ability to regulate the situation.</p>
<p>4. Recommendations</p> <p>A17 Give out a regular message that the Welsh language should be used on Gwynedd Council property by using networks that already exist and referring to the economical value to businesses e.g. Gwynedd Business Network, Town and Community Councils, social media.</p>

<p>1. Subject The Council's assets</p>
<p>2. Findings The positive effect of implementing the language policy means that companies that have supplied building contracts go and use the signs again in other places e.g. nearby councils.</p> <p>Parking payment machines now ask to press a button for an English language service, therefore it demonstrates that we use the Welsh language first every time.</p> <p>It is not possible to control a building's name.</p>

3. Evidence

Interview with Dafydd Gibbard, Senior Manager.

4. Recommendations

A18 Encourage members and social media users to send feedback on the lack of visibility of the Welsh language on the Council's building sites if they notice that something is wrong.

A19 That School Headteachers should not receive any English-only correspondence or posters e.g. from supermarkets to place on school land. In order to ensure a consistent response, the Council or a Cabinet Member (rather than the Headteacher) should communicate this to the company.

1. Subject

Events held in Gwynedd and tourism

2. Findings

The Council gives advice to companies that contact them in order to receive support for business plans.

The Council places conditions on events that are funded by it to use bilingual materials to promote the event e.g. signs, posters.

The 2003 Licensing Act does not enable Councils to demand a specific condition that festival organisers use the Welsh language when promoting their events.

There are examples of good practice in terms of promoting the language in the events field e.g. in Festival No. 6.

3. Evidence

Interview with Professor Durk Gorter, Ikerbasque, who noted that a number of studies have established that there is an economical value in using bilingual signs. He also noted that there is a finding when asking people that bilingual signs are a main priority for them because this creates an opportunity for learners and reinforces learning. He also referred to a small study in a shop that showed that there is a correlation between seeing a sign and the use of language.

Interview with Siân Pennant Jones, Marketing and Customer Care Manager, Hugh Edwin Jones, Events Manager, and Sioned E Williams, Head of Economy and Community Department, outlining the situation and the obstacles involved with influencing businesses in a situation where there is no financial contribution attached.

That there has been an increase of between 25-35% in users on the Snowdonia Mountains and Coast website since November 2015.

4. Recommendations

A20 The Council operates pro-actively and uses every opportunity to promote and influence on the visibility of the Welsh language and remember the Welsh language at all times, giving priority to:

- An initial conversation that happens through a company's first contact with the Council where it could also be reminded of the economical benefit of doing so
- The Events Safety Advisory Group that is chaired by the Events Manager

A21 The Council's departments that come into contact with those that arrange events should work with them and provide them with a list of bilingual designers.

A22 Send out a document to raise awareness of the language with the entertainment licence.

A23 Use the Training Forum to raise awareness of the Welsh language.

A24 Make changes to the tourism website's presentation (Snowdonia Mountains and Coast) in order to strengthen the sense of place.

1. Subject

Planning

2. Findings

It is necessary to be pro-active and consider the language in every case, ensuring clear visibility to the language within our Planning arrangements.

3. Evidence

Planning Committee

4. Recommendations

A25It is necessary for the department to lead in the Welsh language, whatever the language of the planning application forms e.g. Welsh versions of street names, maps, and focus on ensuring that the technology allows us to use information in the Welsh language.

Members of the investigation wish to thank everyone that has assisted them in their work.