

Initial findings of the consultation on the Welsh Language Promotion Plan for Gwynedd 2018-2023

121 individuals or organisations contributed towards the public consultation, with a wide cross-section of ages and locations across the county.

A total of **107** responses were received to the consultation through the on-line questionnaire, and the remainder contributed at public events or by sending in their observations directly.

In terms of the geographical division, the number of respondents per well-being area were as follows:

- Bala - 2
- Bangor – 22
- Caernarfon – 29
- Dolgellau – 4
- Ffestiniog – 5
- Llŷn – 17
- Porthmadog – 8
- Tywyn – 10

(10 of those who responded either had a postcode from outside Gwynedd or had one that could not be included in a well-being area).

The following shows the number of respondents per age group

- 18-29 – 15
- 30-39 – 26
- 40-49 – 27
- 50-59 – 18
- 60-69 – 16
- 70 or older - 3

Two of the respondents did not answer this question.

The majority responded to the questionnaire as individuals, and **4** responded on behalf of an organisation or business: Anelu Aim Higher, Snowdonia National Park Authority, Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd and Bangor University.

Meetings will be held with the Park, the University and Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd to further discuss some observations and proposals, and it is hoped to reflect these in the Plan and in the final actions.

Generally, the response has been positive and very constructive, with only 17 of the respondents disagreeing with the interpretation of the challenges and the opportunities that exist to strengthen the Welsh language in Gwynedd.

This is an initial summary of the responses and the observations received as part of the consultation, along with proposals to consider in preparing the final Promotion Plan.

1. Interpretation of the general challenges (pages 2 and 3 of the Plan)

This section was divided into two questions - the first asked if they agreed with the vision, and the second asked if they felt that there was anything we had missed. These responses will be dealt with together, as the responses deal with the same matters.

1.1 Main themes and nature of the observations:

- **Lack of opportunities and lack of use**
- **Inward migration and support for learners**
- **The role of technology**

Lack of use and lack of opportunities was the most common theme in the responses to the question of whether or not they agreed with the challenge noted in the draft document, and that was in terms of individuals and also bodies and organisations. The challenges we note in the Plan are all obviously things that influence individuals' use of the Welsh language, and there is reference to the lack of opportunities in many fields, therefore we are satisfied that we are dealing with this matter.

When looking at the response to the two questions relating to the challenges and opportunities, there are two apparent themes, namely the influence of **inward migration and technology**.

Inward migration and support for learners:

Of the 60 responses given to the question which asked if they felt we had omitted any challenges, 22 were related to 'inward migration' and how much support is available for people moving into the area to be able to learn the language.

There was a strong emphasis in the responses also on the lack of opportunities to learn the Welsh language and the lack of support for people who wish to learn it. It is fair to say that, upon reflection, the draft document does not give sufficient attention to the encouragement that could be provided to newcomers to Gwynedd. Gwynedd Council's influence is limited in this field, but there is a strong message here to share with partner organisations such as Welsh for Adults.

A number of the comments also referred specifically to the link between language ability and the ability to find a job within the county and the opportunities to learn Welsh at work. For example:

"Your challenge is mostly lack of inclusion for non-Welsh speakers. Only Welsh speakers can access public services jobs but when the nearest Welsh classes are a 20 mile round trip to the nearest town it is completely impractical to learn Welsh in your spare time. If you had a 'learn on the job' scheme then you could employ the best person for the job rather than the best Welsh speaker for the job. It is much easier to learn a language when you are immersed in it every day opposed to an hour once a week."

"I think more support to people who have just moved to the area and Welsh is not their first language should be given support when applying for work as it seems to be a barrier even if people are willing to attend weekly language classes this should be taken in to account when applying for work within Gwynedd and not be a barrier because you have to be at a certain level. If people are willing to learn the language then this should be taken in to account "

“The difficulty for those who cannot speak Welsh to access Welsh language jobs. There isn’t enough done to help people learn and access those jobs including support by employers to take on learners and help them improve “

Again, there is a strong message here to be transferred to Government schemes - Work Welsh - but there is also a message here for Gwynedd Council and a challenge for us to think about how we raise awareness of the opportunities available within the Council itself to support learners and to develop skills.

The role of technology:

Attention is given to the role of technology in the body of the document, however; we have not included it under the challenges and opportunities at the start of the document. It might be worth considering including general aim of increasing the use of the Welsh language in technology.

1.2 Proposals or comments that should be considered?

- i) Should there be a greater emphasis in the document on the support provided to newcomers into the area and to those who are willing to learn Welsh?
- ii) Should we consider including the aim of raising awareness about the opportunities and schemes available to support learning at work - within the Council and beyond?
- iii) Should we include a general aim to increase the use of Welsh language in technology?

2. The Vision (page 4)

86 out of the **104** responses to the questionnaire supported the general vision noted in the Plan.

Once again, support for incomers and learners has highlighted itself in the responses to this section.

It was inevitable that there would be some negative comments in response to this question (and the Plan in general). Some note their dissatisfaction that the Council is spending money on the Welsh language at the expense of other areas of priority and some comments note that the plan is discriminating against non-Welsh speakers and that forcing the agenda is likely to lead to greater division within communities and “blinkered and insular attitudes”. It is important that we bear these comments in mind, and ensure that the Promotion Plan focuses on equality and equal opportunity for all.

3. Individual Priority Fields within the Promotion Plan

The same set of questions was asked for every priority field, namely:

1. Do you agree with the vision for this field?
2. Do you agree with the interpretation of what needs to happen?
3. Are there other opportunities that we should give particular attention to in this field?

Priority Field 1: The Language of the Home

Summary:

81 of the 107 responses to the questionnaire agreed with the vision for this field.

30 chose to note additional opportunities or comments.

Main themes and nature of the comments:

- ***Opportunities that include everyone without alienating people***
- ***More support for parents to learn alongside their children***

There were a number of additional comments in this field which referred to work or target audiences addressed in other sections of the plan e.g. "Increase the support for voluntary organisations working in Welsh with children and young people". This suggests the need to be clearer regarding who the target audience is in the vision for this priority field.

There are also a number of observations regarding inclusion and how we can include non-Welsh speakers in activities so they do not feel excluded. Concern was expressed once again that there is not enough opportunity for parents who wish to learn the language.

Any action taken in this field will rely greatly on collaboration with partners such as Mudiad Meithrin, and several respondents acknowledge the importance of early intervention and influencing parents of babies, which coincides with our vision.

There are a few comments, however, asking us to look at whether our vision for this field is too narrow. See the following observation:

"As a mum of two who returned to work after giving birth I did not attend Cylch Meithrin sessions, or stori a chân sessions in libraries etc. Receiving information on where to get the resources and weekend activities would have been helpful."

Proposals or comments that should be considered?

- i) Should we consider including a specific target in the action plan to create a network that would include key partners in the field, to coordinate efforts and build on previous experience in the field?
- ii) Should we consider how we could influence the variety of opportunities that are on offer to parents and extended family to use and learn the Welsh language with their young children, in order to ensure that everyone is included, and that community groups are seen as opportunities to socialise and learn rather than solely a language group?
- iii) Should we amend the wording of the third bullet point "Increase the number of parents who are learning some Welsh and who use those skills with their families" - to either provide a better definition of "some", or to change the emphasis to increase opportunities to learn as a family, rather than an increase in the number of parents? By changing the emphasis this aim would include the entire family, and include an element of drawing attention and raising awareness of the opportunities available to parents and families to learn alongside their children.

Priority Field 2: The Language of Learning

Summary:

78 of the 107 responses to the questionnaire agreed with the vision for this field, and 76 agreed with the interpretation of what needs to happen next.

22 people chose to propose comments or ideas for this field

Main themes and nature of the observations:

- **Secondary education needs particular attention**
- **Need to ensure there are plenty of opportunities to continue to study through the medium of Welsh**
- **The importance of the Welsh language as a skill and the links with work**

A large number of the comments related specifically to secondary education, and included comments on the need for "more emphasis on the Welsh language" and "continue to use the Welsh language in their sixth form studies", but also comments about the teachers' role and the need for them to be "aware of the value of studying through the medium of Welsh" in order for them to be able to give the pupils the right encouragement.

The Secondary Schools Language Strategy addresses some of the matters raised, but this scheme is of course only in its early days, and awareness of its aims and objectives is currently very low. There will be a need to keep some of these comments in mind when producing the action plan and setting the plan's priorities for next year.

There are also some comments about the primary charter, which suggest that more work is needed to raise awareness of the Charter amongst parents.

There is a feeling of "enforcement" among the responses, and a feeling that there is not enough emphasis on learning English language skills. Given that this is a specific strategy to promote the Welsh language, these type of comments suggest a lack of understanding of the education policy and the aim to create confident bilingual citizens. There are also some comments that suggest a lack of understanding or awareness among parents about the Language Charter's work.

Proposals or comments that should be considered?

- i) Should we consider extending the aim of improving contact with workplaces to include schools (not just the vocational sector as the Plan currently outlines)?
- ii) Should we consider including raising teacher awareness of their contribution to the broader vision as a strategic aim?
- iii) Should we prioritise further research to understand trends in pupils' language choice?

Priority Field 3: The Language of Work and Services

Summary:

78 of the 107 responses to the questionnaire agreed with the vision for this field, and 73 agreed with the interpretation of what needs to happen next.

17 people chose to propose comments or ideas for this field

The responses also included response on behalf of bodies that are relevant to this field: Snowdonia National Park Authority, Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board, Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd and Bangor University.

Main themes and nature of the observations:

- **Better support for businesses and learners**
- **Technology**
- **Simple and coherent language**
- **Equal focus on the public and private sectors**

There are two specific comments that there is little mention of technology before this section, and as with a previous field there are a number of comments on opportunities for individuals to learn Welsh at work.

There are schemes in place, sponsored by the Government, but is there a danger that they are not reaching the areas that need them in Gwynedd?

Proposals or comments that should be considered?

- i) Should we consider how technology is reflected in the different fields and what is the Council's role in this?
- ii) Should we set a specific aim to look at the support that is available for businesses and individuals to increase the use of the Welsh language, and to look at a specific targeting strategy for Gwynedd alongside Welsh for Adults and Work Welsh providers?

Priority Field 4: The Language of the Community

Summary:

75 of the 107 responses to the questionnaire agreed with the vision for this field, and 72 agreed with the interpretation of what needs to happen next.

Main themes and nature of the observations:

- **Inclusion - important that everyone feels part of activities**
- **Community ownership ("encouragement not intervention")**
- **Support for learners, and translation support**
- **Collaboration with other bodies**

Inevitably there were comments in the consultation regarding the decision to change the youth service and close the youth clubs, and the impact this will have on the Welsh language in the community. As the draft plan was written before this decision was made, it was not possible to detail on any priorities in this field, however the final plan will need to address youth work and its role in supporting the Welsh language in the community.

Two comments note the need to ensure local ownership and ownership from young people, and that it is important that events do not "turn into something formal, policy", and this coincides with the hunaniaith principle of trying to empower and work together, rather than provide directly on

behalf of the community, however, there may be room in the final plan to note this principle with greater clarity.

Proposals or comments that should be considered?

- i) Propose to change the wording of the third bullet point in the vision for this section to make it clearer that the aim is to influence activities that operate in English only, in order to increase the use of the Welsh language and ensure they are seen as bilingual, not monolingual events.
- ii) The specific collaboration opportunities mentioned in the responses should be considered - specifically with Bangor University/Pontio and the National Park - and consider how we could turn these ideas into specific actions or aims for the final promotion plan.
- iii) Should we be more explicit in terms of who the contributors are in this field - beyond hunaniaith - and note how we intend to work with communities e.g. set an aim to establish a community forum to play a part in setting Hunaniaith's priorities for the next three years (funding cycle)?

Priority Field 5: Research and Technology – Setting the Right Foundations

Summary:

67 of the 107 responses to the questionnaire agreed with the vision for this field, and 64 agreed with the interpretation of what needs to happen next.

The draft document did not refer specifically to developing the relationship with Bangor University, although we are aware of the good work taking place there - especially when considering this field. Following comments about consultation, and a further conversation with representatives of the University, it is hoped that we will be able to provide more details on the relationship and the opportunities in the final document.

Proposals or comments that should be considered?

- i) Should we consider using an additional bullet point to say something along the lines of ..."Promote the development of new technologies for the Welsh language" - i.e. that we look at potential schemes of campaigns that look at the Council's contribution to developing and growing the software sector in Gwynedd.
- ii) Should we include an additional aim that relates to public bodies' (and schools) use of Welsh language software - or include as part of the Work and Services field?

4. Next steps:

All responses will be considered as we produce the final Plan. There are some specific ideas and suggestions that we will also try to incorporate in the action plan that will provide details of how we intend to implement the vision.