

MEETING:	LANGUAGE COMMITTEE
DATE:	23 April 2024
TITLE:	Update on the work of Menter Iaith Gwynedd
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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	This report is submitted in order to provide a background to Committee members about the existing work and priorities of the Menter Iaith.

1. Background

1.1 The fundamental intention of *Menter Iaith Gwynedd is to increase opportunities for people to use Welsh in all areas of their lives and in all communities across Gwynedd. This report takes a retrospective look at the past year and presents examples of the officers' work in order to improve Members' understanding of the type of interventions that are planned across the various fields.

*The name "Hunaniaith" was dropped in summer 2023, deciding on a simpler name that is in line with the rest of the language initiatives across the country.

1.2 The new Chief Officer of Menter Iaith Gwynedd started his work in May 2022, following the Cabinet's decision in 2021 to fund a Chief Officer for the language initiative "to focus on attracting new grants and raising income, improving the community connections, attracting more community members to the Strategic Group and working towards becoming an independent entity." The post will be funded for 4 years from 2021.

2. Overview of 2023-2024 work

2.1 Work to externalise Menter Iaith Gwynedd has continued over the past year. The initiative was registered as a not-for-profit company with Companies House on 1 August 2023 and there was a 'soft' launch in front of the Welsh language minister on the Eisteddfod field on the Cyngor Gwynedd stand. The directors of the new company are four volunteers and there is a wider group of 7 on the lead group who advise the directors. The launch was 'soft' to reflect that paid staff are still currently working for Cyngor Gwynedd. Complications with pensions have meant that the current 3 members of staff will now move to work for the new initiative on 1 April 2025, rather than April this year. The independent language initiative will receive a service level agreement from the Council to employ one officer in the Meirionnydd area during 24-25, following the departure of one member of staff during 23-24 which created a vacancy, and therefore it was sensible for the new initiative to employ afresh rather than adding another complication to the process of externalising. A Project Board of council officers now comes together regularly, including representation from finance and legal departments, to discuss the externalisation process and it will be an agenda item at a cabinet meeting in May.

- 2.2. Most of our work focuses on Theme 2 of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy, namely 'Increasing the Use of the Welsh language'. Our work with the public is split into three specific fields, namely Children and Young People, Families and Community. Section 3 of this report gives a taste of some of the main schemes that took place in 2023-24 within the 3 areas.
- 2.3 We need to attract more volunteers to take action for the Welsh language in our communities across the county, therefore we are not simply aiming to 'hold' or 'arrange' events, rather plan events and interventions which will inspire people, so that we are able to empower and support communities and individuals to take action themselves as well.
- 2.5 We succeeded to attract additional funding during the year, £24,000 from various funds which increased our capacity to offer more activities and generate income which will support us as Menter Iaith Gwynedd evolves over the next year.

3. Specific projects

3.1 Families

3.1.2 - **Stori a loga**- sessions for parents with young children have been held in Bangor, Llanbedrog and Bala

3.1.3 **Llanbedrog**- Working collaboratively with local group 'Llanbedrog Playing Field Committee' the committee was supported to hold several events over the year, events such as a pancake night with Tudur Phillips, a carol service and a Santes Dwynwen disco.

3.1.4 **Mynydd Llandygai**- An evening with an "in character" company was held before Christmas for the families of the village, a special performance of a Christmas show with a simultaneous translation system available to those unable to speak Welsh. Refreshments followed the performance and an opportunity for residents to tell us as officers of the language initiative and the hall committee what they wanted to see happen to support increasing the use of Welsh. Informal opportunities to chat/practise Welsh, family events and getting to know the local area were top priorities.

The hall committee have now held their own 'Bore ymarfer y Gymraeg' using the Confident/Hyderus board game purchased for them by the initiative, the event was successful with 8 individuals attending and there are arrangements to have similar sessions on a regular basis. A meeting was held to organise a programme of walks and lectures about the area which will start in the spring with the hall committee leading the organising with support from paid officers of the initiative.

3.1.5 **Immersion Centres**- By developing our partnership with the education department, we have started to reach out to new families who send their children to the immersion centres in order to create a system of support for the entire family, not just the pupil, with the aim of this resulting in those families coming closer to the Welsh language and using it. Part of this support is giving presentations to parents, presentations about the history of the language, the current situation, where to go for support and where to use it locally.

3.1.6 **Immersion and Ysgol Pont y Gof**- There is an increasing number of children in the immersion centres and how to introduce and welcome these families as units, and attract them to use Welsh, is important. With this in mind, there was a meeting at Ysgol Pont y Gof, in conjunction with the education department to discuss possibilities of carrying out a pilot project there. It was decided that there was a need for an activity that the children would do in Welsh but that parents would also be able to attend and that the activity was to convey messages about Welsh usage in a fun and understandable way, and to include an opportunity for parents to chat and get information from initiative staff. It was decided that the initiative would take the lead on the work, treat the project as a pilot, and the initiative would then own the scheme. Anni Llŷn was commissioned to create a show, which can be used repeatedly in different schools, which was created in collaboration with pupils at Ysgol Pont y Gof, Botwnnog, using their experiences as latecomers to the area and the experiences of local first language children welcoming new children to the area. Workshops to create the show with the children have taken place, with the main event to come in the

spring, we will then evaluate the event and the whole project so that it can be refined and offered in other areas.

3.1.7 **Nature-** Four nature walks were held to identify Welsh names and characteristics of different plants, these took place in Bala, Aber Ogwen, Nefyn and Mynydd Llandygai

3.2 **Children and Young People**

3.2.1 **Digital-** Digitally we are grasping the opportunities of drawing in the county's schools and immersion centres, to do activities in Welsh, and the following have been proposed:

- Dim Clem Quiz 2024 (National language initiatives quiz)- for the county's schools- 26 schools and 117 pupils from Gwynedd took part, with Ysgol Pentreuchaf reaching the national round
- Sessions with Karen "Kariad" Owen- self-care sessions, boosting self-confidence and protecting feelings for primary children over Zoom. 10 sessions for 140 pupils.
- Dydd Miwsig Cymru- a digital competition with Osian 'Candelas' judging and a prize of disco by Owain Llŷr visiting the school, 27 schools took part, with Ysgol Rhosgadfan winning!

3.2.2 **Schools-** A wider range was offered to schools in this period because we had the financial capacity to do so due to the departure of a member of staff. Through the work in schools, we try to show the children that Welsh is a language to be used outside of class, a vibrant and modern language that can be used in all walks of life and offers them future opportunities here in Gwynedd. Work with schools included:

- Menter Iaith Gwynedd Secondary School Tour- Tara Bandito holds wellbeing sessions and girls in music in the morning followed by a gig by Tara and local young band Sklark in the afternoon. The tour visited Botwnnog, Glan y Môr, Godre'r Berwyn, Dyffryn Ogwen, Tryfan and Tywyn schools.
- Workshops to create Emojis at Ysgol Eder and Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn
- Rapping sessions by Ed Holden in Bontnewydd and Llanllyfni- 2nd and 3rd prizes of the Dydd Miwsig Cymru competition
- Twmpath gwerin and reading sessions and yard game sessions at Ysgol Hiraef
- 'Ready or Not' sessions at Ysgol Llandygai
- A day at Glan Llŷn for the younger pupils of Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn

3.2.3 **Bangor Secondary Schools-** a successful grant application to the lottery community fund has meant that an outdoor scheme for year 8 pupils at Ysgol Tryfan and Ysgol Friars has continued this year, a project that places a value on the Welsh language in the outdoor field.

We attended a careers fair at Ysgol Friars, Bangor, following an invitation from Careers Wales who organised the event. We gave a presentation to all the school's years 7, 8 and 9 children on Welsh in the world of work before they had a chance to meet different employers. We took the opportunity to record some of the employers noting the importance of Welsh to them, and we want to develop this as a joint resource between the

initiative, MSparc, the Council's Language Unit and (depending on final agreement from them) Careers Wales.

3.2.4 The Urdd and Cyngor Gwynedd's Youth Department- during the year a new Urdd community officer was co-funded between the initiative, the Urdd and the Council's youth department. The purpose of the post is to start new village clubs here in Gwynedd.

3.2.5 Llwyfan Llŷn - Theatre club on the Llŷn Peninsula, we started with the initiative's funding paying for the facilitator and venue some years ago, our support continued to reduce gradually and since the Autumn the club is running without subsidy from the Initiative.

3.2.6 Theatr Derek Williams- we want to try and replicate what has happened with Llwyfan Llŷn in Bala and support Theatr Derek Williams to re-start a theatre club that existed before the Covid period. So far there have been two taster sessions and over 100 children have attended.

3.3 Community

Through our community work we seek to empower individuals and communities to take the lead and organise local things in Welsh, as well as organise events that draw communities together, raise prestige and awareness and show what is possible, in this period the following happened:

3.3.1 St David's Day celebration events, Bangor city- The Bangor St David's Day celebrations have grown to be much more than the parade itself, and there are now a series of events being organised in collaboration with different organisations and groups leading on different elements, with Menter Iaith Bangor coordinating. Partners involved in the Bangor St David's Day events include Storiell, Pontio, MSparc, Welsh for Children, Bangor City Council, Y Fran Wen, Bangor First group and the Cathedral. This year has seen new things happen naturally with organisations taking the opportunity to link projects with St David's Day celebrations, examples such as Y Fran Wen going into local schools before the parade doing theatre workshops, a local business (The Garth Pub) going into a local primary school to do a cake workshop and MSparc on the road running art workshops to create the giant dragon that was at the front of the march. We therefore see that Menter Iaith Bangor's work is bearing fruit in the city and events for people to use Welsh happen due to the partnership work of the initiative

3.3.2 Regular Sessions for Learners- Paned a Moidyr (Bangor), Peint a Sgwrs (Bangor)- regular sessions for learners- events that are supported by us, but are also dependent on volunteers and can take place without staff members attending, which is the ideal we aim for with learner sessions, and other activities, across the county.

- 3.3.3 **Clonc a Lonc, Bangor**- a light jogging exercise club every two weeks with the emphasis on enjoying and talking rather than running fast
- 3.3.4 **Walks for Learners**- Our walks for learners remain hugely popular, and while there is a feeling that this is heavy in terms of staff time, there is clear feedback from learners that these are thoroughly enjoyed and vital to add to their classroom learning experience and to get to understand and feel part of their local communities. We aim to develop these with more volunteer leaders in the future.
- 3.3.5 **North Wales Africa Society**- a series of 'Croeso i'r Gymraeg' events organised for members of the society and similar sessions for Adfer service users in the Bangor area.
- 3.3.6 **Rhosgadfan**- support recent meetings discussing the future of the Cae Gors centre in the village, in particular how the resource can be used as a boost for the Welsh language and to assimilate new arrivals in the area.
- 3.3.7 **Community Workshops/ Priority Areas**- as can be seen quite a bit of our work focuses on a few areas- Llŷn, Bangor/ Ogwen and Penllyn. We do this to be able to work at a local level to create a difference that we will eventually be able to evidence, but we emphasise that the Menter Iaith is here to Promote the Welsh language across the whole of Gwynedd and the intention is to externalise to increase capacity that will enable us to focus on all areas.

In terms of our priority areas, we have run Community Workshops in Bala, Botwnnog and Bethesda, there has been a great response from the local communities, over 90 individuals attending across the 3 workshops, and we will be actively developing action plans locally for these areas.

3.3.8 **Community Initiatives**- collaborating with all the community initiatives in Gwynedd is a priority for us, and certainly not duplicating their work but rather supporting them to promote the Welsh language in their local areas. We are proud to be part of Cymunedoli-Gwynedd's new network of community initiatives.

3.3.9 **Work with Partners**- it is only by working together that we can increase the use of Welsh in Gwynedd, the initiative is proud to be members of the Gwynedd Language Forum, administered by the Language Unit with the Menter Iaith currently chairing. Similarly, we are proud to be part of Gwynedd's education language forum and look forward to strengthening our involvement with the education department to increase the use of Welsh as a community language.

4. The future

Menter Iaith Gwynedd has developed and evolved over the past year, and this will accelerate during 2023-24.

4.1 Transferring to being an independent entity

- this will be completed by the end of March 2025

4.1.2 The Menter Iaith's revamped Business Plan- we have developed a business plan. Additional funding was attracted by the Big Lottery community fund, Grymuso Gwynedd, Cyngor Gwynedd's Economy Department and Cyngor Gwynedd's Youth Department. We have been involved in successful applications by Mentrau Iaith Cymru to the Arfor challenge fund. We will be aiming for lottery funds during 24-25, as well as identifying commercial gaps the revamped Menter Iaith can consider filling by offering commercial services.

4.2 24-25 Priorities

4.2.1 Priority Areas- We will support communities across the county, but we will focus some of our work in the Penllyn, Pen Llŷn, Bangor, Dyffryn Ogwen and Felinheli areas.

4.2.2 Priority Audiences- Children and young people, and getting Welsh-speaking children to use the language, is a priority. There is also a need to work together to attract newcomers who are adults to the Welsh language.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that the committee accept and note the report.