

Pre-legislative public consultation on Bilingual Services

Evidence from Gareth J Bevan

Consultation – Bilingual Services

Dear Madam/Sir,

I welcome the intention to legislate on the Welsh language in the National Assembly by amending the Government of Wales Act 2006, but I call on you to make important changes to your legislative arrangements and policies.

- (i) The Record of Plenary proceedings should be fully bilingual, and the Act itself should clearly state that this will be the case. Otherwise, the Assembly will be setting a dangerous precedent for all public authorities in Wales, as well as other organisations.
- (ii) The Bilingual Services Scheme needs to be changed and the clauses that undermine the general principle of linguistic equality need to be changed.
- (iii) The Bill and Scheme should be expanded to include more than "services" only, also addressing the position of the Welsh language in terms of the Assembly's role as a legislature and the role of Assembly Members and its position beyond services only.
- (iv) It is essential that more details are included in the Scheme about the language skills of staff and the internal use of the Welsh language. This should include ensuring that all staff are given Welsh language training and that the ultimate goal will be for all staff to be fully bilingual with Welsh being the main internal language of the Assembly.
- (v) In order to ensure that the Scheme is implemented, there need to be clear targets that can be measured over time, and an open and independent structure in the Bill to monitor the implementation of the Scheme.
- (vi) It should be noted on the face of the Bill that the people of Wales, as well as staff and Assembly Members, have the right to use the Welsh language.

I would be interested to hear how you intend to address these issues.

Thank you

Gareth J Bevan