# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE**  | **The Welsh Government’s response to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee’s report *Supporting and Promoting the Welsh Language*** |
| **DATE**  | **5 August 2019** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan AM, Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language**  |

On 9 July the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee published its report following its inquiry into ‘Supporting and Promoting the Welsh Language’. I have today written to the Committee to provide my response to its 14 recommendations. I would like to thank all who provided evidence to the Committee, and to Committee Members for their careful consideration of the evidence.

We have a bold and exciting programme for our country to ensure that by 2050 we reach 1 million Welsh speakers. As a government we are committed to this and I am delighted that there has been so much support from across the board for this exciting ambition.

In the White Paper we published in 2017 we argued that the emphasis within Welsh language policy had moved too far in the direction of regulation at the cost of other policy levers. As I did not believe there was sufficient support to change structures to fulfil this policy aim the decision was made in February not to proceed with the Bill. However, I stand by the analysis that there needs to be a rebalance between regulation to provide rights to Welsh speakers and other interventions aimed at:

* increasing the number of Welsh speakers to one million by 2050;
* doubling the daily use of the Welsh language; and
* maintaining Welsh-speaking communities.

I therefore welcome the Committee’s recommendations. Since the decision not to proceed with the Bill I have been drawing up plans to implement much of what the Committee is calling for. I outline those plans below.

**Standards**

I am pleased to confirm that the Welsh Government has announced that new Welsh language standards regulations for two new sectors - water companies and healthcare regulators are being developed. Those regulations will be developed in a manner which is consistent with the Committee’s recommendation with regard to adapting standards, by streamlining or combining multiple standards that have the same aim or outcome.

We are committed to deliver rights in relation to Welsh language services and I will make a further statement in the autumn regarding the rolling programme of standards.

**The Welsh Government’s relationship with the Welsh Language Commissioner**

When I announced the decision not to proceed with the Welsh Language Bill, I was clear that I expected the Welsh Language Commissioner to make some changes to the manner in which it undertakes its functions. To be clear, I continue to emphasise that the Commissioner’s independence in relation to monitoring and enforcing standards, and in conducting investigations into allegations of interference with the freedom to use Welsh, is absolute. The Commissioner is also entirely free to voice his opinion on matters relating to the Welsh language. However, I am equally clear that by working together to increase the use of Welsh, both the Welsh Government and the Commissioner can collectively achieve more.

I am therefore delighted to announce that Aled Roberts and I have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding which provides clarity to both organisations about how we will work together, and clarity for stakeholders and the public regarding which organisation leads on which strands of work aimed at increasing the use of Welsh. The Memorandum has been published on the Welsh Government’s website <https://gov.wales/memorandum-understanding-between-welsh-government-and-welsh-language-commissioner>

I am confident that by taking just this simple step forward we will see better, more joined-up effort by both organisations to work together towards the common goal of more use of Welsh.

**Prosiect 2050**

The Committee’s report reflects on the evidence it received from stakeholders who felt that a missing component of the current policy delivery landscape was sufficient intervention rooted in the principles of language planning, designed to address the fundamental issue of the social use of Welsh. These are aims which we all share. The Welsh Language Partnership Council which advises me on the Welsh Ministers’ Welsh language strategy has also expressed a desire to see more focus on language planning.

Some stakeholders have argued in favour of establishing a new external body or agency to promote the Welsh language (in addition to the Commissioner as regulator and the Welsh Government as strategy lead). I have already ruled out creating such a body on the basis that it would create confusion for the public, with a high risk of duplicating functions. It would also create additional overhead costs, taking scarce funding away from programmes and services which would be of direct benefit to increasing the use of Welsh.

I have therefore come to the conclusion that the Welsh Government is best placed to lead on the development of new initiatives to deliver *Cymraeg 2050*. *Cymraeg 2050* is our national language plan and it is only right and proper that the Welsh Government takes a national lead on language planning.

To provide greater focus and rigour in language planning, promotion and behaviour change, both within the Welsh Government and externally, I have made funding available to employ experts to lead and advise *Prosiect 2050*, a new multi-disciplinary delivery unit within the Welsh Government which will be responsible for driving *Cymraeg 2050*.

The funding of nearly £30,000 from January-March 2019, followed indicatively with around £115,000 in 2020-21, will be used to enhance the language planning expertise within Welsh Government by funding a new civil service post to head *Prosiect 2050,* and to commission a panel of up to four external expert advisers on language planning and related disciplines such as behaviour change.

*Prosiect 2050* will be tasked with:

* co-ordinating the planning for our route to a million speakers, from early years through Welsh-medium statutory education provision to post-compulsory education to Welsh for adults;
* creating new initiatives, and evaluating current initiatives, specifically aimed at achieving our target of doubling the use of Welsh; and
* supporting policy areas across the Welsh Government to contribute to the maintenance of our Welsh-speaking communities and to the increased use of Welsh, in alignment with *Cymraeg 2050*.

*Prosiect 2050* will also work with partners across Wales and beyond to help deliver our goals together. As already mentioned, the Welsh Language Commissioner will be a key partner in doing so. We will also give a warm welcome to others who share our national goals for Welsh, whether that’s just to put up bilingual signage in business, to contribute ideas for initiatives to see and hear more Welsh in the community, or to help spread the word.

*Prosiect 2050* will report to me as Minister and will work closely with the Welsh Language Partnership Council, which advises me on our Welsh language strategy. I am confident that the combined experience and expertise of *Prosiect 2050* and the Partnership Council will together provide me with assurance that we are on the right to track as we implement the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should Members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Assembly returns I would be happy to do so.