



Aled Roberts
Comisiynydd y Gymraeg
Welsh Language Commissioner

01/02

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Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner**

Helen Mary Jones MS
(Acting) Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Annwyl Helen Mary Jones

Legacy inquiry by the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your inquiry on the legacy of the work of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Committee over the period since my appointment in 2019 and I look forward to continuing to do so, whatever the form and terms of reference of the Committee during the next Senedd. I will confine my remarks to very general ones about the Committee's work and focus mainly on what I believe needs to be achieved in relation to the Welsh language in the next Senedd.

1. The Welsh Government published its vision for the future of the Welsh language in its *Cymraeg 2050 Strategy*¹ during the summer of 2017. By the start of the next Senedd the Strategy will have been in place for almost four years. The strategy includes milestones to measure the success of its achievement, with the first milestone in 2021 and the next in 2026. We know that the Committee has been scrutinising the overall implementation of the Strategy and the work of many organisations that contribute directly to its implementation over the years. We believe, however, that the Committee in the next period will need to take the Government seriously to account for the extent to which the Strategy and the milestones are being achieved. In correspondence to the Committee in early 2019 I noted that the level of spending on the Welsh language at that time did not match the ambition of *Cymraeg 2050* and that there was a risk that a lack of additional investment would undermine efforts to achieve the Strategy. Whilst recognizing that the side effects of Covid-19 will present an additional challenge to the next government it is imperative that it is challenged on the delivery of the 2050 Strategy. This should be done not just by scrutinizing the data and statistics that will result from the Census but also by getting under the skin of the data in order to fully understand whether or not the Strategy's objectives are being realized.
2. Linked to the above is the importance of mainstreaming the Welsh language into wider legislation and policy. I am concerned that the impact of legislation and policy affecting the Welsh language in general is not scrutinized sufficiently. The Committee of course directly

¹ [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/cymraeg-2050)

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scrutinizes the work of bodies working for the benefit of the Welsh language but developing and supporting the Welsh language is part of the wider work of many other organisations. It should be ensured that there is an approach that enables this Committee to scrutinize wider legislation and policy that affect opportunities to use the Welsh language or that other Committees do so to a greater degree when they consider policy and legislation relevant to their remits. The Welsh language in the health and care sector is just one example of this, with a real need to scrutinize how the implementation of strategies and legislation in the field affect opportunities to use the Welsh language. Foremost in the field of health and care would be the extent to which *More than just words* and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 are implemented in relation to the Welsh language. The same is true however of many other areas such as local government, economic development and, of course, education.

3. Linked to the above also is the need not to consider the Welsh language as a purely cultural issue, as it is a living language in all Welsh communities and is the main language of many of them. Those communities face a number of social and economic challenges which in turn challenge the viability of the Welsh language in those communities. The Committee recently undertook an inquiry into the impact of Covid on the Welsh language and invited, as it should, evidence from a number of bodies concerned with the promotion of the Welsh language. It would have been useful in considering Covid's impact on the Welsh language if further consideration had been given to the economic and social impact of Covid on Welsh-speaking communities.

During its inquiry into the Government's plans to develop a Welsh Language Bill in 2019, the Committee called on international witnesses and experts, e.g. the Irish Language Commissioner and a Scottish academic. Obtaining opinions and context from other minority language countries can be useful when considering the situation of the Welsh language. The Committee's experience of working virtually and conducting its business over video over the last few months may now facilitate the involvement of international witnesses.

I have published a manifesto document for the 2021 election² that supports my comments above that a wide range of factors affecting the Welsh language need to be considered and that the challenge for the next Government will be to take radical action to ensure that we will meet the Cymraeg 2050 targets. I believe that the Committee has a vital role to play in doing so. I hope you find these comments useful when considering the Committee's future work. Senedd officials would be more than welcome to discuss these issues further with my officials if you think that this would be beneficial.

Yours sincerely,

Aled Roberts
Welsh Language Commissioner

² [Manifesto \(positif.wales\)](https://positif.wales)