



Comisiynydd y Gymraeg
Welsh Language Commissioner

Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

9 November 2022

Dear Committee,

Consultation: Agriculture (Wales) Bill

Thank you very much for the opportunity to take part in the consultation above. Our comments will concentrate on the Bill's implications for the Welsh language in the field of agriculture. We ask that the Bill make it compulsory to do the following:

- set specific indicators and targets for the Welsh language, which will dovetail with the objectives of the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy
- collect data on the Welsh language so that the situation of the language in the agricultural sector can be analysed
- include the Welsh language in the list of purposes for which Welsh Ministers are empowered to provide support.

According to National Census figures, 43% of agricultural workers speak Welsh, compared to 19% of the general population. It is the employment sector with the highest proportion of Welsh speakers. Agricultural businesses maintain many rural communities where Welsh is the everyday natural language. We are pleased to see recognition by the Welsh Government of the importance of the Welsh language in the field, in the sustainable land management objectives announced in the Bill. The fourth objective clearly states this: "to conserve and enhance the countryside and cultural resources and promote public access

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to and engagement with them, and to sustain the Welsh language and promote and facilitate its use” (Part 1, Section 1 (5)).

It is not clear, however, how action will be taken to achieve this goal in the context of the Welsh language, or how any progress will be measured. The Bill places a requirement on Welsh Ministers to produce a statement containing indicators and targets for achieving the sustainable land management objectives (Part 1, Section 4 (1)(a) and (b)). The statement must contain “(a) at least one distinct indicator for each sustainable land management objective, and (b) at least one distinct target relating to at least one distinct indicator for each sustainable land management objective” (Part 1, Section 4 (2)). We agree with the intention of setting targets. However, we are concerned that this requirement is not sufficiently ambitious to address all the different aspects of the fourth objective and therefore that there will be no specific indicators or targets for the Welsh language. A potential side effect of that could be a lack of ambition in terms of achieving the objective of the Bill to sustain the Welsh language and promote and facilitate its use.

The Bill requires Welsh Ministers to have regard to “(a) any national indicators (as revised from time to time) published under section 10 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015” (Part 1, Section 5 (2)). The national indicators published on 14 December 2021 include the “Percentage of people who speak Welsh daily and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh” (36) and the “Number of people who can speak Welsh” (37). Similar indicators should be adopted to assess whether the Welsh language is being sustained in agricultural communities, and its use being promoted and facilitated, when trying to achieve the fourth objective. Relevant targets should be set, considering how the Government could support agricultural communities to contribute to reaching the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy targets. The aim of the strategy by 2050 is for the number of Welsh speakers to reach one million and for the percentage of the population who speak Welsh every day, and who can speak more than a few words of Welsh, to increase from 10 per cent to 20 per cent. There is no guarantee that objectives as detailed as this in the context of the Welsh language would form part of the Welsh Ministers’ statement, or targets for the Welsh language. Without the necessary detail in the Bill, there is a risk of

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losing focus on the sustainability of the Welsh language in future, by relying on the discretion of Ministers. The Bill must therefore ensure that there will be specific indicators and targets for achieving the objective of the Bill to sustain the Welsh language and promote and facilitate its use.

The Bill states that Welsh Ministers will have to produce reports assessing the progress made in the context of the sustainable land management objectives and the indicators and targets in the Ministers' statement (Part 1, Section 6 (1)-(3)). Detailed objectives and clear targets from a Welsh language perspective will therefore be crucial to measuring progress in an effective way. To carry out this work it will be necessary to collect data on the number and percentage of Welsh speakers in agricultural communities and information about language use in those communities. This will allow the Government to monitor national trends in the context of the Welsh language and analyse the situation of the language in the sector based on current evidence, in order to influence future policies and address any weaknesses.

Section 8 of the Bill refers to the Welsh Ministers' power to provide support in connection with agriculture and ancillary activities in Wales. Eleven possible purposes are listed (Part 2, Section 8 (2)). We are concerned that they do not include maintaining or promoting the Welsh language. The Farmers Union of Wales has also expressed concern about the fact that the Welsh language has not been specifically included in the list of purposes. A question was raised about this at the plenary meeting of the Senedd on 27 September 2022 when the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd, made a statement about the Bill. Samuel Kurtz MS noted that there was no reference to the Welsh language within the 11 purposes, and asked how the Government intended to conserve and grow the Welsh language within the powers in the Bill. The Minister responded that she had been working with Plaid Cymru around the Welsh language and that further amendments would be brought forward at Stage 1. We look forward to seeing the amendments; it must be ensured then that the Welsh language is included in the list of purposes. The Bill enables Ministers to add a purpose to the list, as well as removing a purpose, by regulations (Part 2, Section 8 (4)(a) and (b)). To reflect the importance of the

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Welsh language in the context of our agricultural communities, the Welsh language should be in the list on the face of the Bill itself. We also believe that it should not be possible to remove a purpose without prior consultation.

We hope that the comments above will be useful to you in your consultation. Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to it.

Yours faithfully,

Gwenith Price
Deputy Welsh Language Commissioner

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