

CFA22 Bilingual Cardiff – Cardiff Council

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Cymraeg i bawb? | Cymraeg for all?

Ymateb gan: Caerdydd Ddwyeithog – Cyngor Caerdydd | Evidence from: Bilingual Cardiff –
Cardiff Council

1. What are the main barriers that prevent wider use of the Welsh language in areas with fewer Welsh speakers, and what might help to change this?

People's perception plays an important role and also how any specific discussion about the Welsh language is framed.

A general point therefore in terms of the terminology of the consultation: there are subtle but potentially significant differences for any discussion (or promotion plans) in relation to 1) 'areas with fewer Welsh speakers'; 'areas where Welsh is not widely spoken'; lower density areas – compared to:

2) higher density areas, areas where Welsh is heard or areas where there are more Welsh speakers.

Though this may be suitable for some parts of Wales, putting things in such a binary frame is not always suitable for discussing the situation of the Welsh language in Cardiff. We therefore need descriptions that are meaningful in their specific context.

e.g. With the vast majority of the population non-Welsh speaking and with only around 12.2% speaking Welsh fluently within Cardiff's borders (2021), that would put the capital in the minds of most in category 1) of the above descriptions. And although the number of Welsh speakers has grown as the capital has grown over the decades, the population of the city as a whole has grown faster. Furthermore, in the last decade the growth rate of Welsh speakers has slowed significantly. So that's the more negative frame.

Still, Cardiff has the third largest number of Welsh speakers among Welsh local authorities and by far the largest number of speakers per square mile among all local authorities. [*The density of Welsh speakers per square mile in Cardiff is over 10 times the density of the authority with the largest number of speakers, which is Gwynedd]. Furthermore, there are some communities in the city where there is a higher percentage of fluent speakers e.g. Canton is at 24%. If any Welsh skill is considered (including understanding spoken Welsh only,) the percentage there rises to over 30% (which is 4,600 residents 3+ old). Part of Canton in Victoria Park reaches a percentage of 35% for

fluent speakers and 43% for those with any Welsh skill. Looking at this wider cohort across the city gives 63,000 residents (2021) – which is very close to the entire population of Anglesey.

Furthermore, it could be added that the linguistic pattern is different in the capital (and much of the south-east as well) – more younger Welsh speakers than older speakers – and more speakers from non-Welsh speaking households – which is another subtle difference.

Another feature related to the use of Welsh here is the thousands of speakers that commute to work daily from outside the county, further increasing the density of Welsh speakers by several thousand every day. *We acknowledge however that further work is needed for us to better understand the exact extent and additional possibilities of this phenomenon, but it is certainly an important part of the full picture in the capital.

The existence of data regarding the critical mass of speakers of the type outlined above, and having such data, suggests that the city could easily be discussed as though it belonged in category 2) when considering the terminology above, because as a rare area of growth for the Welsh language, the city is certainly an Area of Linguistic Importance for the future of the language - identified as such in the policy statement in Cardiff's proposed Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2026-36 – as seen in the Census, it is one of the rare growth areas with almost 30,000 of these fluent speakers under the age of 34.

Certainly, this geographical density of speakers offers an opportunity to develop progressive plans to increase the use of Welsh in the coming years, and the obvious starting point is to increase the visibility of the language in the city. The lack of visibility of the Welsh language in certain areas feeds a lack of use. Greater visibility is a means of increasing use – even if that is only at the most elementary level.

2. What sort of spaces and opportunities might encourage greater use of, and increase confidence in, the use of the language in areas where day-to-day use of the language is limited?

Cardiff is in an advantageous position of being the capital of the whole of Wales (and it is important that it reflects that), being small in terms of geographical footprint but large in population - so more people here are likely to see every Welsh sign, poster or mural. The proposed Development Plan will assist to a certain extent in setting new foundations and expectations for individual new development plans - in terms of giving due consideration to the language in the first place and how it could be strengthened, certainly in terms of naming and signs, but also in due course more specific further action to promote the Welsh language and its use in accordance with Supplementary Development Guidelines and relevant planning obligations, placing measures to promote Welsh central to the Council's growth and land use strategy for the first time ever.

But that has to align with other language use promotion and facilitation plans as well, while also continuing to work on further increasing the number and density of speakers in the city. To that

end, subject to the agreement of the county's elected members, the hope in Cardiff is that it will be able to present a revised promotion strategy a year earlier than expected in 2026 to run in parallel with the introduction of the replacement LDP. We will also review the Council's WESP at the same time, which will also be able to incorporate considerations arising from the new Education Bill which is of course to be published this year.

The hope is that a more coherent policy programme of this type, with the Welsh language at its heart, will be a better platform on which to build, to remove some of the obstacles and increase language use over the next decade.

One possible idea that could increase use in a very dense area in terms of its daily footfall numbers would be to create a dedicated geographical space or 'Welsh quarter' in the city centre – similar to what is planned in Dublin – where Welsh organisations and businesses would be encouraged to base themselves, where there would be an incentive for businesses to offer a Welsh language service, where there would be support for establishing Welsh language co-working spaces, where there would be an emphasis on Welsh goods and products, on Welsh arts, on Welsh language live music performances and street performers – both indoors and outdoors. This would give further substance to the Welsh language and bilingual signs that are already visible in the city centre. It would be an organic platform, a magnet, a tourist attraction, a backdrop for Tiktok videos, a daily Tafwyl.

Seeing a platform for the Welsh language succeed in this way would perhaps make other parts of the city want to emulate it – in the district and local centres in the suburbs where the Welsh language's visibility – with a few exceptions – remains particularly scarce.

But realising such a plan would need to secure a solid financial partnership, including the support of the Government, the local authority, the city's Welsh language stakeholders, promotion and tourism agencies, business and extensive private sector sponsors.

The other area that needs urgent attention is increasing the confidence of young people to use the language that they possess. Getting them to use the language spontaneously in Welsh-medium schools is a difficult enough task as it is – without opportunities and a suitable space outside school to use the language, it is a much more difficult task considering that Welsh is not the language of the household for the majority. The anecdotal opinion of many suggests that this situation worsened during and after the pandemic.

In the first place therefore, we need to start measuring language use more scientifically to get data and a clearer picture of what is happening on the ground. That will likely be a project either for the new Bilingual Cardiff Strategy or a project under the Cymraeg i Bawb (*Welsh for All*) regional banner.

Cymraeg i Bawb is a project that has succeeded in creating new resources and shared good practice across the South-east region in order to promote the Welsh language. During the coming year, the regional partnership will be looking for specific projects to develop, and projects to promote language use will be given consideration at that time.

3. Can you share examples of successful initiatives or activities that have encouraged Welsh language use in areas where use of the language is limited?

Although not an area as such, workplaces are also places to target to increase language visibility and use. Workplaces must have access to accurate data regarding the language skill levels of employees in order to be able to implement suitable and specific interventions to try to encourage and promote further use – whether formally in meetings or informally among staff. The ability to establish the baseline is a necessary step to securing progress. Bilingual Cardiff currently has an initiative in place which tries to tackle this in Cardiff Council – which is a substantial amount of work for an organisation and an employer as large as a county council – but essential work, nevertheless.

Welsh language activity takes place outside school in different clubs on football and rugby fields and on various performing stages – but only a small percentage take advantage of these activities. Apart from the Urdd provision, the CFTi club is a new weekly initiative in the city for young people that offers a safe and welcoming Welsh language space outside of school, but this provision needs to be increased 20 times over to make a real difference, establish new practice, reach out to young people in English medium schools that are studying Welsh to include them as well, and similarly target the global majority communities in the city that are underrepresented as a group of young people that speak Welsh.

The youth service in the county has also recently been reorganised to operate at a level that's closer to the community, so it will also be necessary to work with that model to promote and encourage further use of the Welsh language.

Menter Caerdydd has of course been extremely active in this area for years now, across the age range, and has increased its focus this year on activities for young people in some of the areas in the east of the city where the Welsh language is not as strong. Since Covid, Menter Caerdydd has also increased the number of online activities – which are geographically neutral and open to all.

Again, talking about an 'area' is a little artificial when discussing the capital as there are extensive networks of movement across the city in terms of education, work and socializing, so most residents hardly limit themselves to one specific area e.g. most Welsh secondary pupils travel out of their local area to receive their education every day. Similarly, if they are able, they attend after school clubs or some other evening activity - also more likely to mean having to travel to another part of the city. But it must be remembered that not everyone is able to participate like this in the same way.

Again on a wider level, the Gyrfa Gymraeg (*A Welsh Career*) event is in its third year this year – targeting year 12 Welsh-speaking students in the city and from all over south Wales to consider further and higher Welsh medium education and to think about career opportunities where they could take advantage of their language skills by meeting employers that are keen to employ Welsh speakers like them. The event is held through a partnership between Bilingual Cardiff and

the city's universities and colleges. Despite only being one day, it is a day at a time of their lives when students make important decisions about choosing subjects that can determine the direction of the rest of their lives - so it is a timely intervention.

The partnership is also currently developing a program of smaller events with Careers Wales to be held throughout the year within Cardiff's secondary schools to promote Welsh-medium education and employment opportunities. There is more work to be done on tracking the patterns of students' choices over time and to supplement the intervention with further timely and purposeful messages to ensure that they are aware of the opportunities that they have to use their Welsh skills in their careers in Cardiff in the future. The hope is to create a baseline of data regarding the choices of Cardiff school pupils when they move on to further and higher education to offer a statistical picture of the current situation and to measure the impact when delivering further interventions.

4. How could technology and digital offers help to increase the use of the Welsh language, to identify those who use the language infrequently or lack confidence?

Convenient technology with which to measure language use would be a useful tool. We intend to take advantage of the recent pilot scheme in Anglesey to measure language use in the community, focusing in the first place on young people. It is likely that several types of quantitative and qualitative information gathering methods will be needed to get a better grasp of what is also happening across the age ranges and across areas of the city with regards to language use. Time and resources will be the biggest challenge in terms of securing this information.

A one-stop shop to have every Welsh app and every English app that has a Welsh interface would be an asset, similar to Pod Cymraeg. There are collections of apps for children, or thematic collections to be found - but then it becomes scarce.

Likewise, Welsh YouTube channels so that they can be found in one place or at least accessed from one place.

People (especially young people) should be asked which apps they would like to have in Welsh and encourage more app developers to increase what is available in this sphere with a continuous promotional campaign to back it up.

Welsh Tiktok video competitions with attractive prizes to be won. Adapting to other new popular platforms as they develop.

Establish the habit of using Welsh language apps early on (primary age) – so that Welsh terminology on these platforms isn't unfamiliar later on. Attractive apps for teenagers.

The promotion of the Welsh language through apps and social media platforms is crucial as young people's lives are so much more digital than in the past. They communicate and live much of their lives through these platforms – which are delivered almost entirely through the medium of

English. This feeds into the idea that Welsh is a language for school only and has no place in the digital world, which is so central to the life experience of our young people.

Introducing Welsh onto these platforms will be very challenging, of course, and will require intensive collaboration. It is also crucial to ensure that our young people are part of this, to share their opinions and ideas with us, and to act themselves as champions for the Welsh language. Digital platforms are now part of young people's experience and their identity, and we must ensure that these platforms are central to promotion work if we want to see young people owning and using the Welsh language on these platforms.

5. What impact, in your view, do cultural events such as national Eisteddfodau or Welsh language festivals have on Welsh language use, particularly in areas with fewer Welsh speakers?

An event like Tafwyl clearly creates credibility that Welsh is a living language and is used beyond the school gates. It confirms the decision of non-Welsh speaking parents attending regarding choosing Welsh-medium education for their children. The door is also open to non-Welsh speakers and visitors to the city to enjoy Welsh language culture in an informal way without it being too much of a challenge, because the emphasis is on live music and performance opportunities for children, and on social enjoyment. For Welsh speakers, on the other hand, it is a clear opportunity to spend one weekend (and maybe a few extra nights thrown in) speaking and hearing quite a bit more Welsh than they would on a normal weekend. It's perhaps somewhat sad that it only happens one weekend a year, although some other minor events are held at different times of the year under the Tafwyl banner, such as the monthly Laffwyl comedy event in Victoria Park on Friday nights.

Due to its size and the fact that it occupied Cardiff Bay for 10 days, and was also free and open to all, the impact of the National Eisteddfod in 2018 was obvious. But Cardiff Bay hasn't seen anything like it since and the memory of it is starting to fade locally. Instead, the area is dependent on the presence of stakeholders such as the Urdd, Welsh productions at the Millennium Centre, the presence of the Senedd and Ysgol Hamadryad to fly the flag for the Welsh language on a daily basis in an area that is relatively weak in terms of numbers of speakers.

The redevelopment that is taking place in the area at the moment with the construction of a new arena offers another opportunity to increase the visibility of the Welsh language in the area. A secure and suitable platform must be ensured there for the Welsh language when that development becomes operational. And similarly, the reopening of St David's Hall in the city centre will in due course offer an opportunity to reset the stage in terms of the Welsh language offering there, along with further development of the city's wider City of Music strategy.

6. How might these events (whether large or small in size) be adapted or improved to better serve communities with fewer Welsh speakers?

Regarding Tafwyl, there is more to be done in terms of increasing awareness of the festival outside the location itself, and it is difficult to measure its impact outside the city centre in general in neighbourhoods and communities across the city. That may be another challenge, which is to take the model out to the neighbourhoods themselves and get them to take ownership of it – but significant further resources would be needed to realise that.

In terms of the Eisteddfod, it is certainly the intention to get the National Eisteddfod back to Cardiff as soon as possible!

It must be noted that events such as Tafwyl and the Eisteddfod in 2018 have, and have had, an impact as they have been free and open events. While there are financial challenges in hosting any event, especially these large ones, the entry cost for events is a significant barrier to the participation of all sections of the community, especially those that are often hardest to reach. The spirit and fun of Welsh language festivals must be experienced for them to have an impact within communities and how best to promote access to them needs to be considered. There are already initiatives to offer free tickets, but consideration should be given to how to promote events in communities where Welsh speakers are less prominent. eg Specific promotional events could be held within those communities and opportunities offered to performers and bands from these communities. Tafwyl has been working with a number of partners to realise such initiatives and has been successful in getting non-Welsh speaking families to attend to see their children perform for example. We need to create a partnership and relationship with our diverse communities throughout the year in order to raise awareness and generate richer participation.

7. Are there any other matters you would like to draw to the Committees attention about the Welsh Government's approach to supporting the Welsh language in areas with fewer Welsh speakers?

Promotion of popular national campaigns such as Welsh speaker badges/lanyards, Welsh service stickers for businesses to use

- various advertisements targeting young people and less confident speakers to use the Welsh that they have,
 - advertisements targeting Welsh-speaking parents to use it in front of their children – an important part of normalising use in children's minds
 - specific advertisements discussing the benefits of the Welsh language for global majority communities and incomers
 - making Welsh the default first choice in as many situations as possible
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- encouraging local authorities/language initiatives to carry out micro surveys of language use in neighbourhoods/communities so that a better picture is available – which in turn will guide better choices when prioritising promotion plans
 - ensuring sufficient funding to finance community initiatives through funds such as the SPF to ensure practical resources where the Welsh language can thrive – whether buildings, businesses, services – but that are an obvious network that can be relied on to use and hear the Welsh language locally. Places where those that are new to the area can be welcomed and come to feel part of the community (i.e. – not that life through the medium of Welsh is some kind of parallel universe to their real lives). This is also about promoting community cohesion as well as normalising and increasing use of Welsh.
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