

P-04-330 A Welsh-language Record in our Assembly

Petition wording

We are concerned about the status and use of the Welsh language in the National Assembly. Welsh is now an official language in Wales, and we are very proud of this development. Nevertheless, the decision to allow the Record—a document of the highest symbolic importance—to become, essentially, a monolingual English document, after having been entirely bilingual since 1999, runs counter to this development and denigrates the official status of the Welsh language.

We therefore call on the National Assembly for Wales to return to a policy of providing a fully bilingual Record, so that the people of Wales can read the Assembly's proceedings in their own language, be that Welsh or English. This is a matter of principle and of respecting the fundamental linguistic rights of the people of Wales.

Petition raised by: Catrin Dafydd

Petition first considered by Committee: September 2011

Number of signatures: 1,334

Supporting information:

As an Assembly member you will be aware of the decision made during the third Assembly to cease the production of a fully bilingual version of the Record of Proceedings (Cofnod), and of the fact that the decision was unpopular among the public in Wales as well as with Assembly Members from all parties. I'm writing to you as a member of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, to ask you to support the return to a policy of providing a fully bilingual Cofnod so that the people of Wales can choose to read the Assembly proceedings in their own language, whether it is English or Welsh. We have written to the Commission and the Llywydd on this matter and we would be grateful if you could add some extra pressure.

Welsh has now been confirmed as an official language in Wales through the Welsh Language Measure 2011, something we welcome most warmly, as do you I'm sure. The decision to let the Cofnod – a document of huge symbolic importance – to now become a mostly English-only document after it has been thoroughly bilingual since 1999 goes against this development and tramples the official status of Welsh in Wales.

We all heard recently that the level of Welsh spoken in the Assembly has deteriorated significantly, and I'm sure you would wish to address this

problem. We have no doubt that the lack of a bilingual Cofnod contributes towards this problem, since a bilingual context is needed in order for the use of Welsh to feel natural in the Chamber and elsewhere. There is a risk that the Welsh language will become no more than an ornament and a tokenism in the Assembly. This would undermine the language throughout Wales.

The lack of a bilingual record is a matter of concern to us and other people from all over Wales have said they wish to campaign on this matter. We understand also that the Welsh Language Board is investigating the matter under the Welsh Language Act 1993. If the Assembly itself cannot comply with its Welsh Language Scheme, what hope is there for other organizations throughout Wales?

We understand there is an intention to present a Bill to protect the Welsh language in the Assembly. This is a much-needed step and we will be keeping a keen eye on those developments. However, ensuring a fully bilingual Cofnod will be a basic requirement of the rhetoric of a 'truly bilingual organization' that is so often used with no consideration for what this means. A bilingual record is needed as a starting block, and other developments built upon that. This is a matter of principle, respecting the linguistic rights of the people of Wales at the most basic of levels.

Lastly, I would like to remind you: when the Assembly first stopped producing a bilingual Cofnod, members of all parties came together to voice their concerns and sought to ensure it would continue in a fully bilingual format. I therefore urge you to reverse the decision taken by the previous Assembly regarding this crucial matter.