

Ambitious plans to almost double the number of Welsh speakers launched

Cymraeg 2050 – a million Welsh speakers sets an ambitious direction for the language and acknowledges the need for systematic planning if we are to realise this vision.

Concerted action is required now to grow Welsh-medium education. Our aim in doing so is to provide people with the skills to be able to use the language with their families, in their communities and the workplace. And to enable those things to happen, we need to create an environment where people can and want to use the language.

The strategy sets two overarching targets:

- The number of Welsh speakers to reach 1 million by 2050;
- The percentage of the population that speak Welsh daily, and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh to increase from 10 per cent to 20 per cent by 2050.

To achieve these targets, we will be looking to drive the following transformational changes across three themes:

Theme 1 – Increasing the number of Welsh speakers

- Make rapid progress to expand Welsh-medium early years provision by 150 nursery groups over the next decade to facilitate a seamless transition into Welsh-medium education;
- Increase the proportion of each school year group receiving Welsh-medium education from 22% (based on 7,700 7 year old learners in 2015/16) to 30% (about 10,500 in each year group) by 2031, and then 40% (about 14,000 in each year group) by 2050;
- Transform how we teach Welsh to all learners in order that at least 70% of those learners report by 2050 that they can speak Welsh by the time they leave school;
- Increase the number of primary teachers who can teach in Welsh from 2,900 to 3,900 by 2031 and 5,200 by 2050; increase the number of secondary teachers who can teach Welsh from 500 to 900 by 2031 and 1,200 by 2050; and increase the number of secondary teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh from 1,800 to 3,200 by 2031 and 4,200 by 2050;
- Reform post-16 Welsh-medium education and skills offer to ensure that young people have the opportunity to continue developing bilingual skills to support a prosperous economy.

Theme 2 – Increasing the use of Welsh

- Review the legislation which underpins the Welsh language to ensure it offers a strong foundation for promoting and facilitating the use of

Welsh.

- Ensure that Welsh Government leads by example by promoting and facilitating increased use of Welsh by our own workforce.

Theme 3 – Creating favourable conditions

- Develop a new regional focus to economic development to help all parts of Wales to benefit from prosperity and support each area to develop its own distinctive identity
- Transform the Welsh language digital landscape with particular focus on language Technologies
- Develop a national programme to increase understanding of bilingualism

These themes are interdependent, as are many of the aims identified under each theme. For example, increasing the number of children going to a Welsh-medium school is not enough in isolation – those children must also be given opportunities to learn and speak the language outside of the school gates.

We will publish work programmes at regular intervals during the lifetime of the Strategy which will detail what action is required to achieve our goal. The first of these for the period 2017-21 (also published today), will outline our detailed key priorities for the initial phase of the new Strategy.

We are very clear that it is our responsibility as a Government to set the direction and provide leadership for this work. However, everyone has a part to play, and we want everyone to contribute to realising the ambition.

The First Minister, Carwyn Jones, said:

“Welsh is one of our treasures, and is part of what defines us as a nation – whether we speak the language or not.”

“Reaching a million speakers is a deliberately ambitious target to so that the Welsh language thrives for future generations. There are challenges ahead, but we can undoubtedly face those in the knowledge that we are building from a position of strength.

“If we are to succeed, we need the whole nation to take ownership of the language. Politicians can’t impose that, but politicians can lead. By raising our expectations and adopting an ambitious vision, we have the potential to change the future outlook for the language”

Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language, Alun Davies said:

“It was an honour to be given the important role of developing the vision of reaching a million Welsh speakers by the First Minister and I am proud to be launching the Cymraeg 2050 strategy today. I am confident it will put us on the right path towards facilitating

an increase not only in the number of speakers but also in the use of the language within our communities, workplaces and families.

“We know that language policy needs to be rooted in consensus and democratic strength. Together, by renewing our energy, adapting to an ever changing landscape, we can enable the Welsh language to grow – a living language for all that unites us as a nation.”