

Project gives Welsh speaking throat cancer sufferers a voice

The *Lleisiwr* project, which has received £20,000 from the Cymraeg 2050 grant fund, develops technology which builds personal synthetic voices for Welsh speakers at risk of losing their ability to speak due to diseases such as throat cancer. It is being developed by Canolfan Bedwyr at Bangor University, in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board and, once ready, will be available across Wales.

Currently, patients who have lost their voices only have access to English medium synthetic voices which impacts on their ability to converse with friends and family with whom they have always spoken Welsh.

The Cymraeg 2050 grant is a key element of the Welsh language strategy, Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers. It provides small grants of up to £20,000 each to fund innovative, short-term projects which aim to increase people's daily use of the language and to promote technology which supports the use of Welsh. Twenty-six projects were approved in the first round of funding last year while a second round of funding will open for applications later this year.

The Minister said:

"Today's visit has been both informative and very inspiring. I have built a career on my ability to speak so know maybe more than most how devastating it would be to lose that ability through illness. A far greater loss would be to lose the ability to speak to my family and friends in the language we use every day so I am delighted Bangor University and Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board are working on the Welsh Voices project and proud the Welsh Government is contributing to the project."

Following the visit, Head of the Language Technologies Unit at Canolfan Bedwyr, Delyth Prys, said:

"It was a pleasure to welcome the Minister for the Welsh Language and to showcase this project. This hugely exciting project gives us an opportunity to apply our Welsh language speech technology in a way that benefits patients. We look forward to the feedback from patients as they're referred to us by the National Health Service, and to further developing this technology in the future."