

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

2nd October 2024

**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION,
LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING
ANDREW THOMAS**

MATTER FOR MONITORING

WARDS AFFECTED: All

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2032

Purpose of report

1. To report on progress of Neath Port Talbot's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032.

Executive summary

2. Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 requires Local Authorities to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).
3. Neath Port Talbot's WESP details the plan to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities and planning for future growth. The plan details how further development will be secured over the next 10 years, January 2022 - January 2032.
4. This report details the progress made in the second year of implementing the plan (Appendix A- Annual Review) and targets for the next 5 years (Appendix B- Five Year Plan).

Background

5. Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 requires Local Authorities to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP- Appendix C). The WESP must contain proposals and targets to improve the:
 - Planning and standards of Welsh medium education and teaching; and
 - Report on progress made to meet the targets of the previous WESP.
6. Neath Port Talbot's WESP 2022-32, is the cornerstone for the Council's vision for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in Neath Port Talbot, to enable all learners to develop their Welsh language skills and to use the language confidently in everyday life. It both complements and assists in facilitating the National vision for the Welsh language, to have 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050:

The year 2050: The Welsh language is thriving, the number of speakers has reached a million, and it is used in every aspect of life. Among those who do not speak Welsh there is goodwill and a sense of ownership towards the language and a recognition by all of its contribution to the culture, society, and economy of Wales. Our vision is to secure favourable circumstances throughout the country that support language acquisition and use of Welsh language skills. We want to see an increase in language transmission in the family, early introduction of Welsh to every child, an education system that provides Welsh language skills for all

Cymraeg 2050 – A million Welsh speakers (Welsh Government, 2017)

7. Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of the learning offer in Neath Port Talbot and all children should benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and understand their lives through the medium of Welsh. This principle is underpinned by ensuring universal access to this provision across the county borough. Neath Port Talbot Council recognises that language and culture are critical parts of an individual's identity and is committed to promoting and celebrating Welsh language learning across all phases and sectors.

8. It is acknowledged that the statutory education system has a vital role to play in increasing the number of Welsh speakers. We must increase the number of school learners who have the opportunity to develop Welsh-language skills in school and the opportunity to use it in their everyday lives, significantly, to achieve our goals.
9. Neath Port Talbot's WESP details how we plan to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities and how we plan for future growth. The plan details how we will secure further development over the next 10 years, January 2022 - January 2032.
10. The plan has been developed through close working with partners including Neath Port Talbot schools, Menter Iaith, RhAG, Mudiad Meithrin, Neath Port Talbot College, Academi Hywel Dda Swansea University, the Urdd and with Welsh Government.
11. It aligns itself to the national policy and guidance '*The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (Wales) Regulations 2019*', '*Cymraeg 2050*' and to the '*Education in Wales: Our National Mission, Action Plan 2017-21*'. The plan reflects how the school system in Neath Port Talbot, including sixth forms, will move forward in the period until 2032 to ensure that the new curriculum is implemented effectively in our schools securing the opportunity and 'desire for learners to become increasingly bilingual with a strong grasp of other languages' (*Curriculum for Wales 2022*).
12. The overarching ten year target in Neath Port Talbot is to increase the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh from 16.8% (252 pupils) in 2020/21 (PLASC 2021) to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032.
13. Neath Port Talbot's WESP (Appendix C) contains information on increasing community use of the Welsh language. This is further developed in the WLGA grant action plan- *Funding for county councils to support the Welsh language in Carmarthenshire and the former industrial heartland areas of the Western Valleys* (Appendix D).

WESP Outcomes

14. The following outcomes are outlined in the WESP and address the broader aims outlined in Cymraeg 2050 and its implementation plan.

- More nursery children/3 year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
- More reception class children/ 5 year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
- More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another
- More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh
- More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school.
- An increase in Welsh-medium education provision for learners with additional learning needs (in accordance with duties determined by the ALN Act
- Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh.

Summary of progress

15. Key achievements over the last year include the following.

- Welsh-medium educational promotional material
A series of 6 professional videos, 'Taith at Ddwy Iaith', have been commissioned and are ready to be launched in the Autumn term with a focus on the Welsh-medium pathways from pre-birth through to further education (both higher education and vocational pathways). The promotional material promotes the benefits of bilingualism and Welsh-medium education throughout the Local Authority. Further promotional work has been done in the form of professionally produced prospectuses, flyers and promotional banners for Welsh-medium schools, with specific emphasis on schools with surplus places and work has commenced on producing a 'Taith at Ddwy Iaith' area on the NPT website.
- Local Authority working in partnership with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to increase the Welsh speaking school workforce
The Local Authority is currently working closely with the National Centre for Learning Welsh with the aim of transitioning one English-medium cluster along the language continuum. Currently 4 staff members from Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School are half way through the new pilot for language acquisition and have attended the first block of residential in Nant Gwrtheyrn. It is our aim to work closely with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to develop a Welsh speaking community within the Cefn Saeson feeder cluster primaries. This will ensure pupil transition and progression from primary to

secondary as well as forming a natural cluster support group for staff in both the primaries and secondary cluster schools.

- Welsh Language Promotion Officer employed full time

A Welsh Language Promotion Officer has been appointed full time until August 2025 (with the aim of continuing beyond 2025 in line with funding). One of his main objectives is to work closely with the Welsh-medium cluster to tackle surplus places in our Welsh-medium schools.

- Development of bilingual pre vocational 14-16 and vocational pathways for pupils within the Local Authority

A bilingual skills hub will be completed on the Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur site by Summer 2025. In line with the new National 14-16 Qualifications, the hub will provide bespoke bilingual courses with the aim of improving attendance and pupil engagement. This hub will fit into the Local Authority's strategic approach to developing a wider bilingual curriculum, skills based and vocational offer for young people across NPT.

- Development of Childcare Provision- Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur and YGG Trebannws

In order to increase pupil numbers in YGG Trebannws and Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur primary phase, work has been done to develop, design and source funding for new childcare facilities offering wrap around provision in both schools. YGG Trebannws childcare will open in September 2024 with 13 names already on roll. The new provision in Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera north is expected to open before the end of the 2024-2025 academic year. Positive parental feedback and pupil names already registered for these facilities suggest that there will be a significant increase in pupil intake in both schools in the coming years.

- Development of transition plan from KS2 to KS3 and KS4 to KS5

A transition plan for Welsh-medium KS2 to 3 and KS4 to 5 has been developed with cluster Headteachers and the Welsh Language promotion Officer with the aim of targeting schools with the greatest loss to English-medium education. The plan will be implemented and funded from LAEG grant funding.

Financial Impact

16. There are no financial implications linked to this report. However, as a result of implementing targets within the plan financial impacts could occur, for example an increase in the number of Welsh-medium schools is likely to lead to increased capital and revenue costs.

17. A WLGA grant of £147,500 was awarded to support the Welsh language in Carmarthenshire and the former industrial heartland areas of the Western Valleys (Swansea Valley area). This will be spent in 2024-2025.
18. A Welsh Government Immersion Grant of £300,000 was awarded to facilitate the running of the immersion centre from September 2022-March 2025. Additional costs of running the immersion centre may be identified in March 2025 and reports will be presented to members at the appropriate time for approval.
19. Applications for grant funding have been submitted to assist with additional capital and revenue costs for identified projects through the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme and these will be the subject of further reports.
20. Additional financial impacts may be identified through the course of the 10 year plan and reports will be presented to members at the appropriate time for approval.

Integrated Impact Assessment

21. An integrated impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
22. The assessment has indicated positive impacts in relation to age, disability, race and sex; neutral impacts on the other protected characteristics and a positive impact on the development of the Welsh language. The WESP is a 10 year plan and will continue to be monitored during that period by the WESP forum members and annually by Welsh Government for any mitigating actions where necessary.
23. The Integrated Impact Assessment is attached to this report as Appendix E.

Valley Communities Impacts

24. There are positive impacts on valley communities as result of this report. During implementation it is likely that the WESP will create and provide opportunities and experiences for all learners and the wider community to use Welsh and be part of Welsh life in order to increase confidence in the Welsh language and to feel a sense of belonging. The WESP aims to promote community cohesion by creating opportunities to work together towards a common aim, developing the Welsh language. Specific actions within the WESP promote community cohesion, for example, Menter Iaith's family activity sessions/ days e.g. fun days, singing sessions; The Urdd's Community Department providing arts opportunities and arranging activities to encourage and enable children and young people to socialise through the medium of Welsh outside the classroom; further development of Ty'r Gwrhyd's community groups, including Merched y Wawr, Cylch Darllen Cwm Tawe and papur bro *Llais*, and activities including regular book launches, small art exhibitions, cultural and literary events and creative activities for children and young people. These activities aim to forge good relationships between Welsh-medium and English-medium communities. This is further developed in the WLGA grant action plan- *Funding for county councils to support the Welsh language in Carmarthenshire and the former industrial heartland areas of the Western Valleys* (Appendix D).

Workforce impacts

25. It is likely that there will be positive workforce impacts as a result of this report. WESP outcome 7 aims to increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subjects) and teach through the medium of Welsh, which is likely to positively impact on the workforce. The opening of 3 new Welsh-medium schools within the 10 year period will also increase the number of staff teaching through the medium of Welsh within the Local Authority.

Legal impacts

26. The following legislation / regulations are aligned to this report:
- Section 84 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
 - The WESP (Wales) Regulations 2019
 - The WESP (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020

Risk Management Impacts

27. Failure to implement the WESP targets will mean that the Council will not be able to fulfil its legal obligations.

Consultation

28. Consultation on the WESP has already taken place, there is no requirement for further external consultation.

Scrutiny Observations

The item was considered at the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the 12th September. The Chair was very complimentary about the progress made delivering on the WESP targets. The report was noted.

Recommendation

42. It is recommended that members note the content of the report on the progress of the WESP.

Appendices

Appendix A: Annual Review

Appendix B: 5 Year Plan

Appendix C: Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

Appendix D: WLGA Action Plan

Appendix E: WESP IIA

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