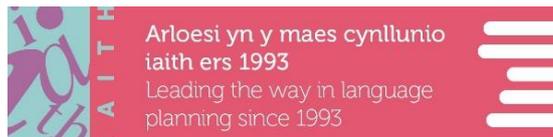




Planning Aid **Wales**
Cymorth Cynllunio **Cymru**



Placemaking for a Thriving Welsh Language

Online Network Event Summary

Introduction

On 25th November 2021, Planning Aid Wales and IAITH: Welsh Centre for Language Planning delivered an online joint mini conference that brought together planners, Welsh language specialists and Community and Town Councils (CTCs) who are taking steps to make more use of Welsh, support the use of Welsh in their communities and are thinking about or involved in planning and placemaking.

Planning Aid Wales (PAW) is a charity that supports community engagement in the planning system in Wales. IAITH is a centre for excellence in language planning that promotes the use of Welsh and developing bilingual practices in community and organisational contexts. The event was delivered in partnership as part of PAW's annual programme of network events, which are designed to bring planners and communities together to debate relevant planning topics.

The webinar provided an overview of the Welsh language planning policy context and presented case-studies across Wales where community development work and planning decisions have addressed this issue, both in rural and urban settings. The event also focused on the contribution of planning to the Thriving Welsh Language Well-Being Goal and how it must ensure that the conditions that are essential for Welsh to thrive are considered. Participants were also provided with information about how to increase their use of Welsh and sources of information about the Welsh language in their areas which will allow them to contribute to this aspect of Placemaking.

PAW and IAITH were pleased and grateful to welcome speakers from across Wales who are activists at the community level and language and spatial planners who provided case-studies of their work. The following provides a summary of the main points raised during the event. Full presentations and the resource pack are available to download here. [PAW Agenda \(iaith.cymru\)](#)

The event was attended by 36 delegates and speakers, which included representatives of Community and Town Councils, community groups and local planning authorities.

Placemaking & Land Use Planning Context

James Davies of Planning Aid Wales introduced some of the key topics to be discussed in the event, highlighting Absersoch Café as an example of where a lack of a Welsh language

name was one material consideration in rejecting the planning permission for a café. James emphasised though that there were a wide variety of other factors that were considered, and this emphasised the importance of a holistic approach to such matters.

James highlighted the current planning framework relevant to planning and the Welsh language, including the Planning Policy Wales definition of Placemaking and other relevant statements, Future Wales, the Welsh national plan, Technical Advice Note 20 and Local Development Plans, links for which were provided in the agenda / resource pack [PAW Agenda \(iaith.cymru\)](#). James also highlighted the current Welsh Government consultation on introducing a new use class for second homes in Wales, which can be found here: <https://gov.wales/planning-legislation-and-policy-second-homes-and-short-term-holiday-lets>

Placemaking for a Thriving Welsh Language

Dr. Kathryn Jones of IAITH: Welsh Centre for Language Planning introduced the wider legislative and policy context for the Welsh Language, including the Government of Wales Act 2006 (s.78(1)), The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, Future Generations Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2015 and the Planning Wales Act (2015). Kathryn explained the relevant duties and requirements of the various Acts, specifically (at local authority level) statutory Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, 5-year Welsh Language Promotion Strategies and Well Being Plans.

Kathryn went on to explain how town and community councils had a responsibility to help achieve the aim set out in Cymraeg 2050 to grow the number of Welsh speakers throughout Wales and to increase people's daily use of Welsh. Kathryn concluded by exploring what Community and Town Councils could do in relation to this. Examples were to operate bilingually, scrutinise how the aims of growing the numbers of Welsh speakers and the use of Welsh are achieved in the matters that are the subject of public consultations & planning applications, in the distribution of grants and in community development projects.

Community Development and a Thriving Welsh Language in an Urban Context (Merthyr Tydfil)

Lis Mclean of Canolfan Soar explained the role of Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful; their aim was prioritising the development of the Welsh language, the community, and the local economy. Lis explained that there are three strands to the work of Canolfan Soar:

- Conservation of historic buildings
- Development of the arts for the benefit of the community
- Development and expansion of Welsh language and bi-lingual services provided within the community

The organisation has 47,000 visitors a year, employs 20 people and has 200 activities a year. Canolfan Soar's strategic goal is to contribute to the regeneration of Merthyr town centre, by providing a place for people to meet, learn, socialise, and engage with education and the arts. Its activities aim to raise confidence, increase self-esteem, and broaden horizons through the arts and education while contributing to local economic development.

Lis highlighted that at a local level the Centre is working successfully and strategically with the local authority and other organisations in contributing towards local regeneration and

cultural projects, “the total economic impact generated by Canolfan Soar within the south Wales economy is estimated to be £1.29 –£1.30 million.”

Community Council Perspective

Gareth Ioan of Llanllwchaearn Community Council spoke about community development in the Welsh language from a CTC perspective. He explained that his Council area has a high population of Welsh speakers, and the language is particularly important in Placemaking in rural areas.

Gareth talked about the responsibility on Councillors to be aware of the government strategies and wellbeing plans to improve the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing, ensuring a better quality of life for this and future generations. He also discussed the creative potential implicit in a town or community council as a platform to implement proactive and significant community development projects for the benefit of the community - including sustaining and promoting the Welsh language.

Gareth then went on to consider how community councils can promote and maintain the Welsh language as a living and viable language in their communities. Firstly, by using more Welsh - not just in the agenda and minutes, but also within the council’s own discussions and activities. Secondly, in their response to public consultations by weighing up plans and recommendations in terms of the viability of the Welsh language in the local area. This also applies to planning applications. But in the context of planning, Gareth felt that community councillors (and others) may need help on how to measure the impact of local developments on the Welsh language. Thirdly, it is possible for a community council to contribute to creating a positive Welsh environment in an area through its powers of street naming and erecting information signs and so on. The right to allocate grants is another means by which community councils can constructively influence the viability of the Welsh language; by supporting local organisations, societies and groups that use the Welsh language and contribute positively to its local culture and viability. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is an opportunity to be proactive and creative.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 gives community councils the right to “... improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of people and their communities” which includes the viability of the Welsh language. Gareth referred to Local Action [Creating a Welsh language action plan: guidance for neighbourhoods | GOV.WALES](#), a micro language planning tool he authored to help community groups identify local development needs in terms of the Welsh language. The community council is a good vehicle for implementing many ideas and projects locally but perhaps not always. Other organizations and organizations are often the best vehicles. But there is potential for the council to act as a catalyst, to identify needs, to stimulate partnerships and to act in partnership with others – i.e., to take the leading role within the community and lead on this process of 'place-making'.

Land Use Planning Decision Making and the Welsh Language

Owain Wyn of Burum Consultancy explored several case studies to illustrate the land use planning dimension of Welsh Language. He started by identifying some of the relevant extracts from planning legislation and policy that clarify the importance of the Welsh

language in the planning system both in terms of policy creation and planning decisions. He emphasised that “The land use Planning system should take into account of the conditions which are essential to the Welsh language and in so doing to its use and the Thriving Welsh language well-being goal.” He also referenced an objective in Future Wales 2040 “Wales where people live..... in places with a thriving Welsh language”.

Owain discussed that when making planning decisions “Considerations relating to the use of the Welsh language may be considered by decision makers so far as they are material to applications for planning permission”. He explained that policies and decisions must not introduce any element of discrimination, based on (individual) linguistic ability, and should not seek to control housing.

Owain went on to advise that if required, language impact assessments may be carried out in respect of large developments not allocated in a development plan which are proposed in areas of sensitivity or importance for the language. He stated the importance that such areas should be defined clearly in the development plan.

Owain concluded that the Government will expect all local planning authorities to consider how their local development plan will contribute to placemaking where the Welsh language thrives.

Local Planning Authority Perspective

Angharad Crump and Ffreuer Owen of Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn /Isle of Anglesey County Council opened their presentation by outlining the local policy base in Gwynedd and Anglesey including the joint Local Development Plan and supplementary planning guidance – “Maintaining and creating distinctive and sustainable communities Welsh Language Strategy 2016-2021”. The Council’s goal for the 2021 Census is to see an increase in the number of Welsh speakers and that the percentage increases to at least 60.1% as it was in 2001.

Angharad and Ffreuer explained how the Council consider the Welsh language in the planning process. In accordance with Policy PS1 developers must identify whether a Welsh language statement/ assessment should be prepared to assess and confirm whether the development will safeguard, support, and promote the use of Welsh as part of sustainability criteria. They are required to assess to what extent the development is likely to have a positive, neutral, or negative effect on the area’s linguistic character.

They used two case studies to emphasise the Council’s approach: Horizon’s Wylfa Newydd power station project and the Morlais tidal energy project both determined by the UK and Welsh Governments. In both instances, the need for a Welsh language assessment was identified early in accordance with the requirements of the joint Local Development Plan and the Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Both projects benefited from early engagement with planning, policy and Welsh language officers in order to agree the scope and identify the affected area, establish the baseline language use and profile of the present and future population, and identify most current and relevant data sources.

They advised that the key information influencing the findings of the Welsh language statement/assessment may include:

- From where will the workforce come?
- Will they speak Welsh?
- Will they set up home in the area and what about their families?
- Who will the contractor be?

Angharad and Ffreur went on to explain what would be required from a Welsh Language assessment. There is a need to prepare separate Welsh language assessments for different stages of the project –e.g., construction phase and operational phase – to account for differing likely effects. The role of planning conditions was discussed. It was explained that it is important to consider the Welsh language assessment a ‘live’ document. Finally, such assessments should formulate a mitigation, optimisation, and monitoring strategy for long-term, major projects.

Angharad and Ffreur emphasised the importance of seeking opinions. It is important to identify and engage with key stakeholders, e.g., Anglesey Welsh Language Forum, Town and Community Councils, Community groups and local Welsh language champions. They also emphasised the importance of using the pre application process as an opportunity to provide an early opinion on the Welsh language statement/assessment as part of the developer’s public consultation.

The presentation concluded by looking at mitigation and optimisation and possible measures may include:

- Considering the language as part of procurement arrangements
- Supporting local supply chains
- Securing local employment
- Adopting a language policy consistent with the local authority
- Gathering evidence on workforce Welsh language skills
- Arranging workforce Welsh language awareness training or Welsh lessons
- Positive attitude towards Welsh
- Using Welsh names
- Respecting and compensating the local community if appropriate
- Engaging with local community

Session Close

Discussion underpinned the need for greater awareness and understanding of the issues raised in the event, which both Planning Aid Wales and IAITH: Welsh Centre for Language Planning would continue to address. Overall, it was agreed that a holistic approach was needed to deliver a thriving Welsh language as part of the placemaking process and collaboration between all parties is key to driving change.

Audience Evaluation & Feedback

The event was attended by a mixed audience 60% Local Planning Authority, 20% Community and Town Council, 14% Private Sector Planners and 6% third sector organisations.

At the outset of the event two-thirds of the audience rated their knowledge of the Welsh Language in the planning process as 'good' or 'very good' with the remainder rating their knowledge 'fair' or 'poor'. At the end of the event, 8% rated their knowledge 'excellent' and 84% rated their knowledge 'very good'.

The event was well-received, and the following comments were made by delegates

"The event was excellent"

"Useful and relevant presentations"

"Interesting to hear a range of views"

"Interesting and inspiring"