MENTRAU IAITH

The Welsh Language, the community and the local economy

The Mentrau Iaith's Manifesto for the Welsh Parliament's 2021 election



Foreword

This document's aim is to present our proposals for the political parties to consider during the run up to the Welsh Parliament's election in 2021. We discuss our point of view regarding the Welsh Language, the community and the local economy along with the Mentrau Iaith's network's recent statistics. This report also contains examples of some of the Mentrau Iaith's community and commercial projects that contribute towards increasing the use of the Welsh language to form prosperous communities and to develop the local economy.

2020 has been a challenging year with Covid19 affecting all aspects of our lives, from the Welsh language to our communities and the economy. Therefore, it's more crucial than ever that we secure investments and sufficient support to protect opportunities to use the Welsh language and develop Welsh language services to reach a million Welsh speakers by 2050.



Lowri Jones,
Mentrau Iaith Cymru's Chair

A summary of our proposals

- **The Welsh language**
  - Investment to develop the Welsh language in the digital technology world
  - Devolve broadcasting
  - Ensure that people are able to access Welsh medium education and that parents can access support
  - Remove barriers to learning Welsh
  - Educate teachers about the history of Wales and local history
  - Careers advice that offers specific guidance on the Welsh language
  - Increase Welsh medium apprenticeship opportunities
  - Ensure that a specific percentage of places are reserved for Welsh speakers on degree courses in Universities in Wales
  - Extend the Welsh language's standards

- **The Community**
  - Independent and impartial language impact assessments on new developments
  - Ensure that local authorities possess the powers to manage the housing market
  - Legislate to protect Welsh names
  - The Welsh Government's departments to understand their responsibilities related to the Well-being of Future Generations Act to include the Welsh language when drawing up plans
  - Collaborate with organisations such as the Mentrau Iaith on Tackling Poverty schemes

- **The Local Economy**
  - Form a network of Social Enterprise Officers to establish Welsh medium workplaces
  - Continue to support Helo Blod Officers' roles through the local Mentrau Iaith
  - Plan and co-ordinate between the need for Welsh language skills in the workplace and the education sector
  - Increase the Mentrau Iaith's minimum grant to £100,000 a year plus inflation costs

The Welsh Language

The Welsh Language is for everyone, at grassroots level and digitally

The Mentrau Iaith are central to implement the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy. It's extremely important that grassroots organisations such as the Mentrau Iaith and other organisations including the Urdd, Merched y Wawr and Young Farmers clubs are able to offer opportunities for individuals of all ages to use the language beyond the education system. Along with this it's essential that they offer support so that parents can transfer the language at home.

We run various activities and events for people of all ages and backgrounds that give people the opportunity to use the language. Through these we're able to share our passion for the language, information on the current situation, and its links with the history, culture and heritage of Wales. Despite this, it's obvious that many people in Wales don't have an understanding of their country's history, their local heritage or a context for the Welsh language's story over the centuries. To reach the goal of "A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language", as noted in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and to support the work of organisations such as the Mentrau Iaith, the Welsh language needs to be seen, heard and used in all aspects of life, such as digitally and in the media.

Our proposals

- **Technology and the Media**
  - Investment to develop the Welsh Language in the world of digital technology, through software and activities, and to ensure that it is more visible and reaches a wider audience
  - Devolve broadcasting to be the responsibility of the Senedd to ensure a better platform for the Welsh language in the media

- **Education**
  - Ensure that everyone is able to access education through the medium of Welsh within a reasonable distance and that parents/guardians can access adequate support
  - Remove any barriers that prevent people from learning the Welsh language
  - Establish a framework to educate and guide teachers so that they can teach the history of Wales and local history through a Welsh point of view as part of the Curriculum in Wales, thus improving children's awareness of their heritage
  - Careers advice that includes specific guidance regarding the Welsh language
  - Increase Welsh medium apprenticeships
  - Ensure that a specific percentage of places are reserved for Welsh speakers on degree courses (such as medicine, nursing and education) in Universities in Wales

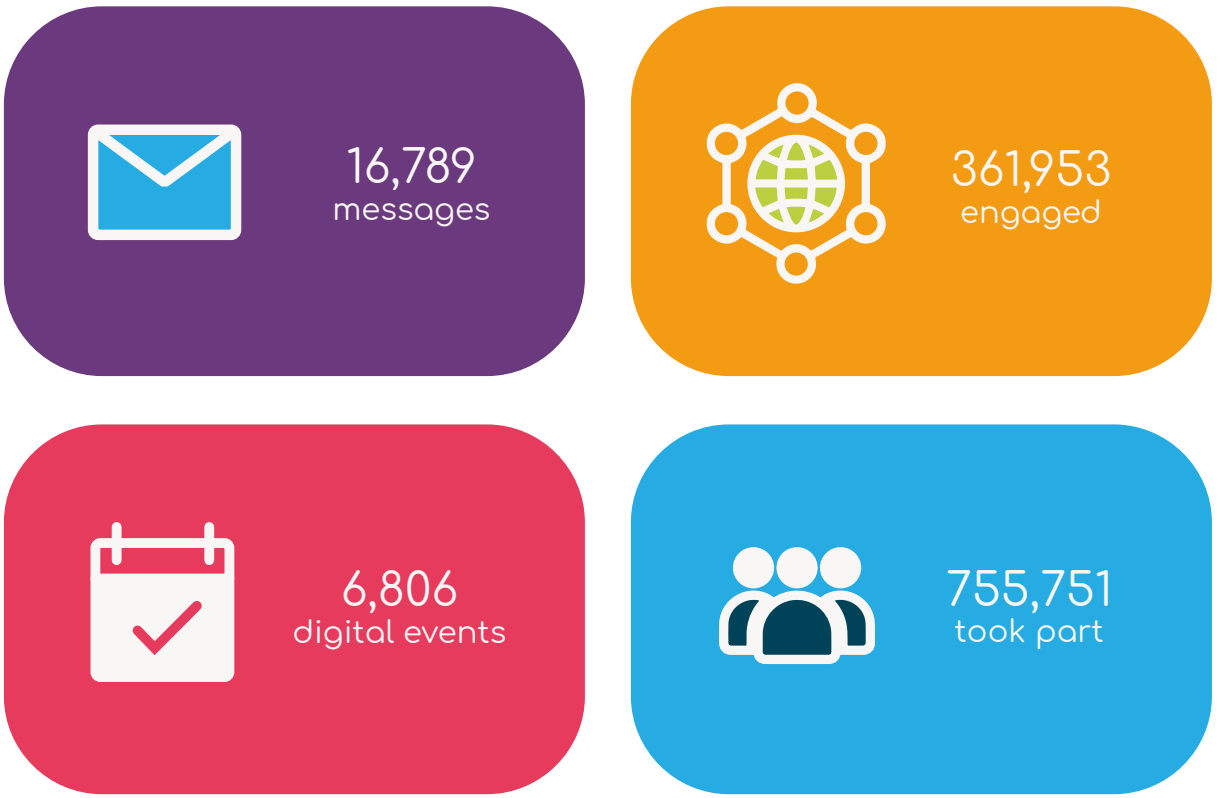
- **Standards**
  - Extend the Welsh language standards to other sectors to expand the Welsh medium services available

From experience : The Welsh language in a digital context

The Welsh organisations ability to adapt quickly during the last year to offer their usual support digitally was astounding. In 2020, all aspects of life were affected by Covid-19 and the importance of technology and the media became apparent for people of all ages. The data below shows the amount of digital activities relating to the Welsh language the Mentrau Iaith alone held between April and September 2020. The Mentrau Iaith succeeded in reaching a wider audience than ever before through raising awareness of the Welsh activities that people can take part in them from the comfort of their home. All the while, the Mentrau Iaith continued to work locally and still maintained the connection that the Mentrau Iaith staff have with their communities by delivering activities that reflect local interests, identity and dialect.

The numbers shown are encouraging but this activity was carried out instead of work in the communities due to the restrictions. If we want to see a continuation of this digital activity to be able to reach new audiences, along with the face-to-face activities that are vital at a grassroots level, further investment is needed.

Mentrau Iaith digital activity, April - September 2020



The Community

The ability to respond to local needs

One of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)'s aims is to ensure a 'Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language' therefore it's important that the Welsh language is considered as part of any local or national developments.

As a network of voluntary organisations established and rooted locally, the Mentrau Iaith are pleased to be able to respond to the needs of their communities. Unlike other organisations, one of our network's strengths is our variety while facing contrasting language profiles from one area to the other.

To ensure that traditional Welsh speaking communities continue and thrive, the Mentrau Iaith work alongside enthusiastic individuals to lead Local Action committees. However, due to the shortage of affordable housing in some areas, young people are known to leave traditional Welsh rural areas. This leads to a change in rural villages and small towns' language profiles.

As well as a linguistic diversity, there are also economic diversities with some areas facing extreme poverty. While there are schemes and campaigns to tackle poverty in many areas, more often than not, the Welsh language isn't central to these schemes. As a result, Wales omits the poorest citizens' privilege to connect with our language, along with our culture and heritage, which are associated with the language, and this in turn restricts job opportunities in the future. Therefore, we should work in partnership as part of the tackling poverty schemes to ensure that access to the Welsh language is also a central part of any future programmes.

From experience : reflecting the language profiles of our areas

There are Welsh speakers across the whole of Wales,however, the percentage varies, and this is reflected in the local Mentrau Iaith's work. By producing language profiles for their specific areas, the Mentrau Iaith have a strong understanding of their communities and audiences. This is reflected in the Mentrau Iaith's various projects in the different areas. The Mentrau Iaith are able to work with communities in west Wales that continue to live through the medium of Welsh, however, the same can't be said for some other areas.

One project that has been established in Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire is Bilingual Communities. The project's aim is to cooperate with community groups that already exist and influence them to develop Welsh medium activities in their area as well as consider the Welsh language as part of any developments to reflect their communities' bilingualism.

Our proposals

- **Planning**
  - Adapt the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 so that language impact assessments relating to any development, private and public, have to be carried out by independent and impartial assessors to ensure that those assessments are reliable. We feel that the Welsh Language Commissioner's office should be responsible for monitoring these processes, however they will need extra resources to be able to undertake this work.
  - Ensure that local authorities possess the powers to manage the housing market in their areas to secure homes for local people and to decrease the percentage of second homes
  - Legislate to protect Welsh names

- **The Well-being of Future Generations Act and Tackling Poverty**
  - Call on the Welsh Government to collaborate with Welsh organisations on National Tackling Poverty schemes
  - Ensure all of the Welsh Government's departments are aware of their responsibility relating to the Well-being of Future Generations Act to consider the Welsh language as part of their work and investments

The Local Economy

Creating work opportunities and keeping the pound local

As part of Theme 3 of the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, the Welsh Government recognize the importance of infrastructure and context to ensure work opportunities for local people to use their Welsh day to day and contribute towards forming prosperous communities. The Mentrau Iaith have succeeded in establishing commercial projects such as cafes, shops, centres, trainee schemes, translation companies, nurseries and childcare schemes – services that contribute towards the basic economy of communities in Wales.

Through entrepreneurship, the local Mentrau Iaith have managed to secure almost £4.5 million of funding on top of the Government's grants in 2019/20 for their communities by securing alternative grants, partnership working or implementing commercial schemes. The graphs below show that the Welsh Government funds a relatively small percentage, less than a third, of the Mentrau Iaith's workforce. By securing funding from other sources, the Mentrau Iaith have been able to create 254 jobs in addition to those funded by the Welsh Government's grant and national projects. By re-investing their profits into community projects, the Mentrau Iaith contribute towards the Welsh labour market, ensure opportunities for people to use the Welsh language in a work environment and reduce the number of young people who emigrate from rural communities to towns and cities.

Our proposals

- **The Labour Market**
  - Create a network of Social Enterprise Officers, funded by the Economy department, to establish Welsh medium workplaces for local people.
  - Since 2017, the Mentrau Iaith have been responsible for running the local element of the Helo Blod project to offer advice and support to small businesses on the use of the Welsh language. It's important that this element of the project continues in order to provide businesses with a local contact along with face-to-face advice.
  - Better planning and co-ordination relating to the need for the Welsh language in certain posts and the world of education. It will be impossible to accomplish strategies such as "Cymraeg 2050" and "Mwy na geiriau", and implement the Standards, if no workforce is planned and created.

- **Investment**
  - Since the strategy was published in 2017, the Mentrau Iaith haven't received any additional investments to continue with their efforts to increase the use of the Welsh language. In order to do this effectively and offer employees a fair wage that reflects inflation, the Mentrau Iaith ask that all the Menter Iaith's minimum grants are increased to £100,000 a year and inflation for those Mentrau Iaith that already receive £100,000 or more. This will enable each Menter Iaith to employ 3 members of staff as well as maintain a prosperous company or charity that seek investments and create further job opportunities.

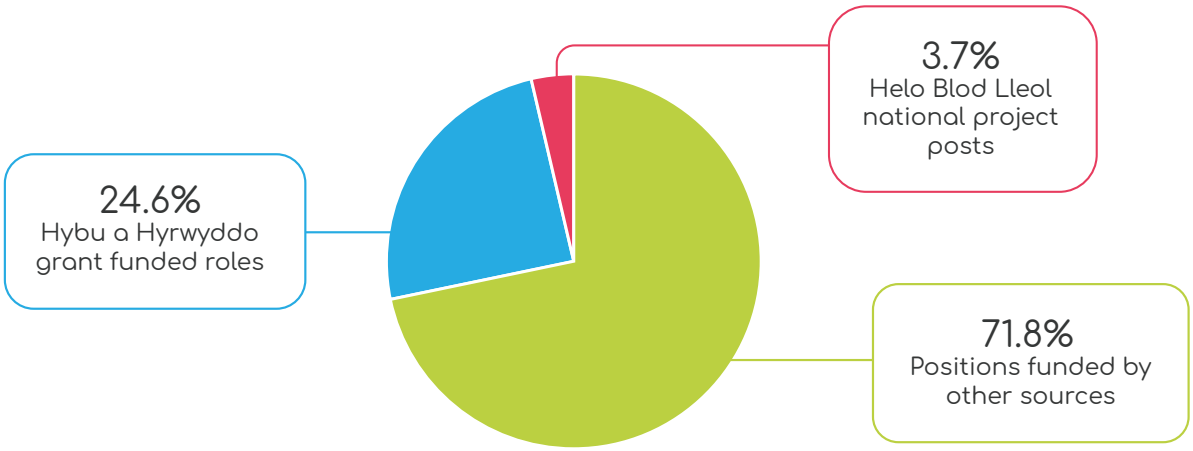
From experience: filling the Welsh gap

One of the network's schemes that have succeeded to create the most Welsh medium jobs is the childcare scheme in south east Wales. The schemes run by seven of the Menter Iaith in the region are partly funded by local authorities but they are also commercial schemes that generate their own income. This income is re-invested to fund more opportunities to use the Welsh language in the most anglicised areas of the country.

The Mentrau Iaith, or their arm's length companies, employ over 150 individuals in the childcare sector alone. By offering breakfast clubs, wraparound care, after school clubs and holiday clubs, the Mentrau Iaith have identified and responded to the real need for Welsh medium childcare in communities.

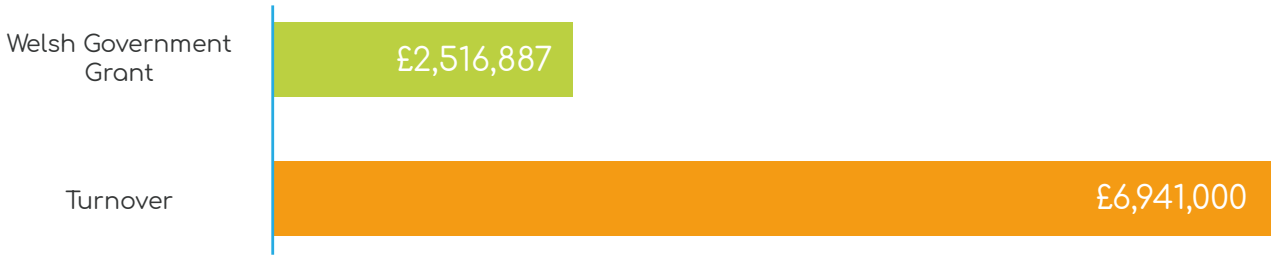
Mentrau Iaith staff overview 2019-20

The Mentrau Iaith generate money to create 254 job opportunities in addition to those funded by the Welsh Government, 72% of the network's workforce.



Mentrau Iaith financial overview 2019/20

Welsh Government 'Hybu a Hyrwyddo defnydd y Gymraeg' grant total given to the Mentrau Iaith compared with the network's turnover for 2019/20.





www.mentrauiaith.cymru

post@mentrauiaith.cymru

01492 643401