

An aerial photograph of a Welsh-speaking community in a valley. The town is nestled in a valley, surrounded by lush green hills and a large blue lake. The foreground is dominated by a dense forest of green trees. The sky is blue with some white clouds.

Empowering communities, strengthening the Welsh language

The Report of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities
on communities with a higher density of Welsh speakers

The Commission for
Welsh-speaking Communities
August 2024

Overview

The Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities was established by the Welsh Government following the publication of the *Second homes: developing new policies in Wales* report. The report highlighted that our Welsh-speaking communities are facing structural challenges which have worsened since the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union and with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Welsh Government asked the Commission to help them develop public policy to maintain the Welsh language in these communities. The Commission consists of ten independent members with expertise and experience in a variety of policy areas. The Commission is chaired by Dr Simon Brooks.

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Foreword by the Chair

It is a privilege to present to the Welsh Government, at the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd, the report of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities on communities with a higher density of Welsh speakers.

The Commission believes that the Welsh language is a national language that belongs to us all—whoever we are, wherever we live, or however much of the language we speak.

Over the past sixty years, as a result of the efforts of the people of Wales and the country's governments, we have seen a huge increase in the status of the Welsh language, in addition to increased acknowledgement and recognition of Welsh at a national and international level. It is impossible today to imagine Wales without the Welsh language.

We should celebrate and take pride in this success. Nothing in history is inevitable. This success is the result of combined efforts and shows what can be achieved when we work together, side by side.

Despite these successes, there has been a reduction in the number of communities in Wales where a comparatively high percentage of the population are able to speak Welsh. This has led to less daily social use of the Welsh language. We know how critically important geographically cohesive language communities are to the survival of languages around the world.

The Commission is heartened that the Welsh Government, in asking us to look at this issue, acknowledges the importance of such communities. In this report, we make recommendations about their future. Our desire is to see a country where Welsh-speaking communities thrive and Welsh is a living community language.

Because a language continuum exists between communities in Wales, and as Welsh is recognised as a truly national language, the strengthening of Welsh-speaking communities will help Welsh in every part of Wales.

Empowering Welsh as a community language will empower it as a national language.

By working together, we can secure a lively and vigorous future for Welsh. Welsh is our language: a language that belongs to all of the people of Wales and to its speakers everywhere.

Dr Simon Brooks

Chair

Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities

Executive summary

Background and principles

The Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities was established by the Welsh Government in August 2022 to make policy recommendations with the aim of strengthening Welsh-speaking communities.

The Welsh language belongs to everyone in Wales, and to Welsh speakers outside Wales. Everyone in Wales has the same language rights, wherever they live. Welsh is a national language.

Language is used in a social context. The linguistic make-up of a community influences language use in that community. To support Welsh as a national language, it must be supported as a living community language.

Census 2021 Results

This report includes an analysis of Census 2021 results in areas where the Welsh language is strongest.

Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire have the highest densities of Welsh speakers. There are also high densities of Welsh speakers in some areas bordering these counties. It is in these communities that there is the highest potential for the daily use of Welsh across a range of social contexts.

The analysis based on Census 2021 data suggests that the Welsh language is losing ground amongst groups with less privileged backgrounds in many Welsh-speaking communities. Until now, social class has not been a central consideration within language planning, however language planning will need to acknowledge its significance. Policies should be relevant to all groups whatever their socioeconomic background.

Census 2021 also suggests that some economic sectors are vital to the future of the Welsh language: for example, agriculture and parts of the public sector.

In Gwynedd and Anglesey, the two counties with the highest percentage of Welsh speakers, Welsh speakers are underrepresented as a group within the most privileged socioeconomic categories. Alongside other types of evidence, this suggests that Welsh speakers as a social group in some areas with a high density of Welsh speakers suffer some measure of structural economic disadvantage.

Areas of higher density linguistic significance—their purpose

The density of Welsh speakers is vitally important for language use at a community level. Despite the increased recognition of Welsh nationally, there has been a significant decline in the percentage of Welsh speakers in communities where Welsh speakers make up a majority, or a significant minority, of the population. This poses a threat to the future of Welsh as a community language, and as a consequence as a national language too. Community sustainability is key to the future of the Welsh language. Using policy variations to address the particular needs of Welsh-speaking communities will help secure

that sustainability. In these areas therefore, there should be public policy intervention to address the various challenges the Welsh language is facing.

The type of policies where intervention is required are those in socioeconomic and sociolinguistic areas that affect the vitality of Welsh as a community language. These include policy areas such as economic development, housing, town and country planning, and education.

Not all policies will need to be varied – many policies, such as those regarding the status of the Welsh language and the rights of Welsh speakers, should be applied on an all-Wales level.

To enable and facilitate the process of policy variation, communities with a high, or relatively high, percentage of Welsh speakers should be designated as ‘areas of higher density linguistic significance’.

This designation should exist alongside a firm commitment by the Welsh Government to revitalise the Welsh language across the whole of Wales.

The designation of areas of higher density linguistic significance will therefore be part of the work of strengthening the Welsh language throughout the whole of Wales.

Creating areas of higher density linguistic significance would be the basis for: greater consideration of the Welsh language as a community language within policy frameworks, ensuring that policy changes respond to social and linguistic needs, and also empowering communities to reverse language shift.

A policy unit should also be established within the Welsh Government to help develop and co-ordinate policies for areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Areas of higher density linguistic significance—how to make a designation

An area of higher density linguistic significance should be designated only after considering the situation of the Welsh language locally.

It should be possible to make a designation using one of two methods.

One method would be for the Welsh Government to set a statistical threshold based on Census 2021 data. Communities with a percentage of Welsh speakers in the population equal to or higher than a particular figure would be designated as areas of higher density linguistic significance.

The statistical threshold should eventually be set by the Welsh Government. However, based on the evidence available, the Commission is of the view that there should be a presumption in favour of designating this threshold as 40%.

Communities should not be prevented from being designated as areas of higher density linguistic significance if they fall a few percentage points below this threshold, and for that reason alone. There are many communities in Wales which have a borderline or nuanced language profile. Therefore, a second method of designating areas of higher density linguistic significance will be required. This approach should be embedded in local democracy.

Local authorities should have the discretion to designate areas of higher density linguistic significance. This would ensure an important element of local accountability in language policy.

Statistical sources other than the census, local knowledge, a community's desire to seek designation, and factors relating to effective administration, might be relevant when considering whether to make a designation. For reasons of practicality, it would be important, for example, that as many areas as possible of higher density linguistic significance are contiguous. It may be appropriate to use discretion to expand outwards the boundaries of areas of higher density linguistic significance, or to designate areas that, although below the threshold themselves, are surrounded by areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Areas of higher density linguistic significance should be established by means of new primary legislation. Provision could be made in legislation as follows:

Areas of higher density linguistic significance

- (1) A local authority has a duty to designate an area within its area as one of higher density linguistic significance if the percentage of Welsh speakers within that area is equal to or greater than X%.
- (2) A local authority may also designate another area within its area as one of higher density linguistic significance:
 - (a) if it adjoins an area designated in accordance with subsection (1) above.
 - (b) if it considers that it should do that based on the density of Welsh speakers in that area as a percentage of its population, even if that percentage is below X%.
- (3) In exercising their functions, Welsh Ministers and local authorities must pay special attention to the viability of the Welsh language within areas of higher density linguistic significance.
- (4) A local authority has a duty to collaborate with other local authorities by sharing expertise and knowledge relevant to their duties and powers under this section.

To demonstrate how areas of higher density linguistic significance might work in practice, this report includes a list of every LSOA (a small geographical area used for statistical purposes) where over 40% of the population can speak Welsh, as well as all LSOAs where over 25% of the population can speak Welsh. This is followed by a discussion of the appropriateness of designating through discretion some communities where between 25% and 40% of the population can speak Welsh as areas of higher density linguistic significance.

In communities where between 25% and 40% of the population can speak Welsh, and which will not be designated as areas of higher density linguistic significance, language policy will need to be examined closely. The Commission will make recommendations with regard to such communities in its report to be published by 2026.

Specific policy areas

This report also addresses challenges in specific policy fields that face Welsh-speaking communities. The report discusses possible policy solutions and makes recommendations.

The report has been structured so that readers can easily turn to a particular subject area, and for this reason, only a very short summary of these sections is presented below.

The economy

The economy is a key policy consideration in relation to the Welsh language, and to areas where it is a community language. These areas face significant structural challenges including an ageing population and continuous out-migration of young people. The Welsh Government should therefore develop and implement an economic strategy tailored to the needs of areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Such a strategy should aim to cater for the foundational needs of the population; support social enterprises and businesses; emphasise the importance of the family farm; ensure that local communities benefit more from the visitor economy; utilise the expenditure of public bodies as a means of investing in the local economy; ensure that local people benefit from significant economic developments such as the proposed nuclear power station at Wylfa; support local businesses; and co-ordinate activity to address the challenges associated with out-migration from communities.

The Commission believes that a suitable body should be established to lead and co-ordinate an economic strategy that will serve areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Welsh language workplaces

Public organisations situated within areas of higher density linguistic significance have a responsibility to expand their use of Welsh within the workplace. To help realise this, the Welsh language ability of the workforce should be measured and developed; workplaces should make greater use of technology; and improvements are needed with regard to leadership culture within organisations. The Welsh Language Standards could be used to require public bodies to move along a language continuum with regard to their internal use of Welsh in areas of higher density linguistic significance. Workplaces in the private sector and the third sector—including community initiatives—also have an important role in supporting Welsh-speaking communities.

Community development

The future of the Welsh language as a thriving community language is dependent on community sustainability, and creating sustainable economic and social foundations. Some communities have demonstrated the ability to support themselves in challenging conditions, through community development. The Welsh Government should support models of community development that promote community initiatives and co-ownership.

Housing

Wales is facing a housing crisis. This presents a threat to Welsh-speaking communities as it can be difficult for young people and families to find homes that are suitable and affordable locally. The situation regarding second homes has intensified these problems, and the Commission is supportive of ongoing efforts by the Welsh Government and local authorities in this area.

The report discusses a range of issues including the importance of basing housing developments on local needs. Housing needs assessments should be carried out at community or town council level every five years.

In rural areas, there should be flexibility within the social housing grant formula to facilitate small-scale housing developments. This will ensure housing development based on local needs whilst limiting the risks of over-development.

The Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan should be made permanent. It could be a strategic vehicle for housing policy in areas of higher density linguistic significance. The Commission welcomes the initiatives of the second homes and affordability pilot in Dwyfor. It will also be necessary to monitor the impact of different policy interventions, particularly in relation to Article 4 Directions.

There should be more support available to assist community groups to develop community-led housing. A low-interest loan fund or equity scheme should be created for community groups to help them buy land or property.

There is also a discussion on various issues relevant to local connection criteria in housing.

Town and country planning

The relationship between town and country planning and language planning is vital.

Changes will need to be made to planning policies and guidelines in order to strengthen the linguistic sustainability of communities. The following changes will be required at least: improved guidance in *Planning Policy Wales* with regard to sustainable development and the Welsh language, more acknowledgement in *Future Wales: The National Plan 2040* of the spatial distribution of Welsh speakers, a comprehensive review of *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 20: Planning and the Welsh Language*, and better guidance within the *Development Plans Manual* with regard to the Welsh language. Collaboration with the Royal Town Planning Institute is also needed to ensure better training opportunities for town and country planners in relation to language planning.

This is likely to be a significant undertaking, and it will be necessary to scrutinise town and country planning nationally, as well as within areas of higher density linguistic significance. Due to the importance of this policy area, the Commission will publish an additional report, making detailed recommendations in regard to town and country planning, by December 2024.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Welsh language belongs to everyone. There are many Welsh speakers with protected characteristics, and many of these Welsh speakers live in Welsh-speaking communities. It will be necessary therefore to look at equality, diversity and inclusion in the context of the Welsh language and Welsh-speaking communities.

To do this, a task and finish group should be established to develop further policy suggestions in relation to protected characteristics and the Welsh language, and specifically in relation to areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Education

Education is the policy area with the greatest potential for creating new Welsh speakers, and is essential for the maintenance and strengthening of Welsh-speaking communities. It is therefore a matter of concern to the Commission that while some pupils in Welsh-speaking communities become confident Welsh speakers, others are not given the same opportunities.

A child's educational journey begins before the start of statutory education with childcare, play and early years provision. Language policy during these essential early years should if possible be linked with language policy in statutory primary education.

In areas of higher density linguistic significance, there should be more ambitious targets for Welsh-medium provision.

Every child in these areas should be confident users and speakers of Welsh by the time they finish statutory education. All schools should, in the fullness of time, offer inclusive Welsh-medium education. In the meantime, schools should progress along a language continuum. All primary schools in an area of higher density linguistic significance should within a reasonable period be Welsh-medium schools, and secondary schools should be either category 3 Welsh-medium schools or category 3P Welsh-medium schools. If there are exceptional circumstances, a local authority should be permitted to exempt a school from these requirements. Within their language category however, all schools should increase their Welsh language provision.

Better data should be made available on Welsh-medium provision. There should also be a greater emphasis on extra-curricular and the social use of Welsh within schools; better progression through Welsh-medium education; and Estyn should have more of a role in regard to some issues. It will also be necessary to consider issues regarding voluntary and foundation schools, workforce recruitment, Welsh language immersion centres and tertiary and vocational education.

Community-based language planning

There needs to be more community-based language planning. Current levels of activity are not sufficiently intense to withstand the language shift to English currently taking place within Welsh-speaking communities. In some instances, this will mean reconsidering priorities within existing resources, with an emphasis on tackling language shift at a community level. Inevitably too, more resources will be required.

Community-based language planning should be at the heart of language strategies adopted by the Welsh Government and other public bodies. The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011's promotion standards could be used to create a new obligation for local authorities to draw up a community language planning strategy in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

The report notes that there are many ways to move forward in this field. Among these is a need to increase the rates of intergenerational language transmission of Welsh, both within the family and the community. There should be strategic emphasis too on language use among young people, by offering more Welsh-medium training in community sports clubs, for example. Issues related to social class also need to be addressed: because of the language shift to English in towns in north-west Wales with a high density of Welsh speakers, a pilot programme should be created with the aim of reversing language shift on a social housing estate in one of these towns.

Background: the work of the Commission

The Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities was established by the Welsh Government in August 2022. It was asked to make recommendations to strengthen public policy in relation to linguistic sustainability in Welsh-speaking communities.

The Government also asked the Commission to provide an analysis of the results of Census 2021. We have done this by working with *Bro: A Comprehensive Sociolinguistic Survey of Contemporary Welsh-speaking Communities (Prosiect BRO)*. Included in this report is a compendium of language statistics from Census 2021 data prepared by them, covering the greater part of that territory which falls within the Commission's remit. An analysis of the significance of these statistics for the direction of public policy can be found in the main body of this report.

The Welsh Government also asked the Commission to offer advice on policy, specifically in regard to the *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* and the development of a white paper on the Welsh Language Education Bill. The Commission provided advice on these matters.

The Welsh Government's main request to the Commission, however, was to make public policy recommendations in the form of a report by August 2024. The Commission is pleased to submit that report in this document.

In carrying out its work, the Commission was keen to base its recommendations on appropriate expertise, informed by an evidence-gathering process that was open and transparent, and to which all could contribute.

The Commission launched a call for evidence in November 2022. This closed in January 2023. We received 179 responses, with a summary published in May 2023. These responses have been invaluable to us as a Commission, and we thank everyone who submitted evidence.

Following the call for evidence, a Position Paper was published in June 2023 at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Llandovery, outlining some of our initial ideas. In this Position Paper, potential public policy ideas were floated, including the idea of designating 'areas of higher density linguistic significance'.

Meetings discussing the Position Paper were held at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show and at the Llŷn and Eifionydd National Eisteddfod of Wales, 2023. The response at these events was positive.

To assist the Commission carry out its work, a wide range of experts in different policy fields were consulted:

- Four stakeholder workshops were held (on the economy, housing, community development, and town and country planning).
- An external expert prepared for the Commission a report on town and country planning based on a stakeholder workshop, discussions among Commission members, and data from the call for evidence. This report will help the Commission

prepare detailed recommendations in regard to town and country planning by December 2024.

- In total, 22 experts across a range of policy areas attended meetings of the Commission and submitted evidence or contributed to the Commission's deliberations.
- Meetings were held with elected members and/or officers of nine relevant local authorities.
- The Chair made regular presentations on the Commission's work to the Welsh Language Partnership Council, the statutory body that provides advice to Welsh Ministers in relation to the Welsh language, and feedback was received from the Council's members.
- A meeting was held between the Chair of the Commission and the Welsh Language Partnership Council's Equality and Inclusion and Diversity Subgroup to discuss policy ideas in relation to race and ethnicity.
- The Commission asked a leading Welsh speaker from the LGBTQ+ community with relevant public policy experience to prepare a discussion paper in relation to LGBTQ+ issues.
- Other discussions were held with organisations, stakeholders and experts regarding specific issues.

The Commission received advice from Gwion Lewis KC in regard to a variety of matters, and we are extremely grateful to him for his assistance.

Following the submission of this report to the Welsh Government at the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd in summer 2024, the Commission will begin the second stage of its work. This will examine the Welsh language in other parts of Wales, and beyond, and will be completed by 2026.

1 General principles

1.1 Language is a social phenomenon

Language is a social phenomenon in that its purpose is to allow people to communicate.

The social context in which Welsh is used can be highly varied—Welsh is spoken in our cities, towns and rural areas. In some communities, Welsh is the language of the majority; in others, it is spoken by a minority. The social context may be a geographical community; elsewhere it might be a network within a wider community. It might be used in an on-line or print community. There are also other factors to consider. The use of Welsh can vary according to language of the home, the language of a neighbourhood, or of education, or of a particular economic sector. Other considerations, such as age and social class, are also critical.

The Commission believes that every single social context in which Welsh is used is valuable, and that all Welsh speakers are equal wherever they may live, and whatever their characteristics may be. The Commission is committed to the fundamental principle that Welsh is a national language that belongs to everyone in Wales, and it also belongs to its speakers in the rest of the world.

But in whatever context Welsh is used, that use is shaped by social conditions. This explains why patterns of language use vary so much in Wales—between different communities as well as within them.

Patterns of language use have also changed over time. Broadly speaking, there has been a gradual—and at times sudden—language shift from Welsh to English over many decades. In 1891 (the first census to ask a question about Welsh language ability), most people in Wales could speak Welsh, and in many areas most of the population were monoglot Welsh speakers. Between 1891 and the Second World War, the population in strongly Welsh-speaking areas became increasingly bilingual, although Welsh was still the vernacular for the large majority. From the 1940s, the non-Welsh-speaking population increased, with anglicisation on the peripheries of Welsh-speaking areas and latterly within them. As a result of long-term processes, Welsh today is weaker as a community language than ever before.

Should current trends continue, and unless the situation is addressed via public policy interventions, it is not impossible that Welsh may eventually disappear as a community language used over a wide area.

In some places in Wales, perhaps particularly in some of our more Welsh-speaking communities, it is possible to identify some sociological tendencies that are more likely to be associated with Welsh speakers—particular patterns in terms of the economy, employment, land use, and relationship to certain socioeconomic fields. This has been demonstrated in academic studies of Welsh speakers that seek to define them as a social group (see Williams and Morris, 2000).

The Commission's starting point, therefore, is that a language group is a social group (see also European Commission, 1996: 5). It is one among many social groups that should be considered in relation to one other, and an individual can of course belong to more than

one social group. Social groups can possess different degrees of power, and in that sense, there can sometimes be disparities between them.

There is a sense among many Welsh speakers that the Welsh-speaking group (taken as a whole) experiences relative disadvantage in some socioeconomic matters in some areas of Wales. This has certainly been the view expressed in some recent public debate, including discussion about equitable access to certain vital resources—such as housing in communities with a high number of second homes. Given the geographical location of Welsh-speaking communities far from Britain’s centres of power and its main economic markets, and the history too of Welsh speakers as a minoritised group over many centuries, it would hardly be surprising if disparities were to exist. This perception is underpinned by evidence discussed in the section of the report on Census 2021 data. This shows that Welsh speakers are underrepresented as a group in the most privileged socioeconomic occupations and categories in the two counties with the highest density of Welsh speakers.

The result of all these processes is that the discussion around Welsh-speaking communities often intersects with debate on social justice in areas such as the housing market, the economy and so forth.

1.2 Community sustainability and social justice

Language is a phenomenon used between people, as well as a characteristic that belongs to individuals by themselves, and linguistic practices are related to the interaction of speakers as a group, rather than merely being a feature of speakers as entities on their own.

In the view of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities, at the core of language planning is the need therefore to reinforce social contexts that favour language acquisition and use. Factors that are destabilising to the Welsh-speaking group need to be identified and addressed through public policy. This is central to the report’s recommendations.

In carrying out our work, we came to some initial general conclusions:

- community sustainability in areas with a high density of Welsh speakers is essential for the maintenance of Welsh as a community language.
- promoting effective language acquisition and use is critical.
- promoting social justice is likely to be beneficial from the perspective of community sustainability, and therefore beneficial for the Welsh language.
- intensifying consideration of the Welsh language within public policy is necessary to stabilise and strengthen Welsh as a community language.

A great deal of the Commission’s recommendations flow from these general conclusions. Many responses to the Commission’s call for evidence in the winter of 2022-23 focused on how to promote the socioeconomic wellbeing of Welsh-speaking communities and placed an emphasis on promoting social justice within them, for example, in the housing market (Welsh Government, 2023a). There was also a desire to promote Welsh language acquisition more effectively within the education system. The Commission’s Position

Paper, published in June 2023, referred to many of these matters (Welsh Government, 2023b).

1.3 The rights of Welsh speakers throughout Wales—Welsh as the language of all

Welsh is a national language, and its official status throughout Wales is confirmed in legislation. By arguing for the strengthening of Welsh-speaking communities, it is important to note that we are not in favour of weakening the Welsh language in any other part of Wales. Moreover, due to internal networks within Wales, we note that strengthening the Welsh language in Welsh-speaking communities would likely have a long-term positive impact in all parts of Wales.

In philosophical terms, the Welsh language in Wales has some universal characteristics and public policy should reflect this. For example, language rights should be universal—they belong to all Welsh citizens wherever they live in Wales. The Commission wishes to see this realised in practice as well as in theory. Recommendations will be made in this regard during the second phase of the Commission's work, which will focus on Welsh as a language in other parts of Wales and beyond.

In advocating in this report for the idea of areas of higher density linguistic significance (see the section 'Areas of higher density linguistic significance' for a full discussion), it is important to note that we do not believe that this will contravene the rights of Welsh speakers throughout Wales. The designation of areas of higher density linguistic significance aims to enable public policy variation in socioeconomic and sociolinguistic matters within geographical areas facing language shift to English. These are primarily housing, education, community development, town and country planning, and economic policy. In Welsh-speaking communities, such policies influence the use of Welsh as a spoken language in everyday life. We are not in favour of varying all policy in these communities, and areas of higher density linguistic significance should exist alongside an understanding that many policies will be implemented universally on a pan-Wales basis, as Welsh is a national language.

1.4 The climate crisis and the Welsh language

The climate crisis is an environmental issue with significant social implications. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report (2023) expects global temperatures to rise by 1.5°C or more above the 1850-1900 temperature average in the next twenty years, significantly increasing the likelihood of extreme weather and rising sea levels. For many areas around the world, this will have a detrimental effect on the social and cultural make-up of communities, with the potential to cause a catastrophic language crisis within the next century (Jaakkola et al, 2018). This is relevant for Wales, a country already trying to tackle declining numbers of Welsh speakers according to Census 2021 data. The death of minority languages may be another consequence of the climate crisis as a result of enforced migration and the way in which ecological collapse also destroys cultures and languages. In addition, the nature emergency, involving climate change and dire damage to the planet's biological diversity, is bound to have far-reaching social, cultural, and linguistic impacts. All this is relevant to the future of western regions of Wales, where most territorial Welsh-speaking communities are located.

It will be difficult to protect areas of linguistic significance from sea level rise, floods and droughts: aspects of climate change that can force communities to migrate or be displaced from their traditional heartlands. Such processes can lead to the dispersal of linguistic communities as people move to other regions or assimilate into larger populations, leading in many cases to loss of linguistic diversity. In addition, environmental crises can increase economic pressure on minoritised language communities, particularly those dependent on agriculture, fishing, or other industries sensitive to these inevitable changes (Addaney et al, 2022). We can expect familiar economic and societal patterns to be destabilised.

In the Welsh context, addressing the impact of the climate crisis on the Welsh language requires holistic approaches that recognise how language, culture and the environment are interconnected. Efforts to mitigate the potential impacts of this crisis must consider the needs of linguistic minorities, while language revitalisation initiatives should incorporate strategies for adapting to environmental changes.

The Welsh Government's Programme for Government 2021 aims to embed its response to the climate and nature crisis within everything it does (Welsh Government, 2021a). As a result, we must think about how the climate crisis could have specific consequences for the Welsh language. For example, were the crisis to bring about changes in patterns relating to migration, new strategies would need to be formulated: to tackle out-migration from Welsh-speaking communities, for instance, or to enable the education system to consider afresh how to linguistically integrate newcomers more effectively.

In addition to challenges, there will also be important opportunities as societies adapt and change in the face of new circumstances over the coming decades. In western regions of Wales, there are rich sources of renewable energy, an abundance of water and opportunities to diversify the supplies of land products and their markets. An alternative development model will need to be developed that responds to the challenge and is beneficial for the prosperity of our communities.

One of the Commission's core principles is that the well-being of Welsh as a community language is connected to the sustainability of communities where it is spoken. There is also a clear link between the sustainability of human societies and the response to the climate crisis. In one sense, therefore, there is a relationship between how we respond to the climate crisis and how we respond to the language crisis that exists in Welsh-speaking communities.

This emphasis on community sustainability led the Commission to a number of policy conclusions and forms the basis of a significant number of our recommendations.

1.5 Language awareness

Preventing and then reversing the retreat of the Welsh language in Welsh-speaking communities will be an ambitious undertaking. To succeed, leaders and the public will need to be aware of what such an undertaking entails, and why it is important.

Promoting language awareness among the population will be essential to achieving this. There should be an awareness in Wales of the history of the Welsh language, of its richness and heritage, and more generally of the significance of language in the history of humanity. It will be important to understand the social history of Welsh as well as the

factors that caused language shift to English. Everyone should know about the history of attempts to reverse language shift, including campaigns to elevate the status of the Welsh language.

To that end, language awareness programmes will need to be developed for various audiences—from schoolchildren, parents and teachers to public employees and their leaders, for social campaigners, entrepreneurs and business people, and for those in the third sector—regardless of their ability to speak Welsh.

These programmes should be based on a sound knowledge of sociolinguistics and the sociology of language. There is a particular need to understand bilingualism as a concept. It is a valuable personal skill, but also a social phenomenon. Bilingualism can be, in different circumstances, either stable or unstable, and the latter is usually part of a shift from one language to another. The aim in Wales should be stable bilingualism that permits Welsh to have domains where it can function as a main language. From a practical point of view, it will be important for people to navigate bilingual social situations of the kind that are now prevalent in Welsh-speaking areas.

Awareness of international contexts is also important. Wales would benefit from an international exchange of knowledge, placing its attempt to reverse language shift alongside similar efforts in countries such as Catalonia and the Basque Country. Since leaving the European Union, this has become even more important. The existence of a society which uses a minority language within a multinational state is a normal state of affairs, and awareness of similar situations in mainland Europe can help us appreciate this.

1.6 The responsibility to future generations to nurture Welsh-speaking communities

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to take action to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales in a way that is compatible with the principles of sustainable development. In undertaking sustainable development, a public body must set and publish well-being objectives. The Act sets out seven well-being goals, one of which is ‘a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.’

The Act also outlines five things public bodies must do to demonstrate that they have followed sustainable development principles. These include balancing short-term needs with the ability to meet long-term needs, acting to prevent problems from occurring or worsening, considering how a public body’s well-being objectives can affect each of the well-being goals, working together, and involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals whilst ensuring they reflect the diversity of an area.

These principles strengthen the argument that the sustainability of Welsh as a community language should be at the core of language policy in Wales. Without support for Welsh-speaking communities today, future generations will not be able to acquire and use the Welsh language naturally in those communities. Thus it could be argued that the recommendations of this report not only respond to today’s needs but contribute also towards meeting them in the long term.

1.7 Equality, diversity and inclusion

A language group is a multi-faceted group. This is certainly true of Welsh speakers: a group that contains within it considerable diversity of characteristics and identities that pertain to individual speakers, as well as characteristics and identities that groups of Welsh speakers share. Like speakers of all languages, Welsh speakers have characteristics and identities besides linguistic ones, and it is essential that all Welsh speakers feel that these are respected, and that they can express their identities, both within the language group as well as outside it.

Furthermore, as in the west in general, some groups within Welsh-speaking society with protected characteristics have faced discrimination or experienced disadvantage. In many cases, this discrimination or experience of disadvantage persists, and it is important that language planning recognises this, and addresses it.

1.8 Social class

The analysis of Census 2021 contained in this report demonstrates the importance of the correlation between language and social class. There are signs that Welsh is losing ground among those from a less privileged socioeconomic background in some Welsh-speaking communities. Until now, consideration of social class within the language group has been largely absent from language planning. Language planning efforts often seem directly relevant to those who already possess a measure of economic and cultural capital, and who are less likely to go through language shift than those with less social capital. It is therefore essential to ensure that language planning fully recognises the significance of social class and takes steps to ensure its relevance to groups from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, including in urban contexts within Welsh-speaking areas.

Recommendation 1: Welsh is a national language that belongs to everyone in Wales as well as to its speakers in the rest of the world. To strengthen Welsh as a living national language, it needs to be strengthened as a community language. Welsh-speaking communities should be empowered, and the sustainability of the Welsh language strengthened in Welsh-speaking communities, and public policy should fully reflect these aims.

2 Census 2021

2.1 Census 2021

The Commission's terms of reference require it to provide an analysis of Census 2021. The Commission decided to do this by asking *Prosiect BRO* to prepare a compendium of demolinguistic statistics based on Census 2021 data focusing on those areas where the Welsh language is strongest. In this section, a brief commentary is offered in relation to the key trends. A list and maps of relevant LSOAs (*Lower layer Super Output Areas*) is also included in the section on 'Areas of higher density linguistic significance.'

An LSOA (Office of National Statistics, 2023) is a geographical area used to organise and present census statistics which cover a population of between 1,000 and 3,000 and between 400 and 1,200 households. It is a unit that seeks to provide consistency and enable comparison between areas over time.

2.2 Geographical distribution of LSOAs with a high density of Welsh speakers

The annexe to this report provides a compendium of demolinguistic statistics prepared by *Prosiect BRO*, based on Census 2021 data, giving the numbers and percentages of Welsh speakers in the total population within each LSOA in Anglesey, Gwynedd, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire.

In each of these counties, over 40% of residents are able to speak Welsh in over half of the LSOAs:

- Anglesey, 34 out of 41 LSOAs (83%)
- Gwynedd, 65 out of 71 LSOAs (92%)
- Ceredigion, 37 out of 45 LSOAs (82%)
- Carmarthenshire, 58 out of 111 LSOAs (52%)

The county with the next highest number of these LSOAs is Conwy with 12 out of 71 (17%). There are also LSOAs where over 40% can speak Welsh in Pembrokeshire, Denbighshire, Powys and Neath Port Talbot.

Across Wales, there are a total of 231 LSOAs where over 40% of the population can speak Welsh. 194 of those 231 LSOAs (84%) are in Anglesey, Gwynedd, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire. The core of the region characterised by a high density of Welsh speakers is located in these four counties, but the area also crosses county boundaries into neighbouring local authority areas.

Raising the threshold by increments of 10% reveals the following:

- Of the 141 LSOAs where over 50% of the population can speak Welsh, 126 (89%) are within these four counties.
- Of the 72 LSOAs where over 60% of the population can speak Welsh, 68 (94%) are within these four counties.
- Outside Gwynedd and Anglesey, there are no LSOAs where over 70% of the population can speak Welsh.

Bringing these four counties together, 50% of their population can speak Welsh. This contrasts with a percentage of 12% of Welsh speakers outside these counties in Wales. The demolinguistic density of Welsh speakers which characterises these counties makes them stand out from other local authority areas in Wales. Together with some contiguous areas, they form a cohesive territory. Here, the density of Welsh speakers in the population creates circumstances which enable the daily social use of Welsh.

2.3 Density and geographical distribution of Welsh-speaking households

In addition, data on Welsh-speaking households in the four counties shows the higher capacity in these areas for the transmission of Welsh within the family. Travelling from north to south, the percentage of households with children where all adults can speak Welsh in the four counties is as follows:

- Anglesey—48%
- Gwynedd—63%
- Ceredigion—36%
- Carmarthenshire—23%

Considering these four counties together, the percentage is 39%, compared with 5% in the rest of Wales. Adding to these households the households with children where at least one, but not all, adults can speak Welsh, the percentage is 66% in the four counties and 20% in the rest of Wales.

2.4 Trends at LSOA level

Data provided in the compendium describes the territory within which Welsh is strongest but also offers a more detailed and subtle picture of this relative resilience at LSOA level.

Anglesey, Gwynedd, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire have 268 LSOAs between them. In 252 (94%) of those LSOAs, the percentage of Welsh speakers fell by between 1 and 21 percentage points between 2001 and 2021. Such whole population percentages, without further analysis of age cohorts, afford the most optimistic view of language vitality.

Studying the percentage of Welsh speakers in 2021 by age group in the LSOAs of the four counties above shows that the percentage of 3-15 year olds who can speak Welsh is consistently higher than the equivalent percentage for the population as a whole (by between 2 and 44 percentage points). To a certain extent therefore, the data of this age group appears to reflect institutional use of Welsh in education, thereby raising the percentage for the general population. This gives the impression that social use of the language is somewhat higher than is the case.

To smooth out the discrepancy that can arise when using raw percentages because of variations like these in the ability to speak Welsh across age groups in a particular area, an analysis of Census 2021 language statistics was done based on standardised incidence ratio (SIR). This entailed comparing the number of Welsh speakers in the LSOAs of the four counties, and the age groups within them, with the average for the whole area of the four counties and age groups. In doing so, we note that there are more than the expected number of Welsh speakers in 129 LSOAs and fewer than the expected number in 139. Only 26 of Carmarthenshire's 111 LSOAs (23%) have an SIR score over

1.0, compared to 44% of Ceredigion LSOAs, 63% of Anglesey LSOAs and 80% of Gwynedd LSOAs.

As noted above, numbers and percentages of speakers are a measure of potential language use. Numbers and percentages of Welsh-speaking households are a more accurate yardstick of real language use. In households with children, over 50% of all adults can speak Welsh in 19 of the 41 LSOAs in Anglesey (46%) and 53 of the 71 LSOAs in Gwynedd (75%). The corresponding figures are 4 out of 45 LSOAs in Ceredigion (8.9%) and 1 out of 111 LSOAs in Carmarthenshire (0.9%).

Data regarding Welsh speakers and households suggests that the potential for the social use of Welsh is stronger in these four counties than in the rest of Wales. Similarly, the potential is stronger in north-west than south-west Wales. Simply put, the potential for social use of the language is stronger in areas of higher density.

2.5 Industries and economic sectors

Along with the higher density of Welsh speakers and households that characterise particular areas, some industries and economic sectors are also characterised by a higher level of representation of Welsh speakers. For example, the percentage in the four counties who are active in agriculture and associated industries, and who are also Welsh speakers, is significantly higher than that in other industries:

- Anglesey—73%
- Gwynedd—84%
- Ceredigion—71%
- Carmarthenshire—56%

This is also the case in regard with public administration, education and health:

- Anglesey—65%
- Gwynedd—74%
- Ceredigion—52%
- Carmarthenshire—43%

As it is in the construction industry:

- Anglesey—63%
- Gwynedd—74%
- Ceredigion—54%
- Carmarthenshire—42%

It can therefore be assumed that protecting these sectors is important from the point of view of maintaining the use of Welsh in the workplace and wider society. It should also be noted that the percentage of Welsh speakers active in agriculture and associated industries in counties in north-east Wales is particularly high compared to other sectors, suggesting the importance of this sector, and associated social networks, to maintaining the Welsh language in areas where the density of speakers is not as strong.

2.6 Villages and the geography of the Welsh language

Another feature is the importance of villages to the Welsh language. Census 2021 data also shows the relative strength of Welsh in a number of towns, although there are concerning signs here of language shift. But along with the high percentage of Welsh speakers in LSOAs in the main towns in the north-west, it is notable that among the LSOAs where the Welsh language is at its strongest, a number have villages as focal points whilst others include clusters of smaller villages.

These include: Bryngwran, Gwalchmai, Llannerch-y-medd, Bodedern and Brynsiencyn in Anglesey; Llanrug, Bethel, Bontnewydd, Abererch, Botwnnog, Tudweiliog, Chwilog, Llanystumdwy and Llanuwchllyn in Gwynedd; Llanilar, Llanafan, Llanfarian, Felinfach and Ciliau Aeron in Ceredigion; Pontyberem, Brynaman Uchaf, Llanddarog and Llannon in Carmarthenshire.

As well as being an urban language (as it is in Caernarfon) and a rural language (as in the agricultural sector), Welsh is also a language of villages, and it can be assumed that much of the social use of the language there is tied to the institutions that are focal points for these villages (school, pub, GP surgery, community centre, etc).

2.7 Underrepresentation of Welsh speakers as a group in the most privileged socioeconomic occupations and categories

Two other contrasting trends in the socioeconomic picture presented by Census 2021 data should also be noted. In Anglesey and Gwynedd, the percentage of Welsh speakers in the NS-SEC (National Statistics Socio-economic Classification) categories L1, L2 and L3 (advanced managerial, administrative and professional occupations) is significantly lower than the percentage of Welsh speakers in the other NS-SEC categories:

Table 2.1: Percentage of Welsh speakers within NS-SEC categories

Local authority	L1, L2 and L3	L4, L5 and L6	L7	L8 and L9	L10 and L11	L12	L13	L14.1 and L14.2
Anglesey	46%	55%	56%	49%	54%	53%	55%	44%
Gwynedd	55%	65%	68%	57%	65%	65%	65%	53%

L1, L2 and L3: Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations

L4, L5 and L6: Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations, higher supervisory occupations

L7: Intermediate occupations

L8 and L9: Employers in small organisations, own account workers

L10 and L11: Lower supervisory and technical occupations

L12: Semi-routine occupations

L13: Routine occupations

L14.1 and L14.2: Never worked and long-term unemployed

Furthermore, data regarding the ability to speak Welsh by occupation shows that the percentage of managers, directors and senior officials able to speak Welsh in both counties is over 10 percentage points lower than the percentage of Welsh speakers in the workforce as a whole (48% compared to 59% in Anglesey; 57% compared with 68% in

Gwynedd). There appears to be evidence here of the longevity of the cultural division of labour described at the end of the last century by Glyn Williams and Delyth Morris in their book, *Language Planning and Language Use* (Williams and Morris, 2000).

The situation is not as clear in the south-west, and this may be because of the lower density of Welsh speakers there, and thus the existence of fewer communities where such trends could emerge. It would be beneficial to investigate this further.

There is sometimes a perception in public discourse in Wales that Welsh speakers as a group are relatively privileged. However, in Gwynedd and Anglesey at least, the two counties where the Welsh language is strongest, this does not appear to be the case and the Welsh-speaking group is underrepresented in the most privileged socioeconomic occupations and categories.

Other evidence might be said to support this perception. In communities with high house prices coupled with high patterns of in-migration and second home ownership, the proportion of Welsh speakers is often lower than that in surrounding communities, which is suggestive of relative disadvantage in such circumstances (Cyngor Gwynedd, 2020, 37-48). Given that the Welsh-speaking areas in question are on the periphery of the territory of the British state rather than located in its core, and a long way too from the most prosperous centres of economic activity, it should not be entirely unexpected that a minoritised group there might face some aspects of structural disadvantage in certain circumstances. Furthermore, the phenomenon of language shift in and of itself testifies to a socioeconomic impediment restricting the language group's ability to reproduce itself effectively over time.

More research is needed to fully understand the implications of these findings. Further research is also needed in relation to the link between language and social class.

2.8 The impact of socioeconomic disadvantage on the ability to reproduce the Welsh language

The disadvantage described above is not absolute. It should be noted that the percentage of Welsh speakers in NS-SEC categories L14.1 and L14.2 (never worked and long-term unemployed) is significantly lower than the percentage of Welsh speakers in the other NS-SEC categories (see table 2.1).

- Anglesey—44%
- Gwynedd—53%
- Ceredigion—33%
- Carmarthenshire—27%

The lower density of Welsh speakers in these socioeconomic categories can be assumed to be the result of, *and result in*, less favourable circumstances for the use of Welsh. This is supported by data on language transmission within the family. This data shows that there are twice as many children who are unable to speak Welsh in households where at least one adult can speak Welsh in Approximated Social Grade categories D and E (semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, unemployed and lowest grade occupations) compared to households in Approximated Social Grade categories A and B (higher and intermediate managerial, administrative and professional occupations):

- Anglesey—21% in categories DE compared to 11% in categories AB
- Gwynedd—11% in categories DE compared to 4% in categories AB
- Ceredigion—21% in categories DE compared to 9% in categories AB
- Carmarthenshire—33% in categories DE compared to 13% in categories AB

In summary, the data suggests on the one hand that Welsh speakers as a social group in communities with a high density of Welsh speakers face a degree of structural economic disadvantage, and on the other that the language group is to some extent diverging along lines of social class.

3 Areas of higher density linguistic significance

A clear question that arises in relation to the work of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities is what constitutes a ‘Welsh-speaking community’, and what the implications of this are in terms of language planning. The Commission’s terms of reference describe a Welsh-speaking community as a community ‘where [Welsh] is the language of the majority of the population, or where this has been true until relatively recently.’ However, this wording is intended to set out the Commission’s remit and is not a definition for public policy.

3.1 The importance of the density of Welsh speakers in particular communities

The density of Welsh speakers in a particular area is important for language planning. It is possible to live a full and comprehensive life through the medium of Welsh in contexts where Welsh is the language of a relatively small minority (as shown by the history of the Welsh language in Cardiff, for example, and before that in Liverpool). This depends on the nature of social networks that are sometimes linguistic in nature. But, in areas where Welsh is a territorial community language, there are opportunities to use Welsh outside such specific networks, or there may be more networks available. There is also often a higher likelihood of the Welsh language being transmitted from one generation to the next. In areas where the Welsh language is very strong, it is often the default language of social interaction within the community.

From a public policy perspective, it is important to note the Welsh Government’s commitment in *Cymraeg 2050: One million speakers* to ensure that ‘the percentage of the population who speak Welsh daily, and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh, [is] to increase from 10 per cent (in 2013-15) to 20 per cent by 2050’ (Welsh Government, 2017a: 11).

The density of Welsh speakers in Welsh-speaking communities is linked to the frequency of its use in those communities, and this has national implications for meeting targets for Welsh language use. As a result, bolstering communities with a high density of Welsh speakers is central to the Welsh Government’s language strategy and to language planning in Wales as a whole.

3.2 Areas of linguistic significance or sensitivity: history of a concept

The concept of areas of linguistic significance or sensitivity has been part of the discussion about language planning in Wales since the days of the Welsh Language Board. For example, ‘Areas of Linguistic Sensitivity’ (ALS) are discussed in a document from 2005 (*Planning and the Welsh Language: The Way Forward*, 2005: 6-7; 11-12) which summarises work undertaken by a consortium of organisations including local authorities, the Welsh Language Board and the Welsh Assembly Government (as it was then known).

The concept was used to promote language planning in areas facing language shift. For example, the Welsh Language Board towards the end of its life referred to the Aman-Tawe area as an area of linguistic sensitivity, a concept that also had the advantage of promoting collaboration across county boundaries.

More recently, there have been references to areas of linguistic sensitivity or significance in Local Development Plans. But in the document, *Planning and the Welsh Language: a review of the procedures of the Welsh planning authorities* (Welsh Language Commissioner, 2019), the Welsh Language Commissioner suggested that uncertainty had affected the practical application of the concept. An unnamed planning authority is quoted:

We understand that there is no definition of linguistically sensitive areas currently in place, although authorities are free to define these areas as they wish. But this can lead to inconsistencies and a failure to identify some areas as being linguistically sensitive, where they should be identified as such, or vice versa. (Welsh Language Commissioner, 2019: 6).

Responding to the Commission's call for evidence, some bodies sought further guidance from the Welsh Government in relation to what constitutes an area of linguistic significance. For example, the Eryri National Park Authority argued that it would be desirable to 'get clearer guidance on what is meant in terms of areas of linguistic sensitivity or significance' (see Welsh Government, 2023b: 15).

The concept of areas of linguistic significance or sensitivity has been part of the discussion about policy, and to some extent part of policy itself, for nearly twenty years. But the use of the term has been fragmented and inconsistent. The call for evidence highlighted a desire to clarify this concept in order to facilitate its incorporation within language policy in Wales in a structured way. Therefore, in its Position Paper, the Commission discussed in detail the idea of formally designating in Wales 'areas of higher density linguistic significance' (Welsh Government, 2023b: 12-28).

It is worth noting that the concept is also being explored in other parts of the United Kingdom. The Scottish Languages Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament in November 2023. The proposed Bill gives official status to Gaelic and Scots in Scotland and includes provisions for creating a power to designate geographical areas as 'areas of linguistic significance.' An area might be designated as such on the basis of the percentage of speakers, historical heritage, provision of Gaelic-medium education or the presence of significant Gaelic activity, and the 'areas' do not have to be a local authority area. They could be a smaller area forming part of a local authority.

3.3 An international comparison—the Basque Country

There is also awareness of the importance of areas with a high density of minority language speakers in contexts outside the United Kingdom. There has been institutional recognition of such communities in the Basque Country, for example.

Udalerri Euskaldunen Mankomunitatea (UEMA), the Association of Basque-language Municipal Councils, was founded in 1991 for community councils in areas with a percentage of Basque speakers of over 70%. One of the aims of the association is to create a territory where Basque will be a majority language.

UEMA has worked closely with Euskarabidea (the Language Policy Department of the Government of Navarre) and the Department of Culture and Language Policy of the Basque Government on formulating a strategy to maintain and develop areas and spaces with a higher density of Basque speakers. The *Euskararen Arnasguneak 2024* report

(Breathing Spaces for the Basque Language, 2024) was published in March this year (Euskarabidea, 2024). The report emphasises how integral higher density geographical areas have been to the survival of the Basque language, and how they will remain so in the future. In addition, it recognises that higher density spaces (such as schools) in lower density areas are also part of the wider 'breathing space' that is indispensable for the regeneration of any minoritised language. The report identifies challenges in the higher density areas, and recommends further work to understand, analyse and propose policy solutions.

The significance of geographical areas with a higher density of speakers claims a central place in debate in the Basque Country about language sustainability.

In the Basque Country, the revival of Basque as a national language spoken throughout its territory goes hand in hand with an emphasis on the linguistic sustainability of higher density communities.

3.4 The principle of designating areas of linguistic significance

The Commission is in favour of the designation of areas of linguistic significance in Wales to support Welsh as a community language. Without the designation of such areas, the likelihood is that Welsh will continue to decline in those communities with a higher density of Welsh speakers. This, in turn, will weaken Welsh as a living national language throughout Wales.

Recommendation 2: The Welsh Government should designate 'areas of higher density linguistic significance' in Wales.

3.5 Inclusive terminology

The Commission's terms of reference require it to 'identify areas of linguistic sensitivity where policy intervention may be necessary in order to support and strengthen Welsh as a community language.' As part of this process, the Commission considered what terminology should be used when referring to such areas.

The Commission prefers the term 'linguistic significance' to 'linguistic sensitivity.'

The Commission notes that all communities where Welsh is spoken are of linguistic significance to those who live there. Welsh language heartlands are not unique because they are 'significant' or 'sensitive' but because they are 'significant' or 'sensitive' in a particular way.

Welsh is a networked community language in all parts of Wales. But it is not a community language everywhere in Wales in a context with a high density of speakers as a percentage of the local population.

To refer to the areas covered in this report in an objective and inclusive manner, and to emphasise that Welsh is of significance in all places where it is spoken, the Commission favours the use of a term that makes this clear. The term the Commission wishes to use to refer to these areas is 'areas of higher density linguistic significance.'

This would allow reference to other areas of Wales as 'areas of linguistic significance'. Considering the appropriateness of this does not fall within the Commission's current

terms of reference, but in using inclusive terminology, the Commission is leaving room for this step to be taken if so desired.

The fundamental point is that every area of Wales is one where Welsh is significant. 'Higher density' is a technical term for defining areas where public policy could be varied in a way that responds to relevant sociolinguistic circumstances. It is not a statement about the validity of Welsh in any particular area.

3.6 The purpose of areas of higher density linguistic significance

Designating areas of higher density linguistic significance would provide a firm foundation for:

- increasing consideration of the Welsh language within a policy framework.
- allowing policy intervention, variation and emphasis in favour of the Welsh language as a community language.
- ensuring that policy variations respond to the social and linguistic needs of these areas.
- providing necessary capacity to empower communities to reverse language shift.

This report shows how such a designation could be used to benefit the Welsh language in practice. Designating areas of higher density linguistic significance could facilitate for example:

- Strategic use of resources—creating a context for the strategic delivery of resources to reverse language shift.
- Collaboration—working and sharing resources and expertise across county boundaries in a way that benefits the Welsh language.
- Language planning at the community level—language planning that is based on community sustainability and holistic action, effective at the micro level.
- Community development—strengthening sustainability and community cohesion and consequently strengthening Welsh as a community language.
- Economy—developing economic policies that will respond to the particular needs of Welsh-speaking communities from a strategic perspective.
- Workplaces—providing a context for increasing use of Welsh in workplaces which will in turn strengthen its use within communities.
- Housing—developing housing policy that not only addresses housing need but also recognises issues that arise in Welsh-speaking communities in particular.
- Town and country planning—developing and standardising the concept of areas of linguistic sensitivity or significance already used in town and country planning, strengthening the policy framework for further interventions, and enabling the variation of policy in a way that reflects the needs and aspirations of communities.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion—developing equality, diversity and inclusion approaches that recognise community-based contexts to the Welsh language and ensure that everyone can contribute to them.
- Education—assessing and setting goals for Welsh language provision ensuring that pupils become proficient and literate in Welsh, whilst also consolidating its social use in the wider community.

Recommendation 3: Areas of higher density linguistic significance should:

- increase consideration of the Welsh language within a policy framework.
- allow policy intervention, variation and emphasis in favour of Welsh as a community language.
- ensure that policy variations respond to the social and linguistic needs of these areas.
- provide the necessary capacity to empower communities to reverse language shift.

3.7 National policies that are not varied

Although it may be beneficial to vary policy in a manner likely to have a sociolinguistic impact on areas of higher density linguistic significance, it is not anticipated that all matters relating to the Welsh language in these communities would be subject to policy variation. In many of them, it may be better to have a national policy without introducing variations. Within policy areas that have a sociolinguistic impact, some policies might also be implemented without variation.

This is not an argument against designating areas of higher density linguistic significance as the purpose of such a designation is to create the *ability* to vary policy. The Commission also believes that the act of designation would have an impact on the policy environment and policy implementation more generally. Such a designation would be useful even if it were not used in every policy field.

Recommendation 4: The designation of areas of higher density linguistic significance should not prevent universal provision (effective throughout the territory of Wales) being made for the Welsh language in some policy fields. In such cases, there should be no requirement to vary national policy.

Designation of areas of higher density linguistic significance

3.8 How to designate areas of higher density linguistic significance

One approach to defining areas of higher density linguistic significance would be through a definition based solely on statistical evidence. Due to the comprehensive nature of the census, such a definition would likely rely on Census 2021 language data.

Another approach would be to consider other relevant factors besides census statistics, thereby acknowledging a wider societal context.

The view of the Commission is that an area of higher density linguistic significance should be designated within the wider context of the local Welsh-speaking group. This suggests that a policy mechanism with a measure of local autonomy would be needed when determining the exact areas to be designated.

The Commission would not therefore favour a model in which statistics would be the only benchmark used to designate areas of higher density linguistic significance. We would not support excluding a community solely because a slightly lower percentage of the population than that set by a benchmark are able to speak Welsh. As we explain below,

we believe that local authorities could use discretion in such circumstances to designate communities.

Areas of higher density linguistic significance would have to be large enough for the proper development and administration of public policy. They should be able to include areas that, although they fall below a certain statistical threshold, are important because of their geographical location, or perhaps because they are local hubs (for facilities, for example), or for another valid reason.

The Commission therefore considers that a hybrid methodology should be adopted to determine the exact areas to be designated as areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Some areas would be designated solely on the basis of Census 2021 statistical evidence. Other areas could be designated based on consideration of Census 2021 data as well as additional relevant factors such as other statistical sources, local information, a local desire to be part of a designation, and factors relating to the effective development and administration of public policy that would be beneficial to the sustainability of the Welsh language.

In the following subsections, we will explain how such a hybrid methodology might work.

3.9 The Welsh Government to set a national threshold for designating areas of higher density linguistic significance

Every community in Wales where there is a high density of Welsh speakers is characterised by language shift to one degree or another, and the science of language planning suggests that it is best to intervene early in order to reverse language shift. The Commission would therefore be in favour of designating areas with the highest density of Welsh speakers as areas of higher density linguistic significance as well as those places where signs of language shift are more obvious.

To achieve this, the Commission considers that the Welsh Government should set a statistical threshold that would lead to the designation of areas with a high density of Welsh speakers.

This would not be the only way to designate areas of higher density linguistic significance, but the Commission considers that a national threshold would avoid situations where a local authority could refrain from making such a designation, even if it were clear that it should do so. It might be appropriate to place the responsibility on Welsh Ministers centrally to make obvious designations should the local authority refuse to act. There are several precedents in planning and education where Welsh Ministers are given a duty or discretion to act if the local authority fails to do so.

We propose using Census 2021 data to establish the national threshold. Using the census is simpler, easier to understand and more transparent than other methods. An important justification for using census figures alone when setting a national threshold is that it would only be used to establish a minimum number of areas where there would be a designation.

As a result, problems that might arise were a single statistical source to be used would be unlikely to occur—for example, splitting an area because one part of it is just under a

threshold, and another just above that threshold. This is because we suggest adopting a second approach to designating areas of higher density linguistic significance that would be able to address complexities of this type.

3.10 Designating areas of higher density linguistic significance through the discretion of local authorities

Only some places would be designated as areas of higher density linguistic significance via a national threshold set by the Welsh Government. The Commission assumes that other places would also be designated. In these cases, a range of statistical data from different sources, as well as considerations not based solely on language statistics, such as geographic location, could be used to make a designation.

There are many communities in Wales with an intermediate linguistic profile. Here, although Welsh is not as strong as in other places, the language is an important part of the social fabric. Such communities are linguistically sensitive to social or socioeconomic changes. Whether to designate such areas as areas of higher density linguistic significance would require careful consideration.

The Commission considers that central government should not take that decision. We anticipate that local authorities would do this.

Local authorities should be responsible for designating areas of higher density linguistic significance because the designation would bring with it some additional responsibilities in regard to public policy. There should be support for this locally. To be effective, language planning must be rooted in the community. If communities that fall below the national threshold were prepared to accept the policy responsibilities that would accompany such a designation, the Commission does not see why they should not be included.

All this could bring flexibility to the designation process. It would ensure that language planning takes place on a 'bottom-to-top' rather than 'top-to-bottom' basis. By responding to local democracy, the possibility that areas might be excluded contrary to the wishes of their residents would be reduced. It would also ensure 'government by consent' in communities with a borderline linguistic profile. To some extent therefore, the Commission considers that the will of a particular community to be an area of higher density linguistic significance could be a valid consideration when considering designation, and that this desire would be best expressed through the local democratic process.

While local accountability could be ensured in a number of ways—taking into account the views of community groups, along with those of town and community councils—the local authority would be the most suitable body to make the final designation.

In some circumstances, it might be beneficial for a local authority in its entirety to be an area of higher density linguistic significance, and in others it could be argued that it would not be sensible to designate the whole local authority area.

Given the above, allowing a fairly broad definition of what constitutes an area of higher density linguistic significance could enable local authorities with a lower proportion of Welsh speakers to adopt the concept if they wished. We are aware that it may be

appropriate for the Welsh Government to provide guidance to assist local authorities in the use of discretion when designating areas of higher density linguistic significance.

3.11 Areas of higher density linguistic significance in local authority areas with a lower density of Welsh speakers

One possible advantage of designating areas of higher density linguistic significance is that it could empower the Welsh language in communities with a high density of Welsh speakers within local authority areas where the proportion of Welsh speakers across the county is not as high. There are majority Welsh-speaking communities in Pembrokeshire, Neath Port Talbot, Powys, Conwy and Denbighshire, for example.

The majority of these communities border on the ‘four core counties’ of the Welsh-speaking areas—Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire. It is therefore worth noting that designating areas of higher density linguistic significance would facilitate strategic links across local authority boundaries and strengthen Welsh-speaking communities outside as well as inside these counties.

3.12 Possible legislative provision for areas of higher density linguistic significance

The Commission considers that provision could be made for the designation of areas of higher density linguistic significance in potential legislation as follows:

‘Areas of higher density linguistic significance’

- (1) A local authority has a duty to designate an area within its area as one of higher density linguistic significance if the percentage of Welsh speakers within that area is equal to or greater than X%.
- (2) A local authority may also designate another area within its area as one of higher density linguistic significance:
 - (a) if it adjoins an area designated in accordance with subsection (1) above.
 - (b) if it considers that it should do that based on the density of Welsh speakers in that area as a percentage of its population, even if that percentage is below X%.
- (3) In exercising their functions, Welsh Ministers and local authorities must pay special attention to the viability of the Welsh language within areas of higher density linguistic significance.
- (4) A local authority has a duty to collaborate with other local authorities by sharing expertise and knowledge relevant to their duties and powers under this section.

Recommendation 5: An area should be designated as an area of higher density linguistic significance if the percentage of speakers in the area is equal to or greater than a national threshold set by the Welsh Government. In addition, local authorities should have discretion to designate an area as one of higher density

linguistic significance if an area borders on such an area, or on the basis of the density of Welsh speakers as a percentage of its population.

Provision should be made for the designation of areas of higher density linguistic significance as follows:

‘Areas of higher density linguistic significance’

- (1) A local authority has a duty to designate an area within its area as one of higher density linguistic significance if the percentage of Welsh speakers within that area is equal to or greater than X%.**
- (2) A local authority may also designate another area within its area as one of higher density linguistic significance:**
 - (a) if it adjoins an area designated in accordance with subsection (1) above.**
 - (b) if it considers that it should do that based on the density of Welsh speakers in that area as a percentage of its population, even if that percentage is below X%.**
- (3) In exercising their functions, Welsh Ministers and local authorities must pay special attention to the viability of the Welsh language within areas of higher density linguistic significance.**
- (4) A local authority has a duty to collaborate with other local authorities by sharing expertise and knowledge relevant to their duties and powers under this section.**

3.13 Definition of an ‘area’

In order to designate areas of higher density linguistic significance, it would first be necessary to define what is meant by ‘area’. An ‘area’ could be an ‘LSOA’ (*Lower layer Super Output Area*) as used within the context of Census 2021, or it could be a cluster of LSOAs that have been brought together—to include a particular town or settlement in its entirety, for example, or to take into account some other relevant factor, such as a local secondary school catchment area, or a ‘travel-to-work’ area, or an area set out in a Local Development Plan.

The Commission would favour that areas of higher density linguistic significance border each other. In order to implement public policy, it would not be sensible for there to be small enclaves that are not areas of higher density linguistic significance within a wider area of higher density linguistic significance, or small enclaves of higher density linguistic significance within a wider area without that definition.

For example, it would make little sense to define an entire town as an area of higher density linguistic significance with the exception of one small part of that town which would be excluded because an individual LSOA fell below X%, the threshold for a statutory designation.

This suggests that advice might need to be sought in regard to what is mean by ‘area’.

The Commission's advice is that the Welsh Government should seek further guidance on this from *Prosiect BRO*.

3.14 The statutory national threshold for designating an area as an area of higher density linguistic significance

In order to ensure the coherence of public policy at regional and national level, it should not be possible to avoid designating an area as an area of higher density linguistic significance if the percentage of Welsh speakers is equal to or above a certain figure unless there are special reasons for doing so.

We refer to that percentage in this report as X%.

For all practical purposes, this would create a national threshold for the percentage of Welsh speakers required in an 'area' in order for a duty to be imposed to designate that area as an area of higher density linguistic significance.

The Commission considers that this should be a statutory duty.

If this statutory requirement were laid down in legislation, it would not be necessary to state on the face of any Bill the exact percentage of Welsh speakers in a population that would equate to X%. The percentage could be set in regulations. What constitutes an 'area' could also be defined in regulations. The use of regulations would not only bring an element of flexibility when setting public policy, but also means that the percentage could be reviewed as required. It would be useful to do this on a regular basis—every five years, for example.

There are two factors that would likely influence the decision of Welsh Ministers in determining the percentage named as X%.

The first consideration would be sociolinguistic evidence regarding changes in minority language use as the proportion of speakers in an area increases or decreases. There is not a great deal of evidence based on contemporary detailed fieldwork in Wales about changes in Welsh language usage as the proportion of Welsh speakers within communities changes. The situation is complicated by the possibility that parallel linguistic communities may exist side by side in places that have experienced significant in-migration of non-Welsh speakers. A viable language community that uses Welsh on a daily basis across a range of sociolinguistic contexts might still exist within a particular area, even though Welsh speakers may be a minority locally.

The Commission's view is that these communities should also be designated as areas of higher density linguistic significance so that appropriate sociolinguistic interventions can be made. The Commission anticipates that the current *Prosiect BRO* survey will be able to provide some of the evidence that would inform further deliberation here.

The second consideration is practicality within public policy. Areas of higher density linguistic significance should be large enough to be meaningful for the implementation of public policy, and they should be as cohesive as possible. This is relevant to the discussion about the percentage named as X%.

If X% were too low, a number of dispersed linguistic enclaves, that would be small and also isolated, could result. They would need to be designated as areas of higher density linguistic significance despite their distance from other areas of higher density linguistic significance. These enclaves would only cross the statutory national threshold by a few percentage points, and their social characteristics might be quite different to those of other areas of higher density linguistic significance. This raises the question of whether the type of public policy interventions recommended in this report would be appropriate for them.

If X% were too high, it would be difficult to enable areas of higher density linguistic significance to be designated over a wide territory, although local authorities in such circumstances could remedy this by exercising discretion.

The Commission is also keen to ensure that X% is a percentage that facilitates use of the national threshold in areas of the south-west as well as the north-west of Wales. If X% were very high (say 70%), it would not be possible to include any part of south-west Wales within the statutory definition. In the Commission's view, this would not be beneficial.

The Commission considers that X% should be determined in due course following the publication of further findings from *Prosiect BRO's* research, taking into account also the views of other academics and statisticians, and having consulted with stakeholders including local authorities.

However, for the purpose of this report, and in order to be able to model the concept, the Commission suggests that X% should be defined for the time being as 40% of the population having the ability to speak Welsh in a particular area according to Census 2021 data.

If 40% were adopted as a threshold, local authorities could designate areas under the threshold on discretionary grounds, for example to ensure that areas of higher density linguistic significance are broad and cohesive. Discretion could also be used to extend the boundaries of these areas.

It is worth noting that LSOAs within areas of higher density linguistic significance that fall below 40% usually do so by only a few percentage points. For that reason, we do not consider that there would be significant local opposition to designating these areas as areas of higher density linguistic significance on discretionary grounds.

Recommendation 6: There should be a presumption in favour of designating X% (the threshold mentioned in recommendation 5) as 40%. The Welsh Government should make the final decision on X% following the publication of further findings from *Prosiect BRO's* research, also taking into account the views of other academics and statisticians and having consulted with stakeholders including local authorities.

3.15 List of LSOAs relevant to the discussion

This list includes every LSOA in Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire. In the rest of Wales, every LSOA is listed in which the percentage of Welsh speakers in the population exceeds 25%.

Table 3.1: Gwynedd—LSOAs that cross the 40% threshold

Name	%		%
Seiont 1	86%	Talysarn	70%
Llanrug	86%	Penrhyndeudraeth 1	70%
Bethel & Cwm y-Glo 1	86%	Llanberis	69%
Peblig (Caernarfon)	85%	Bethel & Cwm y-Glo 2	69%
Penygroes	83%	Y Felinheli	68%
Bontnewydd	83%	Penisarwaun	68%
Llanwnda	81%	Tregarth & Mynydd Llandygai	68%
Ogwen 1	81%	Porthmadog – Tremadog	66%
Cadnant	81%	Dolbenmaen	65%
Llandderfel & Llanuwchllyn 2	81%	Llandderfel & Llanuwchllyn 1	65%
Menai (Caernarfon)	78%	Pentir 1	62%
Abererch	78%	Llanengan	61%
Groeslon	77%	Dolgellau South	61%
Porthmadog East	77%	Criccieth	60%
Bowydd and Rhiw	76%	Brithdir & Llanfachreth/Ganllwyd/ Llanelltyd	60%
Pwllheli North	76%	Dolgellau North	60%
Seiont 2	76%	Arlechwedd	58%
Aberdaron / Botwnnog & Thudweiliog	76%	Pentir 2	57%
Penrhyndeudraeth 2	75%	Porthmadog West	56%
Pwllheli South	75%	Llanbedrog & Abersoch	55%
Llanystumdwy	75%	Harlech	55%
Teigl	74%	Glyder	53%
Ogwen 2	74%	Dewi	52%
Waunfawr	74%	Marchog 1	51%
Deiniolen	73%	Corris/Mawddwy	49%
Gerlan	73%	Marchog 2	48%
Nefyn	73%	Dyffryn Ardudwy / Llanbedr	47%
Diffwys & Maenofferen	73%	Aberdyfi / Bryn-crug / Llanfihangel	43%
Efail-newydd/Buan	73%	Barmouth 1 / Barmouth 2	42%
Trawsfynydd	73%	Llangelynin	40%
Bala	72%	Tywyn 2	40%
Morfa Nefyn	72%		
Llanllyfni & Clynnog	71%		
Llanaelhaearn	70%		

Table 3.2: Gwynedd—LSOAs that do not cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Hendre	38%
Tywyn 1	36%
Hirael & Garth 2	35%
Hirael & Garth 1	33%
Menai (Bangor)	22%
Deiniol	20%

Table 3.3: Anglesey—LSOAs that cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Cyngar	79%
Llanfihangel Ysgeifiog	75%
Tudur	75%
Braint	73%
Cefni	73%
Bodffordd	72%
Bryngwran	69%
Gwyngyll	68%
Llannerch-y-medd	67%
Llanfair-yn-Neubwll 1	65%
Bodorgan	64%
Llanidan	64%
Rhosyr	61%
Llanfaethlu	61%
Amlwch Port	60%
Tysilio	58%
Llanddyfnan/Moelfre	58%

Cwm Cadnant	58%
Mechell	56%
Pentraeth	54%
Llaneilian	52%
Aberffraw & Rhosneigr 1/2	51%
Amlwch Rural	51%
Trearddur 1/Valley 1	49%
Brynteg	49%
Parc a'r Mynydd	48%
Valley 2	48%
Llanbadrig	47%
London Road	47%
Llangoed	46%
Kingsland	46%
Cadnant	46%
Porthyfelin 2	45%
Maeshyfyd	41%

Table 3.4: Anglesey—LSOAs that do not cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Llanbedrgoch	39%
Morawelon	38%
Holyhead Town	37%
Llanfair-yn-Neubwll 2	37%
Beaumaris	37%
Porthyfelin 1	36%
Trearddur 2	35%

Table 3.5: Conwy—LSOAs that cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Uwchaled	64%
Uwch Conwy	62%
Llangernyw	62%
Gower	61%
Llansannan	60%
Crwst	57%
Eglwysbach	54%
Betws-y-Coed	47%
Pandy	45%
Bryn	42%
Trefriw	42%
Betws yn Rhos	41%

Table 3.6: Conwy—LSOAs that do not cross the 40% threshold but have a percentage of Welsh speakers higher than 25%

Name	%
Caerhun	39%
Conwy 3	34%
Pant-yr-afon / Penmaenan 2	34%
Llansanffraid 1 and 2	32%
Capelulo	31%
Pant-yr-afon / Penmaenan 1	31%
Pensarn 1	29%
Pensarn 2	29%
Marl 2	28%
Marl 1	26%

Table 3.7: Carmarthenshire—LSOAs that cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Quarter Bach 1	62%
Pontyberem 1	61%
Gorslas 1	61%
Llannon 2	60%
Pontyberem 2	60%
Llannon 1	59%
Llanegwad 1	58%
Penygroes 2	58%
Quarter Bach 2	57%
Llanfihangel-ar-Arth 2	56%
Gorslas 2	56%
Llanddarog	56%
Penygroes 1	55%
Abergwili	55%
Llangyndeyrn 2	54%
Glyn	54%
St. Ishmael 1	53%
Llanybydder 1	52%
Llandybie 2	52%
Pontaman 2	51%
Llanfihangel-ar-Arth 1	51%
Llanybydder 2	51%
Llandybie 1	51%
Garnant	51%
Cynwyl Elfed 2	50%
Betws	50%
Trimsaran 1	50%
Llannon 3	50%
Saron 2	49%

Glanaman 2	49%
Llangunnor 2	48%
Cynwyl Elfed 1	48%
Llangeler 2	48%
Glanaman 1	48%
Llandeilo 1	48%
Llangunnor 1	47%
St. Clears 2	47%
Ammanford 2	47%
Llangeler 1	47%
Llangadog	47%
Llanboidy	47%
St. Clears 1	47%
Saron 1	46%
Llanfihangel Aberbythych	46%
Pontaman 1	46%
Llangyndeyrn 1	46%
Cenarth	46%
Manordeilo and Salem	45%
Trelech	45%
Carmarthen Town North 4	45%
Ammanford 1	44%
Cynwyl Gaeo	43%
Llandeilo 2	43%
Tycroes	42%
Cilycwm	42%
Llangennech 1	42%
Llansteffan	40%
Trimsaran 2	40%

Table 3.8: Carmarthenshire—LSOAs that do not cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Carmarthen Town West 2	39%
Llandovery 2	39%
Hendy 1	38%
Carmarthen Town South 2	38%
Kidwelly 1	38%
Kidwelly 2	38%
Hendy 2	37%
St. Ishmael 2	37%
Llangennech 3	37%
Carmarthen Town West 3	37%
Whitland	37%
Llandovery 1	36%
Llanegwad 2	36%
Pembrey 1	34%
Carmarthen Town North 3	34%
Elli 1	33%
Lliedi 2	33%
Hengoed 1	33%
Burry Port 3	32%
Carmarthen Town North 1	32%
Llangennech 2	32%
Hengoed 2 / Hengoed 3	31%
Carmarthen Town South 1	31%
Burry Port 1	31%
Swiss Valley 1 / Swiss Valley 2	30%
Dafen 1	27%

Burry Port 2	27%
Bynea 1	27%
Carmarthen Town West 1	26%
Carmarthen Town North 2	26%
Felinfoel	26%
Bigyn 1	25%
Bynea 2	25%
Elli 2	24%
Lliedi 3	24%
Glanymor 3	23%
Pembrey 2	23%
Llwynhendy 2	23%
Llwynhendy 1	23%
Lliedi 1	22%
Bigyn 2	22%
Bigyn 3	22%
Dafen 2	21%
Laugharne Township 2	21%
Llwynhendy 3	20%
Tyisha 1	19%
Laugharne Township 1	19%
Glanymor 2	18%
Glanymor 1	18%
Tyisha 3	18%
Tyisha 2	17%
Glanymor 3	17%
Bigyn 4	15%

Table 3.9: Ceredigion—LSOAs that cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Aberaeron	59%
Tregaron	59%
Ystwyth	57%
Llandysul Town	57%
Pen-parc 2	55%
Cardigan – Mwldan	55%
Llanfarian	53%
Llanfihangel Ystrad	53%
Trefeurig	53%
Llanwenog	53%
Llanrhystud	52%
Ceulanamaesmawr	52%
Lampeter 2	52%
Ciliau Aeron	52%
Tirymynach	52%
Beulah	50%
Lledrod	50%
Llandyfriog	50%
Troedyraur	50%

Llansantffraed 2	50%
Melindwr	49%
Cardigan – Rhyd-y-Fuwch	48%
Llangeitho	47%
Capel Dewi	47%
Faenor 1	47%
Llansantffraed 1	47%
Aberporth 1	46%
Pen-parc 1	46%
Llanarth / Llandysiliogogo / New Quay	46%
Penbryn	45%
Aberporth 2	45%
Lampeter 1	45%
Llangybi	44%
Aberystwyth Bronglais	44%
Llanbadarn Fawr – Padarn & Llanbadarn Fawr – Sulien (W01001935)	42%
Borth 1 / Borth 2	42%
Cardigan – Teifi	41%

Table 3.10: Ceredigion—LSOAs that do not cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Aberystwyth Rheidol 2	34%
Aberystwyth Penparcau 1	33%
Aberystwyth Penparcau 2	32%
Llanbadarn Fawr – Padarn & Llanbadarn Fawr – Sulien (W01001936)	28%
Aberystwyth - Central	25%
Aberystwyth Rheidol 1	22%
Aberystwyth North / Faenor 2 (W01002000)	22%
Aberystwyth North / Faenor 2 (W01002001)	20%

Table 3.11: Pembrokeshire—LSOAs that cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Crymych 1	59%
Crymych 2	56%
Clydau	50%
Dinas Cross	47%
Cilgerran	47%
Maenclochog 2	46%
St. Dogmaels	42%
Newport	41%
Maenclochog 1	41%

Table 3.12: Pembrokeshire—LSOAs that do not cross the 40% threshold but have a percentage of Welsh speakers higher than 25%

Name	%
Llanrhian	37%
Letterston	32%
Fishguard North West	31%
Scleddau	30%
Fishguard North East	28%
Goodwick	28%

Table 3.13: Denbighshire—LSOAs that cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Llandrillo	55%
Ruthin 3	50%
Llanrhaeadr-yng-Nghinmeirch	47%
Efenechtyd	47%
Denbigh Lower 1	44%
Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd / Gwyddelwern	44%
Corwen 1	42%
Corwen 2	42%

Table 3.14: Denbighshire—LSOAs that do not cross the 40% threshold but have a percentage of Welsh speakers higher than 25%

Name	%
Denbigh Lower 2	37%
Denbigh Lower 3	35%
Llandyrnog	35%
Denbigh Upper / Henllan 2	34%
Ruthin 1	34%
Llanbedr Dyffryn Cwyd / Llangynhafal	33%
Ruthin 2	33%
Trefnant	28%
Tremeirchion	27%
Denbigh Central	27%

Table 3.15: Powys—LSOAs that cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Glantwymyn	55%
Machynlleth	47%
Llanbrynmair & Banwy	45%
Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant	41%

Table 3.16: Powys—LSOAs that do not cross the 40% threshold but have a percentage of Welsh speakers higher than 25%

Name	%
Cwm-twrch	37%
Ystradgynlais 2	36%
Ynyscedwyn	35%
Llanfair Caereinion	34%
Aber-craf	33%
Llanfyllin	32%
Meifod & Llanfihangel	28%
Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant/Llansilin	28%
Caersws	25%

Table 3.17: Neath Port Talbot—LSOAs that cross the 40% threshold

Name	%
Cwmllynfell	53%
Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen 1	52%
Lower Brynaman	51%
Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen 2	42%

Table 3.18: Neath Port Talbot—LSOAs that do not cross the 40% threshold but have a percentage of Welsh speakers higher than 25%

Name	%
Ystalyfera 2	38%
Ystalyfera 1	33%
Trebanos	31%
Pontardawe 3	28%
Pontardawe 1	27%
Godre'r Graig	27%

Other parts of Wales—LSOAs that do not cross the 40% threshold but have a percentage of Welsh speakers higher than 25%

Table 3.19: Cardiff

Name	%
Canton 6	35%
Whitchurch and Tongwynlais 1	31%
Canton 7	28%
Canton 5	27%
Canton 8	27%
Creigiau/St Fagans 2	27%
Whitchurch and Tongwynlais 10	25%

Table 3.20: Swansea

Name	%
Mawr	31%
Pontarddulais 1	28%
Pontarddulais 3	27%
Pontarddulais 2	26%

Table 3.21: Wrexham

Name	%
Ceiriog Valley 1 and 2	30%
Ponciau 3	26%

Table 3.22: Flintshire

Name	%
Mold South	28%

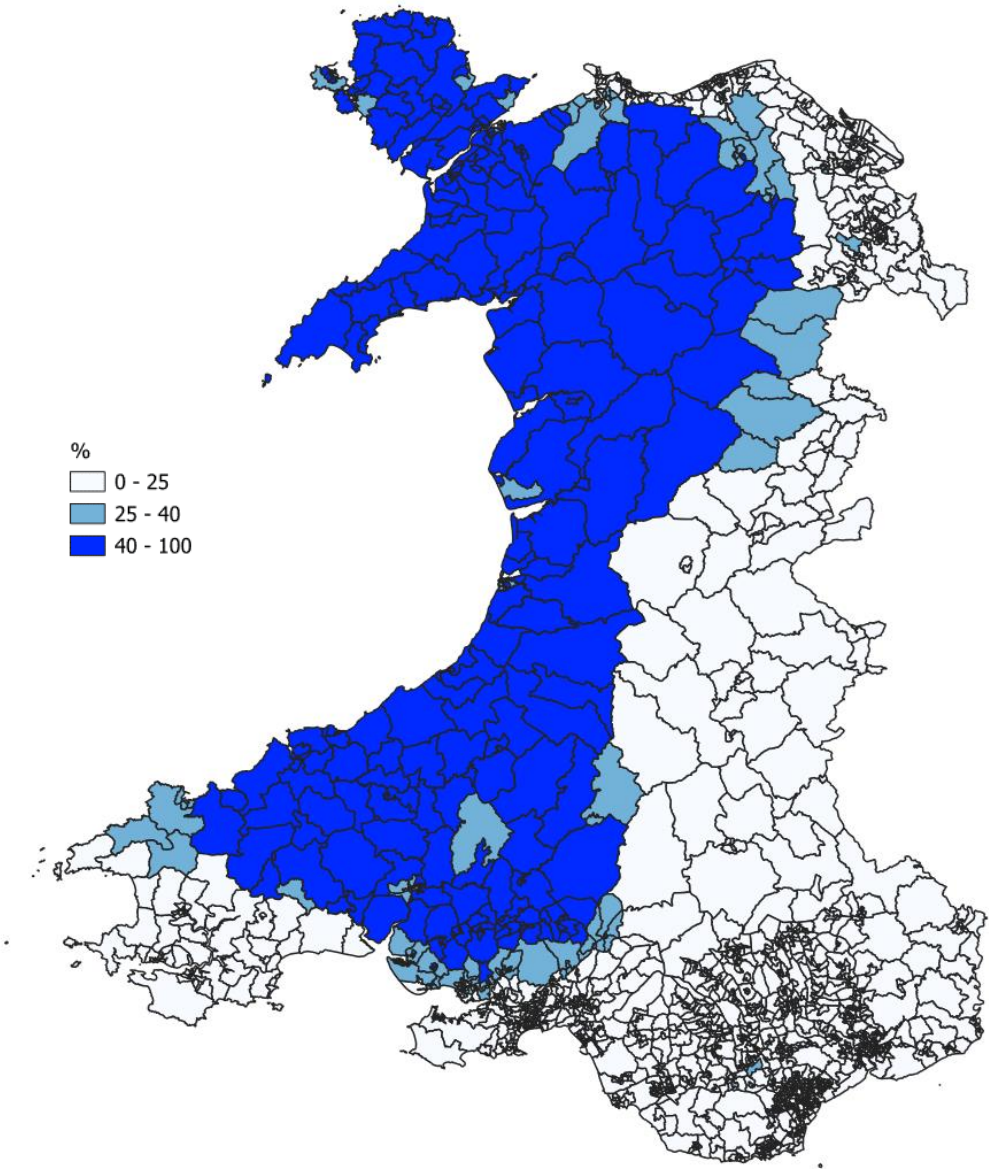
Table 3.23: Rhondda Cynon Taf

Name	%
Pont-y-clun 2	27%
Church Village 2	26%
Llantwit Fardre	25%

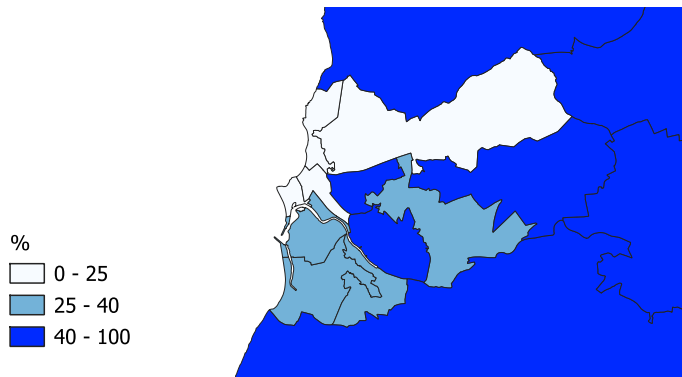
Note: LSOAs in the Compendium are named in Welsh. To cross-reference LSOAs in this section of the report with LSOAs listed in the Compendium. LSOAs in the Welsh and English versions of this report are listed in the same order.

3.16 Map of LSOAs where 40%+ and 25%+ are able to speak Welsh

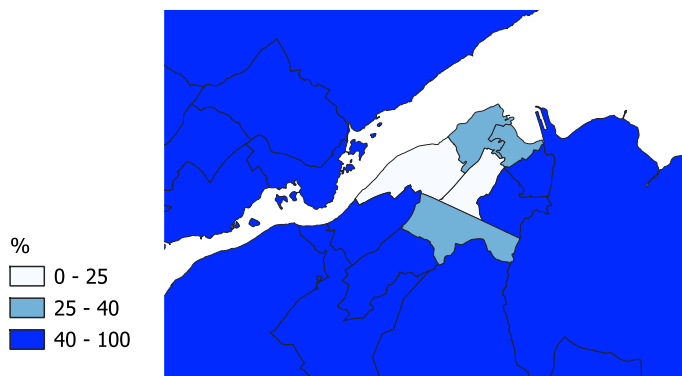
Percentage of Welsh speakers (Census 2021)—Wales



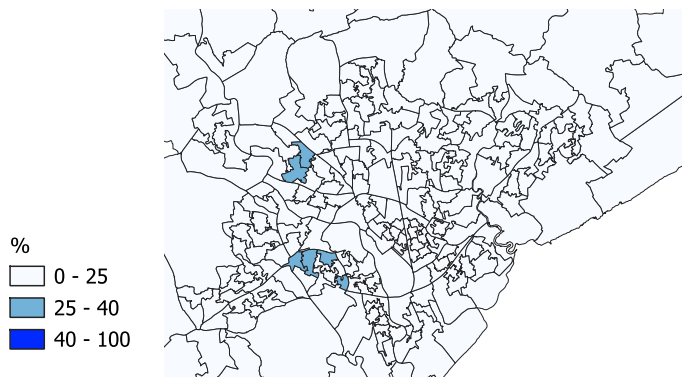
Percentage of Welsh speakers (Census 2021)—Aberystwyth



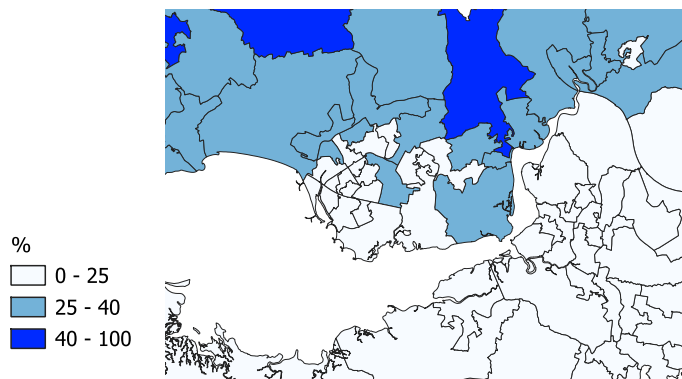
Percentage of Welsh speakers (Census 2021)—Bangor



Percentage of Welsh speakers (Census 2021)—Cardiff



Percentage of Welsh speakers (Census 2021)—Llanelli



3.17 Territorial cohesion of areas where over 40% are able to speak Welsh

The map of Wales in 3.16 shows that LSOAs where over 40% of the population can speak Welsh possess a marked territorial cohesion. Combined, these areas cover sufficient territory to offer a spatial basis for the credible realisation of public policy aims.

3.18 Some considerations regarding communities where between 25% and 40% are able to speak Welsh

Maps in 3.16 also show the location of LSOAs where between 25% and 40% can speak Welsh and raise some considerations in relation to the implementation of public policy there. Some of these are discussed below, including as to whether some of these LSOAs should be designated as areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Rural communities where between 25% and 40% are able to speak Welsh

This report has noted that the percentage of Welsh speakers working in agriculture is particularly high in comparison to other economic sectors. To date, detailed research at LSOA level has not been undertaken into the sociolinguistic fabric of rural communities in which the viability of the language is largely based on the agriculture industry and associated social networks. Such research would enable consideration of the extent to which the linguistic density of these areas can survive independently of this particular economic sector and associated land ownership patterns. This could be significant in determining the extent to which the designation by discretion of some rural areas where between 25% and 40% can speak Welsh would be beneficial. Such areas, which are concentrations of several LSOAs, are found in different locations on the periphery of the 40%+ region, most significantly perhaps in parts of north Pembrokeshire, Montgomeryshire and the Vale of Clwyd.

University towns

As regards university towns, there are two LSOAs in Bangor and three LSOAs in Aberystwyth where, according to Census 2021, the percentage of Welsh speakers in the population is below 25%. The data is presented below:

Table 3.24: Welsh speakers in university towns

Name of LSOA	Local authority	Population	Number of Welsh speakers	%
Menai (Bangor)	Gwynedd	3,033	681	22%
Deiniol	Gwynedd	1,964	385	20%
Aberystwyth Rheidol 1	Ceredigion	1,154	257	22%
Aberystwyth North / Faenor 2 (W01002000)	Ceredigion	2,895	629	22%
Aberystwyth North / Faenor 2 (W01002001)	Ceredigion	1,401	277	20%

The proportion of the population in the 16-24 year age group is particularly high within these LSOAs, and the percentage of Welsh speakers in the same age group is particularly low, reflecting the number of students in that age group. In the table below, the number and percentage of Welsh speakers in the same LSOAs are given excluding the 16-24 age group:

Table 3.25: Welsh speakers in university towns excluding the 16-24 age group

Name of LSOA	Local authority	Population excluding the 16-24 age group	Number of Welsh speakers	%
Menai (Bangor)	Gwynedd	796	271	34%
Deiniol	Gwynedd	718	216	30%
Aberystwyth Rheidol 1	Ceredigion	651	178	27%
Aberystwyth North / Faenor 2 (W01002000)	Ceredigion	977	375	38%
Aberystwyth North / Faenor 2 (W01002001)	Ceredigion	569	186	33%

After omitting the 16-24 age group, the percentage of Welsh speakers is closer to the percentages in neighbouring LSOAs in Bangor and Aberystwyth. Furthermore, the Commission does not anticipate that policies and interventions implemented in areas of higher density linguistic significance will have a particular impact on students who largely reside in these university towns temporarily while attending higher education. This strengthens the argument for designating by discretion these LSOAs in university towns as areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Cardiff

It is interesting that the percentage of Welsh speakers is relatively high in a handful of LSOAs located in Cardiff's suburbs. There are seven LSOAs in Cardiff where the percentage of Welsh speakers is over 25%:

Table 3.26: Welsh speakers in Cardiff

Name of LSOA	Population	Number of Welsh speakers	%
Canton 6	1,526	529	35%
Whitchurch and Tongwynlais 1	1,580	482	31%
Canton 7	1,520	427	28%
Canton 5	1,672	456	27%
Canton 8	1,242	337	27%
Creigiau/St Fagans 2	1,386	369	27%
Whitchurch and Tongwynlais 10	1,415	355	25%

In addition to a few dispersed LSOAs in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Flintshire, these areas are exceptional among areas with a percentage of between 25% and 40% of Welsh speakers in that they are neither part of a wider cohesive area of Welsh demolinguistic density, nor adjoin wider areas as such, nor do they represent a residual, historical demolinguistic presence.

In the main, these are neighbourhoods that have become popular with Welsh speakers who have moved to Cardiff from other parts of Wales. Because the social characteristics of these communities are so different to those of communities in other parts of Wales where over 40% can speak Welsh, we do not envisage that they should be designated by discretion as areas of higher density linguistic significance. We are not convinced that policies in economic development, housing, town and country planning, and community development intended in general for rural, semi-rural, smaller urban, and post-industrial communities would be suitable in Cardiff, where the growth and sustainability of the Welsh language are dependent on vastly different factors.

However, this strengthening of the Welsh language at a community level in parts of Cardiff is a significant development that the Commission believes should be supported by public policy. In this regard, it would be beneficial to better understand sociolinguistic processes at play within the city. Further research into the relationship between the linguistic density of these communities over time, internal migration patterns in Wales, and the relationship of Welsh speakers to major sectors of economic activity, should therefore be undertaken to provide data to support policy interventions to revitalise language in a city context. It will be essential to understand the extent to which intergenerational language transmission is taking place within households in suburbs with a relatively high density of Welsh speakers, as well as the nature of the social use of Welsh among young Welsh speakers born in Cardiff.

Conclusion

These various considerations suggest that there are sound sociolinguistic reasons for using discretion in the case of communities with borderline linguistic profiles when forming a view about whether they should be designated as areas of higher density linguistic significance.

3.19 Legislative mechanisms for designating areas of higher density linguistic significance

The Commission gave careful consideration to the regulatory or statutory mechanisms that could be used to establish areas of higher density linguistic significance. The Commission considers that any mechanism should establish robust entities in a transparent process.

There are many policy areas that are relevant to areas of higher density linguistic significance. They include matters of particular interest to citizens, such as education, economic policy, housing policy, town and country planning and so forth.

Establishing areas of higher density linguistic significance would be a hugely positive development for public policy, but it would also be a significant and substantial development. For this reason, areas of higher density linguistic significance would need to be established on the firmest foundation possible.

Consequently, the Commission concluded that a non-statutory designation would not be appropriate.

The Commission was unanimous in its view that a statutory designation would be necessary to establish areas of higher density linguistic significance and that primary legislation would be the most robust and expedient way of doing this.

The Commission considered three possible ways to establish areas of higher density linguistic significance:

1. Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

The Commission considered whether it would be possible to establish a set of standards that could enforce or allow local authorities to designate areas of higher density linguistic significance under regulations relating to the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

In this way, a duty could be imposed on local authorities to designate areas of higher density linguistic significance through the Welsh language standards. Targets and objectives could also be placed on bodies subject to standards and which are relevant to public policy in the areas concerned.

As set out in the 'Community-based language planning' section of this report, the Commission considers that Welsh language standards may be an appropriate vehicle for improving some elements of language planning policy in areas of higher density linguistic significance in certain circumstances.

However, the Commission concluded that the standards would not be the best framework for establishing areas of higher density linguistic significance in the first instance, although standards could be developed for them, or applied to them, in due course. The principle of areas of higher density linguistic significance will impact in a far-reaching way on many policy areas, and it is questionable whether it would be appropriate to provide the legal framework for such areas through mainly secondary legislation.

2. The Well-being of Future Generations Act

The Commission considered whether it would be possible to amend the Well-being of Future Generations Act to designate areas of higher density linguistic significance, and facilitate the implementation and variation of relevant public policies there. The Commission does not consider this to be a realistic suggestion because of the nature of this Act. It is not the purpose of the Act to endorse specific policies under the umbrella of the general well-being objectives promoted by it; further legislation or policy beyond the Act is required to do that.

3. New primary legislation

The Commission also considered whether new primary legislation should be introduced to establish a framework for designating areas of higher density linguistic significance, the aim of which would be to facilitate the development and variation of public policy.

The Commission believes that this would be the best way to establish areas of higher density linguistic significance as entities which would be robust in meeting public policy goals. Establishing the legal framework through primary legislation would provide appropriate legal credence to designated areas and would be commensurate with their significance for policy development.

In the Commission's opinion, designating areas of higher density linguistic significance is key to ensuring the future of Welsh as a community language. Introducing new primary legislation would not be disproportionate in terms of the time investment that would be required.

Recommendation 7: The Welsh Government should introduce new primary legislation to establish the framework for designating areas of higher density linguistic significance. The percentage commensurate with X% (i.e. the threshold mentioned in recommendation 5), and the definition of an 'area', could be specified in regulations.

3.20 One or two tiers of areas of higher density linguistic significance

Some responses to the Commission's call for evidence supported the establishment of two tiers of areas of linguistic significance in communities with a high density of Welsh speakers. One tier was envisaged for communities where Welsh is very strong as a community language, and another where Welsh is part of the everyday social fabric of the local community, but not as strong.

After careful consideration, the Commission concluded that only one tier of higher density linguistic significance should be created.

The Commission's reasons for reaching this decision are as follows.

The purpose of establishing areas of higher density linguistic significance is to allow for the development of better public policy, by providing a meaningful, reasonable and practical framework for varying policies in terms of their impact on Welsh as a community language.

There is no benefit, in the Commission's view, in creating two tiers of areas of higher density linguistic significance (for example, a tier for 40-70% areas and a tier for 70%+

areas). The upper tier would be limited to some communities in the north-west, and even here, there would be little territorial cohesion to the 70%+ tier. The south-west would be entirely excluded. The Commission does not consider this to be either desirable or practical, nor does it think that such an approach would be widely supported.

As previously noted, the Commission considers 40% to be a credible statutory threshold were a single tier to be established. This would create an area that would meet the need to provide a reasonable and practical framework for varying policies in a way that would benefit Welsh as a community language.

The communities in question form a cohesive territory that is extensive enough to be meaningful in terms of public policy implementation. The territory is also extensive enough to include many of those social networks that connect villages (and the surrounding areas) to nearby towns through everyday patterns of mobility (as people travel to work, attend secondary school or college, or use services, for example).

The communities are similar enough sociolinguistically to permit the development of framework policies. These areas also have a long history as Welsh-speaking communities, which is important in terms of gaining public trust that policies implemented are reasonable and justified.

These communities are also socioeconomically similar, and often face similar challenges and opportunities. Areas where over 40% can speak Welsh are characterised mostly by rural and semi-rural localities, and include within them small and large villages, as well as small towns. These areas also contain a number of post-industrial communities. On the periphery of the area, there are a number of larger towns (again relatively small in a British context) which are important regional centres.

The similarity of these communities means that it is possible to think purposefully about potential policy variation in socioeconomic and sociolinguistic fields (housing, economy, community development, etc) that might be relevant to them. In short, public policy interventions could be implemented in a practical manner.

Consequently, the Commission is confident that areas of linguistic significance designated in this way would create practical and actionable governance of benefit to the public.

3.21 The challenges of establishing a tier for communities where between approximately 25% and 40% are able to speak Welsh

The advantages that support the creation of a tier for communities where over 40% can speak Welsh are not as evident for communities where, according to Census 2021, between 25% and 40% can speak Welsh.

As the maps in 3.16 show, they do not form a cohesive territory.

Such communities could be classified into half a dozen or more different categories, some of which have already been discussed:

- parts of east Carmarthenshire and west Glamorgan, mainly in the former coalfield, along with parts of Llanelli.

- some post-industrial areas in other parts of Wales such as part of the community of Rhosllanerchrugog near Wrexham.
- parts of university towns such as Bangor, Aberystwyth and Carmarthen.
- rural and semi-rural areas, mainly on the peripheries of the area where over 40% can speak Welsh, for example in Montgomeryshire extending to Oswestry and the English border, parts of north Pembrokeshire, dispersed communities in Carmarthenshire, parts of the Vale of Clwyd, the Ceiriog Valley near Wrexham, and so on.
- some areas along or near the coast.
- LSOAs in the south-east, for example south of Pontypridd in Rhondda Cynon Taf and in suburbs of west Cardiff.
- parts of the town of Mold, an important administrative centre in the twentieth century.

The Commission is not convinced that creating a statutory duty to designate these as a 'second tier' of areas of higher density linguistic significance would work in practice, nor was it convinced that it would lead to better public policy.

It would be particularly challenging to devise a common policy framework for these communities because of the differences between them and their dispersed geographical locations. It would be very difficult for local authorities to administer policy, and due to the fragmented and extremely diverse nature of the communities involved, it would be difficult for the Welsh Government to create policies for the tier as a whole without the risk of causing unintended harm to some communities.

3.22 Supporting communities where between approximately 25% and 40% are able to speak Welsh

The Commission is of the view that communities where approximately 25% to 40% can speak Welsh are strategically important to the Welsh language.

Using the discretion available to local authorities, a number of these communities could be designated as areas of higher density linguistic significance. In the Commission's view, that would be beneficial from a public policy perspective.

But this would not be desirable, nor practical, in many cases, particularly in the case of communities that are not coterminous with other areas of higher density linguistic significance, or have very different socioeconomic characteristics to those that usually characterise areas of higher density linguistic significance.

The Commission discussed how the linguistic needs of these communities might best be met.

The Commission believes strongly that these communities are of strategic importance to the Welsh language. There was agreement that such communities form part of a linguistic continuum in Wales, that most of them have been Welsh-speaking communities within the lifetime of many of their inhabitants, and that they can be a cultural bridge between different parts of Wales. The Commission also noted that they are often quite densely populated areas, and that a medium density of Welsh speakers in an urban context equates to a high number of Welsh speakers.

The Commission felt that many of these areas form a ‘third category’ of linguistic significance in Wales, sitting between areas of higher density linguistic significance and areas of Wales where the percentage of Welsh speakers is near the national average or lower. However, as previously noted, the Commission was not convinced that creating a ‘tier’ for these communities would be the best way to address their needs.

It was the Commission’s view that language policy in these areas should be explored in detail during the second stage of the Commission’s work.

3.23 Administrative arrangements

The Commission received several suggestions in response to its call for evidence regarding administrative arrangements to co-ordinate the strengthening of Welsh-speaking communities. Among proposals were calls to establish a unit within the Welsh Government, establish an arm’s length body, or establish a regional language planning agency. The Commission promised to consider these arrangements.

In doing so, the Commission had to acknowledge that there has been a deterioration in the Welsh Government’s fiscal position since the call for evidence during the winter of 2022-23.

The Commission agreed that there could be valid arguments for establishing an arm’s length body or language planning agency to develop policy for areas of higher density linguistic significance.

However, such a body would be costly to establish and it is possible that it would duplicate certain functions (which we discuss in the ‘Economy’ section) that the Commission assumes could be adopted by the ARFOR scheme or a successor.

At least for the time being therefore, the Commission’s view is that it would be best to establish a unit within the Welsh Government to develop and co-ordinate relevant public policy in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

As this would be an internal Welsh Government unit, it would be advantageous for it to be able to access appropriate external expertise. To facilitate this, the Commission believes that a council or panel of experts with skills and experience in various relevant areas (such as the economy, housing, community development etc) should be established. It could advise the Welsh Government as required.

Recommendation 8: A unit should be established within the Welsh Government to develop and co-ordinate public policy relevant to areas of higher density linguistic significance. A council or panel of experts that possess skills and experience in various relevant policy fields (such as the economy, housing, community development etc) should be established to advise the unit.

4 Economy

4.1 Aims

The economy is key to the future of the Welsh language. The ability of a minority language group to successfully reproduce itself is dependent to a certain extent on its location within the economic order (see European Commission, 1996: 7). From a language planning perspective, interventions and strategies that address the economic order are therefore justified.

In Wales, the economy is influenced by a range of complex and varied economic processes, many relating to British and international trends and events at the macro level that cannot be influenced by recommendations made by the Commission. However a range of organisations engage in economic development within Wales. In addition to the Welsh Government and the United Kingdom Government, organisations operate at more regional or local levels such as the growth partnerships and city regions, Regional Skills Partnerships, Corporate Joint Committees as well as local authorities.

In this section of the report, the Commission aims to address the economic challenges specific to Welsh-speaking communities that can be influenced by the Welsh Government. We believe that these have not always been adequately addressed by some existing economic development bodies. In developing ideas in this field, we wish to do so in a way that adds value to existing activity.

The section will therefore aim to:

- consider approaches to economic development within areas of higher density linguistic significance.
- discuss specific economic policies and activities that benefit areas of higher density linguistic significance.
- make recommendations in relation to the economy, and suitable models for their implementation.

The section is divided into three parts:

- Firstly, we discuss the nature of the economy and current approaches to economic policy in the context of Welsh-speaking communities.
- Secondly, the Commission's views and recommendations in specific policy areas are outlined.
- The final part will address how recommendations should be implemented, discussing suitable models to enable this.

4.2 The economy of Welsh-speaking communities

There are areas of higher density linguistic significance throughout Wales, but a large percentage are found in western, rural and semi-rural areas. These areas have diverse, vibrant and innovative economies that have sustained their communities for centuries. They have played a leading role in the heavy and mining industries (indeed, they have been of global significance), as well as in areas such as agriculture, sea trade and commerce.

Agriculture remains an important sector, but today, tourism and the public sector are also central to economic performance and capacity to employ and sustain populations. There has also been significant growth recently in the number of social enterprises active in these areas. Many of these enterprises are inspired by a deep commitment to the Welsh language, which functions as a social good in these areas. They are also a testament to the vibrancy and energy of these communities. There are other strengths too: a rural, skilled workforce, as well as a wealth of natural resources, offer opportunities to invest in the green economy and sustainable energy, sectors that are likely to become more important in the future.

Nevertheless, the west of Wales, like many areas in Wales, faces significant and structural economic challenges. Transport infrastructure is poor, the labour market does not always meet the needs of industry, and productivity levels are lower than in most of the rest of Britain (see Henley, 2021). Although unemployment levels are relatively low, these figures often obscure the true nature of employment in the area; the underemployment and low wages.

4.3 An ageing population, out-migration and depopulation among working age adults

Demographic patterns are a key challenge in the areas in question. The population of Wales as a whole is ageing and, by 2040, there will be around two people of working age to each person over 65 in comparison to four, as was the figure in 1991 (Office for National Statistics, 2018). According to Census 2021 data, age disparity is more acute in western counties such as Anglesey, Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, where around 25% of the population are already over 65. This means higher care and health costs, and it can be assumed that these will also increase in the future. Projections suggesting a fall in the number of working age people raise the possibility that conventional economic growth may be harder to sustain.

Out-migration is another challenge facing western parts of Wales and areas of higher density linguistic significance. Migration has been a central element of Welsh history, often on a scale that has transformed our communities. Had it not been for in-migration over the past decade, Census 2021 data suggests that the population of rural areas of Wales could have fallen by somewhere in the region of 20,000 through out-migration and natural processes. But, despite this, the percentage of the population of working age is falling. Patterns of out-migration are part of this complex demographic challenge. It is concerning that significant numbers of young people are leaving regions of higher density linguistic significance.

Out-migration poses a structural challenge, both economically and linguistically, for Welsh-speaking communities. Out-migration among young people weakens the resilience and viability of the language. Usually, it is young people who bring up children, playing the key role in passing the language on from one generation to the next. Furthermore, out-migration among young people, particularly young people with high skill levels, is an economic disadvantage. It places increased pressure on a shrinking workforce; communities lose people who could be using Welsh in the workplace; and it also reduces the opportunities businesses have to develop the workforces of the future. There is clear linguistic and economic benefit in trying to ensure that levels of out-migration among

young people are reduced. But with the exception of occasional and small-scale programmes, there has never been a coherent strategy or plan to try to offer support to people to stay in Welsh-speaking communities, encourage them to return, or incentivise other Welsh speakers to settle there.

4.4 Resources and research

Furthermore, in a period of extended austerity in public spending, exiting the European Union and the Rural Development Programme, resources for developing the economy are scarce. With slower population growth than the rest of the United Kingdom, Wales will receive less money through the Barnett formula in the future. Cuts to local government budgets over the past decade have also crippled the capacity of local authorities to plan and operate in the economic sphere.

Finally, there is scant data and research on the relationship between the economy and the Welsh language (Welsh Government, 2020a; Bonner et al., 2024a). Research is available on the impact of linguistic factors upon economic variables such as labour market outcomes, attitudes towards enterprise, business expenditure and turnover. But there is less empirical evidence about the impact of policies, activities and economic trends on the Welsh language. While the understanding of this relationship has developed somewhat in recent years, there is a clear need for more data and research to understand exactly how economic processes affect the Welsh language.

4.5 The nature of economic development

The British economy has developed unevenly, and significant and structural differences exist between the various British nations and their regions. Mainstream economic policy prioritises the self-correcting forces of the market as the means to develop economic efficiency. Such economic policies pay less attention to factors of ‘place’, such as history, geography and culture. As a result, London and the south-east of England has benefited from the flexibility and mobility of its workforce, as well as its location and history as an international economic and *haute finance* hub. Other parts of Britain, such as western areas of Wales, are left on the periphery of the economy. It has been more difficult for such areas to compete and attract investment, particularly in a post-industrial age. The adoption of alternative approaches to economic policy could be justified to support and develop the economies of these areas.

One stereotype about western areas of Wales is that they are ‘left behind’ or ‘uncompetitive.’ Such views are based on economic performance measurements such as Gross Value Added per capita, which is lower in these areas compared to the British average. Although a meaningful and important measure, Gross Value Added is not an effective measure of meaningful economic development at the community level. Using this measurement alone encourages unnecessary comparisons with other areas, rather than focusing on the economies of the communities involved and the people who live and work there. Focusing solely on Gross Value Added also leads policy makers to seek to adopt conventional economic policies that—while potentially successful in other areas—can be less effective in relation to the priorities of the type of economies found within areas of higher density linguistic significance. The prominence given to such approaches also tends

to swallow a large proportion of the very limited resources available to help develop the economy.

4.6 Foundational needs of the population

Conventional economic policies have not closed the Gross Value Added gap between Welsh-speaking communities and the rest of Britain, nor have they prevented their decline in terms of community and linguistic viability. Successful economic policy aligns with the nature of particular places, taking into account what is important to the people who choose to live there. If individuals belong to a particular area, then the role of inclusive and equitable public policy should be to enable them to continue to live there on the assumption that, as long as essential basic services are available to them, they have the imagination and ability to continually reinvent the place. If we want people to stay, return to, or settle in areas of higher density linguistic significance, while still being able to acquire and use the Welsh language, we need to ask what economic processes and policies will support and allow them to do so.

This means moving away from thinking of economic disadvantage as a matter of income and output only. The focus should be broadened because access to essential services and social infrastructure is as important as income if communities are to be maintained. Consequently, the Commission's view is that economic development in areas of higher density linguistic significance should ensure, along with other things, the foundational needs of the population. Household well-being should be emphasised and the social value of economic activity fully considered.

The obvious priorities of such an approach would be:

- service infrastructure such as housing, utilities, public transport, health, care and education.
- local social infrastructure, such as hubs and community assets, libraries and public spaces.
- activity that increases the residual income (income after housing, transport and utilities costs) or GDHI (Gross Disposable Household Income) of the local population.

These are the parts of the economy that create and distribute the goods and services that are relied upon for everyday life. Efforts to develop the economy should also be supportive of processes, efforts and opportunities to acquire and use the Welsh language. The viability of communities and the Welsh language should be prioritised, helping and encouraging people to live and work in these areas.

Civil society, and local and community initiatives, play an important role in demanding and driving development that suits the specific needs of communities. This should be in partnership with the Welsh Government, local authorities, housing associations, health boards and educational institutions. There should be opportunities for communities to have more control of their economies, and to develop them in a way that aligns with their objectives and needs.

4.7 A strategy for developing the economy of western areas of Wales

Wales does not have a body or comprehensive strategy for rural development that addresses economic and social policies as well as agriculture and the environment. ARFOR programmes have been operating since 2019, offering support and piloting economic interventions in Carmarthenshire, Gwynedd, Ceredigion and Anglesey, simultaneously considering their impact on the Welsh language as well as on the economy. But, compared to the range of other bodies responsible for aspects of economic development in areas of higher density linguistic significance (namely governments, city regions, regional partnerships and local authorities), the budget and scope of ARFOR is very small. Other bodies usually have national or regional strategic objectives, and work mainly along an east-west axis. It could be argued that they do not always prioritise the challenges and opportunities common to the economies of western areas of higher density linguistic significance (which are at the periphery of the east-west axis). This makes it more difficult to maintain a comprehensive and long-term economic development programme for these areas.

The needs, challenges, strengths and opportunities common to these areas can differ to other regional and national strategic goals in Wales. For this reason, the Commission concluded that there was a strong argument for coordinating efforts to develop the economy in areas of higher density linguistic significance. The best way to do this would be by developing a clear strategy that co-ordinates and directs resources more effectively towards the specific objectives of the communities involved. The strategy should reflect alternative or additional approaches to the economy, and have ways to realise recommendations.

Here rural development strategy and economic strategy for western areas of higher density linguistic significance overlap. For example, the Welsh Local Government Association's *Rural Wales Manifesto* calls for a particular focus on rural issues as well as a clear plan to succeed the Rural Development Programme (WLGA, 2021). The Commission would agree with this view. However, after careful consideration, the Commission felt that making recommendations for rural Wales as a whole did not fall within its terms of reference. Despite this, it is important to note that a rural development strategy can include aspects that would deal specifically with Welsh-speaking communities.

Such a strategy should ensure an element of local ownership and leadership from the communities involved. In this regard, consideration should be given to the development and adoption of a similar model to the European Union LEADER programme and Local Action Groups (LAGs). LAGs are a community-led means of achieving strategic priorities (see Welsh Government, 2023c:107).

Recommendation 9: The Welsh Government should ensure that an economic development strategy, specifically tailored to the economic needs of areas of higher density linguistic significance, is formulated and implemented. The strategy should add value to existing economic policy by promoting additional approaches to economic development, including prioritising policies and activity that will provide for the foundational needs of the population and household well-being (including

improving service infrastructure, social infrastructure, residual income, and effective language planning).

Economic development beneficial to the Welsh language

The Commission decided therefore to make recommendations that would prioritise household wellbeing and the viability of the Welsh language within areas of higher density linguistic significance.

4.8 Supporting social enterprises and businesses and local ownership

Available evidence suggests that the nature of ownership and leadership of companies and organisations is important to the place of the Welsh language within those companies and organisations, as it is for their contribution to the language in the community. Local companies are generally more likely to operate through the medium of Welsh formally or informally. Any profits are also more likely to circulate locally, rather than being extracted from communities.

The years before the COVID-19 pandemic saw growth in the number and importance of social enterprises within the Welsh economy. Research by Social Business Wales (2021) revealed that the social business sector makes an important social and economic contribution in Wales. In 2022, between 56,713 and 65,299 workers were employed by 2,828 social businesses of some description in Wales, two thirds of whom earned at least a living wage (Social Business Wales, 2023: 29-38). Community-led pubs and village shops continue to provide crucial services, as well as Welsh-speaking spaces. In terms of the impact and longevity of these types of businesses, although COVID-19 has had a negative impact, the social business sector has 'shown a surprising amount of resilience where the COVID-19 effect appears to have manifested in stalling growth, rather than decline' (Social Business Wales 2021: 75).

The linguistic contribution of social enterprises is important. Around 75% of social businesses in Wales operate or offer services to some extent through the medium of Welsh (Social Business Wales, 2023: 40). Many in areas of higher density linguistic significance operate in line with an ethos and commitment to using Welsh in their work. These bodies espouse and incentivise the use of Welsh when offering services within communities and tend to attract staff who want to use and work through the medium of Welsh.

Moreover, in examining the experience of Cwmni Cymunedol Bro Ffestiniog for example, it is clear that community initiatives have further potential when they come together to collaborate and federate for the benefit of an entire area. But such instances are uncommon, and local or community ownership of the economy needs to be developed on a larger scale to have a significant impact. Currently, large scale developments are an exception, and for many, capital investment is a key barrier.

Although social enterprises are often well managed, they struggle in many circumstances to generate a surplus of capital to invest in new ventures (there are exceptions such as Menter Môn which, in increasing its portfolio of major economic and energy projects, is an example of growing revenue and accessing significant sources of finance). But, if social

enterprises and businesses are good for the Welsh language, then they should be supported for the social benefit derived from them. The Perthyn project, established in 2022 by the Welsh Government and administered by Cwmpas with their partners Dolan and PLANED, offers an example of one way of doing this (see Cwmpas, 2023).

In addition to promoting social and community initiatives, the Welsh Government should seek to maintain local ownership of the economy. There have been instances where local businesses have grown but their ownership has subsequently been transferred from the hands of local people to external entities. This can turn a business from one that circulates money locally into one that extracts profits from the area. Local communities and workforces need further support to retain at least an element of local ownership of such businesses.

Recommendation 10: The Welsh Government should offer additional support to community initiatives and businesses in order to strengthen Welsh as a community language in areas of higher density linguistic significance, including:

- **support to develop the skills necessary for growing, sustaining and managing larger scale enterprises.**
- **facilitating access to assets and funding sources.**
- **support to develop networks and processes for developing partnerships.**
- **further support for communities and workforces to buy or own a portion of businesses in the community that are up for sale.**

4.9 Agriculture, land use and rural policy

The agricultural industry and its culture are central to the social fabric of Welsh-speaking rural areas, and the future of the industry matters to the future of Welsh as a community language. 10,860 of the population aged 16 or over who worked in the 'Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing' industries were able to speak Welsh according to Census 2021 data. This amounted to 43.1% of the sector's total workers, the highest proportion of Welsh speakers in all sectors of economic activity. The percentage of the Welsh-speaking agriculture workforce is even higher in areas of the north and west.

Furthermore, the percentage of those in the agricultural industry who can speak Welsh is usually higher than the percentage in the community and is sometimes significantly higher. The percentage of the local Welsh-speaking workforce which is employed by the industry can also be high in some communities. According to Census 2021, there were 51 LSOAs in Wales where at least 20% of the workforce aged 16 or over who were Welsh speakers worked in the 'Agriculture, Energy and Water' sector. These were in Powys, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Conwy, Gwynedd, Denbighshire and Wrexham. These are often communities where Welsh is part of the social fabric but is not dominant, including in communities on the peripheries of the main Welsh-speaking area. Geographically, therefore, the agricultural industry is one factor that makes Welsh viable as a community language over wider swathes of Welsh territory than would otherwise be the case.

The linguistic contribution of agriculture is also socially important. Activities and social organisations associated with the sector (Young Farmers Clubs, agricultural shows, some

sports clubs, for example) provide spaces and opportunities to socialise in Welsh. In summary, agriculture acts as the backbone of the Welsh language in a significant number of rural communities. From a linguistic point of view, maintaining this is crucial.

In terms of the future of Welsh-speaking communities, it is important that sectors of the economy that employ a high percentage of Welsh speakers be supported, and the size of those sectors is also important—that is, the absolute numbers associated with them (not necessarily through direct employment).

Ensuring the prosperity of an agricultural sector that employs people and can withstand depopulation pressures is vital to the future of Welsh as a community language in rural Wales: a view with which the Welsh Government agrees (Welsh Government, 2022a).

The Commission therefore unequivocally supports the family farm that produces food alongside upholding environmental duties. Food production sustains other economic activities in rural areas that also often employ a significant number of Welsh speakers.

There is no official definition of a ‘family farm’, but the Commission’s understanding of the phrase is that it denotes the type of farm that is owned and operated by a family, especially one that has been handed down from one generation to the next. A concentration of family farms in a particular area can serve to preserve and sustain a population in these communities. This is important not only in terms of the percentage of Welsh speakers in any community, but also in terms of the critical mass of the population. The preservation of family farms is therefore compatible with the Commission’s central principle: the importance of community sustainability.

During its deliberations, the Commission considered whether it would be appropriate to vary agricultural policy in areas of higher density linguistic significance. The Commission concluded that, if desired, the Welsh language could be given a distinctive designation in certain areas within the context of agricultural and rural policy.

The Sustainable Land Management objectives of the Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023 include the following:

The fourth objective is to preserve and enhance the countryside and cultural resources and promote public access to and engagement with them, and to maintain the Welsh language and promote and facilitate its use...

Policy variation in areas of higher density linguistic significance could be one means of achieving this.

However, the Commission is aware that the family farm is also important to the social fabric of Welsh in areas of Wales with a lower density of Welsh speakers. There are communities that might not be designated as areas of higher density linguistic significance but where Welsh is spoken by a significant percentage of the agricultural workforce locally. For this reason, the Commission concluded that agricultural policy in relation to the Welsh language should be implemented on an all-Wales basis.

At the same time, the Commission is of the view that this issue could be revisited in the future as public policy develops.

Recommendation 11: The Welsh Government should ensure that the Welsh language is a central consideration in agricultural policy. There should be support for the family farm, and the principle of the importance of the family farm should be reflected in other policies such as environmental policy.

4.10 The visitor economy

The visitor economy can be beneficial to local economies. The sector creates employment and opportunities for residents to work and live in their communities. In the context of the economy of the west of Wales, this is a significant and important contribution.

At the same time, there is evidence that in some circumstances, economic processes associated with the sector can be detrimental to communities and the Welsh language.

Employment in the sector tends to be seasonal in nature, there is little employment security, and wages are low. Major tourism centres, as well as a portion of the accommodation industry, are often owned by companies based outside the area and promote economic processes where profits are extracted from communities. The rapid growth of short-term holiday lets has also in some circumstances helped transfer profits made within the sector into the hands of property owners who do not always contribute to these communities.

Nevertheless, the Commission is not opposed to a visitor economy *per se*. It is rather a matter of considering how the industry is structured and how to ensure an appropriate contribution is made to the sustainability of local communities.

Policies that promote the visitor economy in areas of higher density linguistic significance should be driven primarily by the social value of the economic activity concerned. Support for the sector should prioritise locally owned businesses and aim to grow them sustainably, rather than trying to attract external companies. Processes that support ownership and leadership by the local community, and recognition of the status of the language, should be established and strengthened.

To draw on just one example, the Commission considered the question of how to turn holiday homes into a community asset through a model of local ownership. Not-for-profit companies could purchase suitable properties and renovate them. A portion of these properties could then be let as holiday homes to generate profit, and a portion offered as social homes for rent or sale through a shared ownership scheme. A portion of the proceeds could also be used for other socially beneficial purposes. The Commission commends proposals that create models for a visitor economy that promote the well-being of local communities.

There have been developments in this regard from a public policy perspective, such as Gwynedd and Eryri's plan, *Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035*, which sets a framework for a sustainable future for the sector in the area (Eryri National Park Authority and Cyngor Gwynedd, 2023). The plan establishes a set of principles that aim to put communities at the heart of the visitor economy. These principles have been developed to inform future priorities including to celebrate, respect and protect communities and their language; respect the environment; and ensure that activity in the sector offers more benefits than disbenefits for Gwynedd and Eryri. The plan also

introduces possible criteria for assessing the benefits offered by the sector to communities and the local area.

Recommendation 12: The Welsh Government should develop a plan that prioritises community benefit and sustainable activity within the visitor economy sector as well as the viability of the Welsh language. In addition, the principles of *Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035* should be considered by other local authorities and national parks.

4.11 The public sector

Although centres of public employment, such as local authority offices, hospitals and schools, are often concentrated in urban areas, the workforce lives over a more dispersed area, and the public sector has grown into a significant employer in areas of higher density linguistic significance. StatsWales data shows that in 2023 over 67,000 people, representing between 30%-37% of the workforce, were employed by the public sector in Anglesey, Gwynedd, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. Overall, the sector offers competitive salaries and pensions and career pathways that can keep staff within communities for long periods of time. Furthermore, local government and the Welsh Government have the ability to influence and promote language acquisition, local training and recruitment, as well as the use of Welsh within the sector, through the Welsh language standards and schemes such as *More than just words* (Welsh Government, 2022b).

Large employers such as the National Health Service for Wales (NHS Wales) play an important role in creating local economic value through employment. NHS Wales employs around 100,000 people across Wales. Nursing and medical jobs make up less than half the workforce, and other types of jobs are very diverse, offering opportunities for people to develop a wide range of careers. Health boards spend a significant proportion of NHS Wales' expenditure, including c. £4.6bn a year on staff costs, and they represent one of the most important employers in Wales (Foundational Economy Research, 2022: 13-20). This investment through wages is significant. It creates residual income that is circulated within communities and local economies.

If more individuals from Welsh-speaking communities could be trained and employed in the health sector, it would be possible to make more investment through wages in these communities. Hywel Dda and Aneurin Bevan health boards have already initiated programmes to train and employ local people (see Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, 2021; Hywel Dda University Health Board, 2023). While the training focuses on healthcare support, the aim is to develop the programmes, opening pathways to other professional skills and jobs. Both health boards also offer training for support workers to become qualified nurses.

Another important employer in areas of higher density linguistic significance is the university sector. One positive feature of the western region of Wales is the presence of several universities. Consideration should be given to whether they could make a greater contribution to the Welsh language through their employment policies. Also, although not part of the public sector, housing associations' spending and potential to collaborate and

invest in communities offer further ways of directing and circulating substantial expenditure within areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Recommendation 13: Health boards and universities should adopt and increase the number of schemes that promote local employment. Individuals should be offered flexible access to training courses and career pathways throughout their careers. Good practice should be shared to support similar developments in other parts of the public sector.

4.12 The labour market

Employment is a key factor that influences the decisions young people make to stay in Welsh-speaking communities, return there following university or later in life, or move to live in these areas for the first time. But there are weaknesses within the labour markets of Welsh-speaking communities on both the supply and demand side. While out-migrants express concern about job shortages in rural areas (see Woods and Utz, 2022), employers note labour market weakness, and face recruitment challenges.

At a national and regional level, better data needs to be collected and analysed, and better guidance and support made available to policy planners, to understand how the Welsh language benefits individuals and employers, and to ensure more effective language planning. This view was expressed in a report by the National Assembly for Wales' Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee which outlined actions for improving the situation (National Assembly for Wales, 2019: 44, 50).

The workforce already living in areas of higher density linguistic significance needs to be developed. Local processes should be devised to identify and develop the specific skills needed by major employers within these communities, or to support specific growth areas. The potential of attracting people back, as well as motivating other Welsh speakers to move there if they wish, should be considered. There is a need for a broker who could connect returning, or newly settled, individuals with employers within the communities concerned, as well as supporting wider work on mobility to attract Welsh speakers to areas of higher density linguistic significance.

4.13 Economic developments of significant size

Solid economic foundations are key to the prosperity of the Welsh language. Economic developments are often seen to have a significant impact on local economies by creating employment, and also by creating and supporting wider supply chains. In general, the economic prosperity of the western region of Wales is supported by the contribution of small and medium-sized enterprises.

In May 2024, the United Kingdom Government announced that the Wylfa site in Anglesey was the preferred location for the development of a nuclear power station of significant size. Should the decision to go ahead with the development be realised, or should there be other economic developments of significant size in areas of higher density linguistic significance, careful planning will be required. There will be a need to help build the future workforce by developing skills locally, consider housing needs carefully, and develop strong local supply chains. Any impact on the Welsh language should be evaluated and a

robust impact assessment framework developed. Associated infrastructure developments should also be carefully planned and follow the principles set out above.

4.14 Grants and public expenditure

The influence of public investment can be significant and such investment is often a way of facilitating or enabling developments within communities that would not otherwise be possible. ARFOR has developed an understanding of the potential publicly funded grants have in influencing language use, as well as the type of economic developments that may possibly be stimulated through grants (Wavehill Ltd, 2021). Furthermore, ARFOR programmes have demonstrated how grants of relatively low financial value can have a significant impact on the development and innovation of indigenous businesses within areas of higher density linguistic significance.

To ensure that public spending has a positive impact on the Welsh language, applications in procurement processes should be scored in relation to the circulation of money within the local economy as well as the impact on the Welsh language. Consideration of the Welsh language is already part of application scoring processes for other grants, such as Flying Start.

The terms and conditions attached to grants and public funds are a crucial element of the process of using financial support to stimulate the kind of economic developments desired. The terms and conditions attached to public grants or loans should be strengthened, and based on clearer principles, to maximise benefit to areas of higher density linguistic significance. This is of great importance in relation to significant developments, such as energy projects that are likely to generate employment on a scale that has the potential to transform the social fabric of communities.

Recommendation 14: The Welsh Government, local authorities and relevant public bodies should ensure that public spending, through grants and the procurement process, guarantees household well-being in local communities, social value, and that opportunities are created to increase the use of Welsh. The aim should be to increase the capacity and development of indigenous businesses.

When feasibly possible, therefore, public funding in areas of higher density linguistic significance should:

- **support Welsh language use and acquisition processes.**
- **support procurement processes and local supply chains.**
- **ensure community benefit.**
- **create or maintain Welsh language spaces.**
- **properly contribute to a ‘sense of place’.**
- **seek, within some economic models, to maximize the business’ involvement with, or ownership by, the local community and workforce.**

4.15 Town-regions

The concept of town-regions has been discussed in the past, specifically by the Welsh Language and Economic Development Task and Finish Group which reported in 2014 (Welsh Government, 2014). The report recommended facilitating development in specific

areas, identifying Aberystwyth, Porthmadog and Carmarthen as examples. The intention was to designate 'special economic language zones' while prioritising efforts to generate quality employment in these regions where ability in the Welsh language would be regarded positively. The Commission considers that the concept of town-regions still has value, particularly in relation to efforts to support young people to settle in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Leisure opportunities, and opportunities to socialise, are important elements in young people's decisions to live in, or leave, rural communities (see Woods & Utz, 2022: 15-16; Social Mobility Commission, 2020: 21). With suitable infrastructure already in place, it would be possible to seek to develop these towns as hubs that could offer services and opportunities that are attractive to individuals and families considering a return to, or moving to, the area. Their development should seek to align with a clear strategy on mobility that encourages young people to settle in areas of higher density linguistic significance, and to seek career opportunities within the region. Within these key towns, there should be deliberate efforts to plan for, develop and invest in infrastructure and amenities.

4.16 Out-migration

Mobility is part of many people's life experience, offering opportunities for individuals to develop valuable skills and experiences. But current patterns of out-migration from areas of higher density linguistic significance are harmful. More should be done to support those who have a desire to return to the region, or Welsh speakers who wish to settle there, for example by supporting pathways that promote areas of higher density linguistic significance as destinations for young people looking to return or settle.

Wales would not be the first country to try to tackle the demographic challenge presented by the out-migration of young people. Various programmes have sought to convince people to return or move to areas far from the metropolis, such as Vermont in the United States and islands off the coast of Ireland (Vermont Government, 2023; Rjaltas na hÉireann, 2023). A law passed in Castilla-La Mancha in Spain in 2021 seeks to tackle rural depopulation through policy and active intervention. These include reductions of up to 25% in individuals' income tax and a reduction of more than 50% in taxation on capital transfers and legal transactions for acquiring a primary residence or premises to establish company workplaces (see, ENRD, 2023). Such policies raise the question as to whether the tax system in Wales could be used to boost economic and social activity in areas facing out-migration.

Young people's motivations for leaving Welsh-speaking communities, and the reasons for returning or settling there, are varied and complex (see Cunnington Wynn, 2019). Policy makers' understanding of the field has developed in recent years as a result of academic work and lessons learned from ARFOR and *Llwyddo'n Lleol* programmes. We know, for example, that some individuals are very likely to leave, while others are almost certain to stay in their local area (Bonner et al., 2024b). But we also know that a significant proportion are less sure of their intentions, and are willing to consider staying, or returning, at different stages of their lives. There are therefore opportunities to target these individuals with support and information to facilitate decisions whether to return or stay.

Nonetheless, further work is needed to deepen the understanding of who is leaving and why, as well as who would be likely to return to areas of higher density linguistic significance. It is necessary to understand what kind of support would help people to stay or settle in these communities. It is also necessary to maintain and increase our understanding of patterns of out-migration. This understanding should underpin continuous efforts to communicate with individuals throughout their life journey, with a view to promoting areas of higher density linguistic significance as potential places to live, and offering support, when appropriate, to facilitate moving back. One of the most important lessons of the *Llwyddo'n Lleol* programme is the need to ensure that such a campaign is ongoing, and that there is a consistent message and brand.

Negative narratives and stereotypes contribute to the mindset that young people must leave communities in west Wales. 81% of young people in rural areas believe they will need to move out of their local area for education, training or work, and 61% worry about being able to find a suitable job in the area (Woods & Utz, 2022: 1). Any support should go hand in hand with efforts to convey a positive narrative about staying, returning, settling down, and living and working, in areas of higher density linguistic significance. It should be emphasised that the region is a progressive one that is welcoming to individuals and new ideas or developments.

As well as attracting people to return to the region or settle there, the idea of '*restanza*', of making a purposeful decision to stay in an area in order to actively protect and develop it, needs to be supported (see Teti, 2018; Cunnington Wynn, Froud & Williams, 2022). Depictions of those who decide to remain as individuals who have 'failed', or have somehow 'been left behind', must be avoided.

Recommendation 15: In order to address out-migration of young people from areas of higher density linguistic significance, the Welsh Government should ensure that:

- **information and data are collected regularly about young people and mobility in areas of higher density linguistic significance.**
- **research is commissioned to deepen understanding of specific issues such as who moves, from where, to where, when and why; what support might motivate people to stay or return; how to target and attract people most likely to support the economy and language in areas of higher density linguistic significance; and how to help and welcome other Welsh speakers to settle there.**
- **an ongoing communication and support plan is developed to incentivise young people to stay, return or settle. The plan should be based on further data and research about young people's aspirations and decisions, developing a positive narrative, and aligning with labour market needs as well as young people's priorities and aspirations.**

The Welsh Government should place responsibility on a single body to deliver and co-ordinate this.

How to take action

This report has already discussed the need for a clear strategy to co-ordinate a range of policies and activities to be implemented within areas of higher density linguistic significance. The Commission believes that this should be delivered in a specific way, by establishing a body to lead and co-ordinate work around the economy and by establishing a centre of excellence.

4.17 The future of the ARFOR programme

The Commission carefully discussed the future of the ARFOR programme, the economic collaboration partnership between Anglesey, Gwynedd, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire, as it is an important part of the economy and Welsh language policy landscape.

Awareness of its importance is indicative of a growing maturity within language planning in Wales as we acknowledge that creating favourable socioeconomic conditions is vital to the future of communities and therefore to the Welsh language itself. The Commission was aware that the Welsh Government, as part of its former cooperation agreement with Plaid Cymru, had commissioned a piece of work to consider potential long-term organisational structures for ARFOR. These findings had not been published by the time the Commission completed its deliberations.

4.18 A suitable economic policy vehicle

The Commission concluded that a specific vehicle, or body, is needed to guide and co-ordinate activity in a way that maximises the use of resources. It should operate mainly in western areas of Wales serving areas of higher density linguistic significance. It would be crucial that the body held expertise in language planning as well as economic development.

The ARFOR programme already exists and might form the basis for such a body. The Commission's view is that the programme is important to the linguistic sustainability of Welsh-speaking communities. Not only does it facilitate investment in these areas, but it also allows for strategic discussions along the north-south axis, and provides opportunities to focus on the economy and the Welsh language, and for examining and understanding the relationship between them.

The ARFOR 2 programme ends in 2025. The Commission recognises the programme's valuable contribution and is keen to see continuity to work in this vital area. The Commission therefore considers that ARFOR itself, or a similar body, or indeed another body of the kind suggested below, should be established on a permanent basis.

The communities included within the ARFOR programme were discussed. The Commission's view is that it is important to strengthen the ARFOR programme, or a successor, by including within its remit areas of higher density linguistic significance outside the four counties within the current programme. Including these communities would not only be beneficial to the areas themselves but also to the four current counties. The communities concerned are an integral part of the linguistic continuum of the whole region.

Several possible models were discussed for a body to succeed the ARFOR 2 programme. Such a body could add value to wider economic development structures by recalibrating economic support in a way that specifically benefitted areas of higher density linguistic significance. Opportunities for strategic and long-term planning for communities, their economies and the Welsh language would be created by establishing a permanent body.

The Commission agreed to recommend two possible options to the Welsh Government.

Recommendation 16: The Welsh Government should establish a body to lead and co-ordinate a range of activity in relation to economic development and the Welsh language within areas of higher density linguistic significance. Its boundaries would therefore extend beyond the four current counties of the ARFOR programme. The body should have expertise in language planning and economic development.

The terms of reference for this body should include responsibilities for:

- **developing a range of economic development policies or strategies in the context of areas of higher density linguistic significance.**
- **mainstreaming economic policies in relation to areas of higher density linguistic significance.**
- **influencing wider economic development structures.**
- **developing partnerships and sharing capacity and expertise on the ground.**
- **developing understanding of the relationship between the economy and the Welsh language.**
- **leading and co-ordinating efforts to attract young people to stay, return or settle in areas of higher density linguistic significance in order to stimulate enterprise and counteract depopulation.**

This body should take the form of one of the following two options:

Option 1: In this option, ARFOR, or a body similar to ARFOR, would be established as a permanent incorporated entity that would have its own executive. Local authorities would be represented on its board, but the body would be independent of individual local authorities. Its capacity could also be strengthened by transferring to it a portion of mainstream programme funding available for regional economic development. Such a body would be a suitable vehicle for achieving the above objectives without unduly disrupting the fabric of existing economic development structures.

Option 2: In this option, the body would be a higher-level entity, creating an economic development agency for the west. It would be organised through a board of local authority and Welsh Government representatives to ensure consistency and joint strategic planning. Funding and resources from mainstream Welsh Government programmes that promote economic development regionally could be transferred to it. Transferring additional economic development functions could be considered, to further strengthen its capacity.

In the context of Option 2, it would be best to avoid a situation where economic, town and country planning, and transport policies were developed separately

according to different timeframes. Requirements could therefore be placed on local authorities to consult with this new body in those areas. Corporate Joint Committees could also be required to consult with the body as they develop Strategic Development Plans and Regional Transport Plans.

The Commission believes that Option 2 would be the optimal option.

4.19 Centre of Excellence

A major challenge is to develop a better understanding of the relationship between the economy and the Welsh language. Establishing a Centre of Excellence would be one fitting way of achieving this. The aim of such a centre would be to develop understanding of the interrelationship between the economy and the Welsh language to assist policy makers to develop effective interventions. The centre should co-ordinate and develop a strategic research and data programme to support wider policy work in regard to the economy.

It would be important to ensure the involvement of universities and businesses, or other specialist centres, in the discussion about the exact terms of reference for such a centre.

Recommendation 17: The Welsh Government should establish a Centre of Excellence to develop a better understanding of the interrelationship between the economy and the Welsh language. The centre should co-ordinate and develop a strategic research and data programme to support wider policy work in regard to the economy. The centre could be located within the body outlined in recommendation 16.

5 Welsh language workplaces

5.1 The importance of the workplace

The use of Welsh in the workplace is vital to the viability of the language. This may be particularly important for those who do not use Welsh at home or in everyday social networks. In addition, deeper penetration of the Welsh language into different sectors of the economy gives the language additional value. Creating, maintaining and supporting Welsh language workplaces is an important part of a comprehensive language strategy for Welsh-speaking communities.

Public sector

5.2 The public sector and the Welsh language

Public sector organisations in Wales have a duty to support the Welsh language. In areas of higher density linguistic significance, this duty should extend to the internal use of the Welsh language in the workplace, and public bodies should increase their use of Welsh-medium internal administration. The Commission recognises that patterns of internal use of Welsh within organisations can often vary from area to area. This tends to reflect the density of Welsh speakers locally.

In areas where the Welsh language is strong, it may be appropriate for public sector organisations to move towards operating exclusively or primarily through the medium of Welsh. This already happens in some local authorities and public bodies in the north-west, and in some organisations in other parts of Wales. The language policy adopted by Cyngor Gwynedd (Gwynedd Council) might be the best example of this. The strength of Welsh in Caernarfon where Cyngor Gwynedd's headquarters is located, and in surrounding villages where much of the workforce lives, suggests that use of Welsh in the workplace is one factor that can counteract language shift in the community.

In some areas of higher density linguistic significance, however, it will not be feasible for all organisations to solely use, or predominantly use, Welsh. Where this is the case, there should nevertheless be a strategy that facilitates the increased use of Welsh-medium administration. This may mean using more Welsh internally across an organisation, or it might be better to establish specific units within the organisation able to work through the medium of Welsh; the two strategies could, of course, be combined. The Commission recognises that it is important that such steps take into account the linguistic nature of communities.

Public sector organisations and bodies should be moved along a linguistic continuum through careful, reasonable and practical planning that increases the use of Welsh over time. This should be mapped; vaguely hoping that change will come at some point in the future without carefully planning for the eventuality is unlikely to be successful. The workforce will need to be supported, a strategy put in place that expands the Welsh-speaking workforce available (for example, through training, or in the long term through the education system), and leadership culture strengthened with regard to the Welsh language.

5.3 Measuring proficiency in Welsh effectively

To enable public sector organisations to increase their Welsh-medium administration, Welsh language proficiency within the workforce needs to be developed. However, the use of Welsh language proficiency measurements is inconsistent. When recruiting, some organisations use a 1-5 scale to measure proficiency, while others refer to Welsh as an ability that is ‘essential’, ‘desirable’, or they refer to ‘a need to learn Welsh after securing the job.’ This lack of consistency hinders the ability of leaders and public organisations to purposefully plan for the development of language skills, and the use of Welsh, in the workplace.

Standardising proficiency measurements would be a significant step forward. This would facilitate recruitment processes and help in planning the improvement of individuals’ language skills.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) provides comprehensive, coherent and transparent descriptions of language proficiency. It is already used in some sectors in Wales, including at the National Centre for Learning Welsh. The CEFR should be used to measure Welsh language proficiency in the workplace throughout the public sector.

Recommendation 18: Public sector organisations should use a common framework for measuring proficiency in Welsh to support the improvement of Welsh language skills within the workforce, and as part of the recruitment process. This framework should be based on the CEFR.

5.4 Developing the language proficiency of everyone in the workforce

Developing the workforce’s language proficiency increases their capacity to operate through the medium of Welsh. But according to the 2019-20 Language Use Survey, only 33% of Welsh speakers reported that their employer offered training or provided support to improve their Welsh (Welsh Government, 2023h). Organisations, and public bodies in particular, need to promote opportunities to develop the language skills of their workforce throughout their careers.

The Cymraeg Gwaith (Work Welsh) programme is a means of supporting these developments while offering diverse, flexible and funded training to employers. The training can be in the form of confidence building sessions, or more intensive face-to-face courses with tutors or online.

5.5 Apprenticeships

Offering Welsh-medium apprenticeships in areas of higher density linguistic significance would be beneficial as part of a strategy of creating Welsh-medium workplaces. This would also help create favourable conditions so that more young people stay in their communities. But delivering Welsh-medium apprenticeships can be complicated; usually the apprentice, employer, mentor and training provider need to be proficient in Welsh. Better planning would allow public sector organisations to offer more Welsh-medium apprenticeships. Local authorities, health boards and other major public sector organisations should work to make this a reality.

5.6 Supporting the use of Welsh through technology

Technology is critical to increasing the use of Welsh in the workplace. In general, too, advances in technology can also reduce economic distance between areas of higher density linguistic significance and major markets within the United Kingdom. The public sector is key to the uptake of Welsh language technology and can stimulate its development and use on a significant scale.

The *Welsh language technology action plan* plans for increasing the use of Welsh through technology in a wide range of situations (Welsh Government, 2018). The main themes of the scheme are speech technology, computer-aided translation, as well as Conversational Artificial Intelligence. There are work packages available specifically related to the world of work. The Welsh Government is now working with Stable to create CALI (*Customised Automated Language Interface*)—a process designed to change a user interface entirely to Welsh, automatically. By reducing resistance to choosing Welsh digitally, the user experience improves when using the language online, and more people are encouraged to use more Welsh.

The Welsh Government should continue to offer leadership in language technology, encouraging public sector organisations to continue to adopt and use language technology to facilitate the use of Welsh in the workplace.

5.7 Changing leadership culture

The leadership culture of organisations is critically important. Leaders can ‘set a tone’ in regard to the Welsh language. A leadership culture that is outward-looking, welcoming, friendly and inclusive is an important basis for stimulating and facilitating the use of Welsh in the workplace.

Despite positive examples where leaders have changed the tone of an organisation benefitting the Welsh language, the picture is not consistent across Wales. Leaders’ awareness of the important role workplaces play in terms of the future of the Welsh language needs to be improved to help them better plan for developing and using Welsh language skills in the workplace.

Academi Wales has developed a ‘Leading in a Bilingual Country’ course which brings together senior leaders from the public sector to discuss how to lead organisations in a way that will contribute to the spirit and objectives of *Cymraeg 2050: One million speakers*. An equivalent course on leadership in Welsh-speaking communities should be developed. This should seek to develop leaders’ understanding and their ability to tailor linguistic attitudes in their organisations in a way that reflects and empowers Welsh-speaking communities.

Recommendation 19: Leaders of public bodies in Wales should follow the course, ‘Leading in a Bilingual Country’. Academi Cymru should also develop a ‘Leading in a Welsh-speaking Community’ course suitable for leaders of organisations and workplaces in areas of higher density linguistic significance. Such a course could also be useful for community, third sector and private sector leaders in those areas.

5.8 Moving public sector organisations along a language continuum

With standardised proficiency measurements, support to develop skills, improved use of language technology, and leaders who set the tone and plan for the future, public bodies will be better placed to increase their use of Welsh. The Commission notes that some public bodies within areas of higher density linguistic significance have for years committed themselves to work increasingly through the medium of Welsh. But there is little evidence that all of these bodies have succeeded in achieving this goal. In some cases, the failure can be traced back over several decades, and this has been frustrating for many and has contributed to language shift to English in local communities.

As a result, the Commission concluded that proactive steps should be taken. Welsh language standards should be used to move public sector organisations along a linguistic continuum in their use of Welsh in the workplace.

This should ensure that public bodies increasingly move to operate bilingually, or through the medium of Welsh, internally, taking specific steps to enable and make this a reality.

Recommendation 20: The Welsh Government should use Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 standards to ensure that public sector organisations subject to the Measure in areas of higher density linguistic significance state the extent of their use of Welsh as an internal language, as well as the steps they will take to move the organisation concerned along a language continuum within a given timeframe.

5.9 Private sector workplaces

Discussions regarding Welsh-medium workplaces have tended to focus on workplaces in the public sector. It is easier to use public policy to influence this sector than other sectors. In the private sector, or in parts of the third sector, businesses could be encouraged to make more use of the Welsh language internally, though the same policy instruments are not available to achieve this.

Nonetheless, it is important to consider the use of Welsh in workplaces other than those in the public sector as they are an important part of the economy of Welsh-speaking communities. In the private sector, there is some evidence that businesses often operate informally through the medium of Welsh (Wavehill, 2021: 28; 31-32). Most of these do not have official or accredited plans to drive the development of the use of Welsh within the business but continue to use the language. Internal formal work (and external formal engagement with customers such as making payments), contracts or legal work, are often completed in English. But, unofficial or informal activity, such as talking to customers and clients, often takes place through the medium of Welsh. Such workplaces are core to the survival of Welsh as a community language in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

The private sector needs to be supported to promote the use of the Welsh language. ARFOR could have a role in providing such support. In areas of higher density linguistic significance, the primary emphasis should be on the social use of Welsh. There should be local support available to businesses to encourage them to use more Welsh in a way that will increase the use of Welsh in everyday life. Advice and support should be available to

encourage businesses to provide as many Welsh-speaking services as possible to their customers, and also to promote them.

6 Community development

6.1 Local and holistic solutions

The future of Welsh as a viable community language depends on creating sustainable economic and social foundations. Any attempt to strengthen Welsh-speaking communities must recognise the range of needs such areas have in terms of housing, economy, community development and language planning. However, these needs should not be looked at in isolation. Holistic solutions will be required for many of the challenges facing areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Public policy should do both: consider specific socio-economic contexts as well as identify commonalities.

6.2 Context and the dissemination of good practice

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, some communities have shown an ability to sustain themselves in challenging circumstances. There are successful examples of integrated and holistic models of community development in parts of Gwynedd (particularly in the former slate quarry communities), as well as in Anglesey and Pembrokeshire, for example. Trusting communities and empowering them to provide their own solutions, with additional support available if needed, is key. Engagement and consultation with the communities themselves is also essential.

The Commission therefore sees value in drawing on existing expertise locally to realise a vision for the language. Organisations, enterprises, and groups already working in these communities in ways that support the Welsh language, and the community at large, are best placed to act locally in many circumstances. There are specific examples where communities have successfully supported social infrastructure and used their own resources to develop and maintain spaces of all kinds. Examples of these include pubs, restaurants, cafes, community shops and nurseries.

A starting point would be to map these community organisations and the work that they do. In addition, they should be given the opportunity to share ideas with each other. However, not all communities have the capacity to realise their aims, and in some instances, more effective and focused support needs to be provided by local and central government.

Recommendation 21: The Welsh Government should devise and support a programme to disseminate successful community development models across areas of higher density linguistic significance by drawing on existing local expertise and good practice. Successful models could also be implemented in other parts of Wales.

6.3 Long-term planning

While support for social activity and development that sustains the Welsh language should be shaped by priorities identified by communities, it remains the case that financial support is needed to secure ownership of buildings, for example, as well as support to cover service costs. Furthermore, co-ordination with local authority services that provide social

infrastructure, such as libraries or public green spaces, is also important to ensure an appropriate mix of activities and services that support the Welsh language.

Consequently, there is a need to increase capacity, resources and financial support for these organisations, enterprises and groups. The current system of providing financial support needs to be improved as it does not allow for long-term planning. For example, *Mentrau Iaith* (organisations which promote Welsh in the community) are currently funded on an annual basis through Welsh language facilitation and promotion grants. Short-term funding regimes of this type may hinder substantive long-term language and community planning as well as the ability to attract or retain staff through longer-term contracts.

Recommendation 22: The Welsh Government and other relevant funding bodies should change the current system of awarding financial support to community organisations and groups so that they can develop medium-term and longer-term projects. Most importantly, the lifespan of existing grants should be extended from one to three years to ensure the longevity and success of schemes.

6.4 Assets and community ownership and co-ownership

Communities should be legally, financially and politically empowered in a meaningful way. Moreover, there is a need to understand how communities can take ownership of assets. It could be argued that community groups, social enterprises and community councils are often at the forefront of maintaining and safeguarding services and facilities for the benefit of the local community. Libraries, leisure centres and community centres are examples of services and facilities where ownership has been transferred to the community.

Community assets can underpin the development of Welsh-speaking communities. Recent initiatives that have established community pubs and other community centres within Welsh-speaking areas are inspiring. Community groups should be encouraged to ensure that the Welsh language is central to their activities. The right of town and community councils, as the most local and community-based layer of democracy, to operate through the medium of Welsh, should also be protected.

Community ownership is the antithesis of inequality. It will not replace all that is public and all that is private, but it should play a more prominent role in any model of economic, social and language development within areas of higher density linguistic significance. Policies encouraging community ownership are likely to be supportive of the Welsh language within communities with a high density of Welsh speakers.

Consequently, the Commission believes that it is increasingly important for communities to be able to own assets to ensure the sustainability of these communities and their language. A community asset can include the built environment (use of buildings and facilities for example); land, including green spaces and parks; and also the people who live in the community (their skills, knowledge and social networks, for example).

Shared ownership is equally important in the case of communities that can draw on the private sector to strengthen social and linguistic activity. Co-ownership is often part of a model used in renewable energy projects, for example, where assets are jointly owned and managed by members of the community alongside project developers/operators. This

presents an opportunity for economic and social development that truly addresses the needs of the communities concerned.

The Bevan Foundation has highlighted how community ownership offers opportunities to create community wealth, such as by providing employment and supporting local supply chains. One of the potential benefits identified by the Bevan Foundation is the ability to measure and demonstrate social impact. In their view, not all assets generate profit but many generate social value (Bevan Foundation, 2020). One of the opportunities recognised is the potential of community ownership to strengthen the economy and social infrastructure of areas of higher density linguistic significance, so creating opportunities for residents to live and work through the medium of Welsh.

Communities in other parts of the United Kingdom have rights that do not exist in Wales. For example, a *Community Right to Buy* exists in Scotland and a *Community Right to Bid* in England. In Scotland, asset transfers can be facilitated by the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act*. Where community bodies believe they could make better use of publicly owned land or buildings, the Act gives them the right to make applications to local authorities, Scottish Ministers and a variety of public bodies to transfer to them assets of this type. They may request ownership, a lease or other rights. If such a request is denied, the community group has the right to appeal or request a review of that decision. The *Community Right to Bid* in England allows communities and parish councils to nominate buildings or land to be listed by the local authority as an asset of community value. When a listed asset comes up for sale, there can be a moratorium of up to six months to give local community groups the opportunity to raise funds, develop a business plan and apply to buy the asset on the open market.

While Welsh-speaking communities may benefit from community ownership schemes, research by the Institute of Welsh Affairs shows that communities in Wales are the least empowered to facilitate community ownership in Britain, and that there is a need to make substantial changes to community policy (Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2022). The Commission agrees with the premise of the report of the Senedd's Local Government and Housing Committee on Community Assets published in 2022 that legislative changes are needed to empower communities (Welsh Parliament, 2022). We note that the Welsh Government accepted 15 of the Committee's 16 recommendations.

The Commission also recognises the need to ensure that the transfer of assets to the community does not undermine the Welsh language. For example, when considering whether an applicant should be allowed to make a full business case for the transfer of an asset, criteria should include the ability to provide services through the medium of Welsh and the ability to create social capital to benefit the Welsh language.

Recommendation 23: The Welsh Government should invest financially in community initiatives within areas of higher density linguistic significance by providing them with grants and/or long-term loans at preferential rates. To ensure that the process of transferring assets to the community is beneficial to the Welsh language, conditions and requirements should be placed on grants and/or loans so that Welsh language social capital is central to any scheme.

6.5 Cymunedoli

Cymunedoli, a network of 26 social enterprises and businesses in Gwynedd, was launched at the 2023 Llŷn and Eifionydd National Eisteddfod. Funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and Menter Môn, it is one of the projects supported by the Perthyn project. In 2023, the *Cymunedoli* enterprises employed over 450 people and their assets were valued at over £43.2m. Most of these social enterprises and businesses operate through the medium of Welsh. Cymunedoli seeks to ensure that communities own and manage their own resources.

This is an alternative model of economic development that promotes ownership of community assets and cross-community projects. This work has social, linguistic, cultural, environmental and economic value. The Commission welcomes this form of community and economic development. It benefits the Welsh language throughout areas of higher density linguistic significance. It also increases local capacity and competencies.

There is a need to examine what supports both the Welsh language and community infrastructure. Social enterprises and projects such as Cymunedoli and Perthyn are potential models for developing capacity. A dedicated network where communities share experiences, and learn from good practice, can be an effective starting point. In areas where there are already examples of resilient community work that support the Welsh language, these models should be nurtured and developed for the community and linguistic benefits they bring. In order to develop competency, there is a need to secure training and guidance for communities, including supporting them to set up new social enterprises if appropriate.

The Commission is aware of concerns that some forms of community activity may lead to less use of Welsh in some communities within those areas of higher density linguistic significance where the Welsh language is perhaps less strong. Guidance is needed to avoid this eventuality. Welsh should be treated as a social good central to community projects.

Recommendation 24: The Welsh Government should offer to help community groups develop a network/s that can support them assess and increase competence and capacity in their respective areas of activity, and share good practice and expertise across the network.

6.6 Place Plans

Following a workshop on planning and the Welsh language, the Commission considered the potential of Place Plans in relation to community development and the Welsh language. Place Plans were introduced by the Welsh Government to enable communities to engage creatively with the planning process, and for planners to support local priorities. Place Plans are developed by the local community and can offer further detail to the work of town and country planners.

The Commission is eager to see Place Plans used to give more comprehensive consideration to the Welsh language in areas of higher density linguistic significance. They could also enable the facilitation of community ownership through the planning system. The Commission will provide detail on this in the further recommendations it will make in

relation to town and country planning by December 2024 (see the section on 'Town and country planning' for details).

7 Housing

7.1 Introduction

There is no doubt that Wales is facing a housing and homelessness crisis. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, this crisis has deepened as the gap between local income levels and house prices and the cost of renting widens. The situation poses a real threat to Welsh-speaking communities. The inability of young people and families to find homes that are appropriate and affordable affects the viability of communities, the sustainability of schools and essential services, and can mean a shortage of workers available to employers. Urgent action is needed to ensure a supply of affordable homes in line with the needs of these communities, and of the type of tenure that responds to their need.

7.2 Current policy developments

A package of planning, tax and licensing measures to address the issue of second homes and short-term lets has recently been introduced within housing policy. The independent report by Simon Brooks to the Welsh Government, *Second homes: developing new policies in Wales*, discussed measures of this type (Welsh Government, 2021b), and a number of interventions were introduced in the context of the *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* (2022c) and the Welsh Government's approach to second homes and short-term holiday lets. A number of new policies have also been introduced by local authorities.

The Welsh Government has published one Green Paper, *A Call for Evidence on securing a path towards Adequate Housing – including Fair Rents and Affordability* and one White Paper, *Ending Homelessness in Wales* (see Welsh Government, 2023e; 2024a). Both contain recommendations that could have an impact on the use of the Welsh language. Although the *Dwyfor second homes and affordability pilot* only started in June 2022 (Welsh Government, 2023j), anecdotal evidence is beginning to emerge about the effects of introducing some changes.

7.3 Relevant background data

Census 2021 tenure data shows that among Welsh households:

- 38% own their homes.
- 28.3% own their homes with a mortgage, loan or shared ownership.
- 17% rent privately.
- 16.5% live in the social rented sector, renting through local authorities or housing associations.

StatsWales data from March 2024 shows that 11,273 individuals in Wales were homeless in temporary accommodation at the end of December 2023. Of these, 2,077 children under the age of 16 were homeless.

During 2022-2023, 12,537 households were assessed as being homeless households, where local authorities have a duty to provide support to secure accommodation. This was an increase of 7% from 2021-2022. Of these cases, support was successfully given to

30% to secure suitable long-term accommodation. There are also long waiting lists for social housing and in December 2023, Shelter Cymru estimated there were almost 139,000 families on these lists (*BBC Wales investigates*, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic had negative impacts on affordability in the open housing market. House prices increased in Wales by an average of 28% between March 2020 and March 2023. There was a significant increase in interest rates from 0.1% in March 2020 to 5.25% by August 2023.

7.4 Context

Residents often feel a sense of injustice that they face difficulties accessing the housing market within Welsh-speaking communities. This frustration was expressed in the debate on second homes, but it also relates to the housing market more widely. In Gwynedd, for example, according to a report by Cyngor Gwynedd (Cyngor Gwynedd, 2023: 23), 65.5% of the population are priced out of the local housing market.

To some extent, the problem is similar to the situation in other parts of the United Kingdom where increases in long-term house prices have led to a significant percentage of the population being priced out of the housing market. In Welsh-speaking communities however, the situation is complicated by the need to ensure the sustainability of the language. This is much more difficult if people are unable to purchase property in their own communities. The discussion about housing is therefore important to the future of Welsh as a community language.

7.5 Planning based on local need

More homes are needed to address the needs of Welsh-speaking and rural communities. However, they must be the kind of homes that people need and can afford to live in.

Affordable homes can help secure the future of rural communities. A handful of new homes can make the difference between a primary school that is forced to close and one that still welcomes new pupils, between a village shop closing and one that continues to serve customers, or between a pub that has been converted into holiday cottages and one that continues to be a hub for the local community.

To facilitate planning based on local needs, local planning authorities across Wales should take into account all the relevant evidence when preparing a Local Development Plan. This would include any strategies a local planning authority has in place, but also national policies.

Caution needs to be exercised in relation to the scale of developments in rural villages. Development in rural communities should be sustainable and fair, and it should not lead to the displacement of local communities. Development beyond local housing demand can be devastating for the community and the Welsh language. Every five years, local authorities have a duty to undertake a review of housing needs through Local Housing Market Assessments (LHMA), with a review halfway between years two and three. The LHMA is a key part of evidence in preparing Local Housing Strategies and Local Development Plans that allocate land for affordable and open market housing. The LHMA also provides evidence for the Social Housing Grant Prospectus which is prepared by

each local authority, summarising the housing need of an area as well as identifying the housing need of different groups within communities and setting out the local authority's priorities. Together with a local document that is shared with the Housing Partnership locally, the Prospectus details plans regarding the allocation of the Welsh Government's Social Housing Grant. The LHMA template does not take matters relating to the Welsh language into account.

The LHMA is based on broad estimates. Housing Market Areas are geographically defined and based on the areas where people currently live and where they would be willing to move without having to change jobs. But an unintended consequence of this is that the data does not match the need for housing locally at individual community level. A local authority may have up to 20 local Housing Market Areas, defined using wards, MSOAs (*Middle layer Super Output Areas*) or LSOAs. Each area can consist of up to 40 wards, MSOAs or LSOAs.

In addition, the data period for the latest population projections does not match the timeframe used for conducting the LHMA. For example, the latest LHMA was completed in February 2024 using population projections dating back to 2021. There needs to be consistency in the use of data to ensure that assessments, on which key planning documents are based, are robust.

The Local Housing Strategy and Local Development Plan should be informed by evidence of housing need at community level. This information would then form the basis for appropriate housing solutions in each community, and ultimately ensure that public funds are invested effectively and offer the best value. The Welsh Government needs to revisit and change this methodology to secure a better data base for these strategic plans.

Rural Housing Enablers (and in Dwyfor a Senior Community Housing Enabler) are an example of good practice currently operating in north-west, mid and south-west Wales. They work at a local level in collaboration with local authorities, national parks, community councils, rural town councils and community-based organisations to identify and understand local housing need. The posts are funded by the Welsh Government in partnership with local authorities, national parks and housing associations in the relevant areas. The Community Assessment undertaken by the Rural Housing Enabler involves working with the community to establish the housing needs of an area. This includes encouraging the community to complete a housing needs questionnaire either by phone or online, or during an open day held in the community with the development partner / community group. Information from the consultation is presented in the form of a report, along with data relevant to the housing situation within the community, for example the number of second homes and empty homes, open market house prices, local wages, social housing lists and the affordable homes register.

The evidence gathered is used when submitting applications for planning permission for affordable housing such as on exception sites and also to enable housing associations and local authorities to receive a Social Housing Grant for development costs. The evidence gives the housing association or local authority greater confidence that a need exists for the homes that will be developed. It is vital to have the right types of homes in terms of tenure, affordability and scale of development in the right places. It is important that communities are empowered and their voice heard when identifying housing need. A

development can meet need locally, or it can be a solution that serves multiple communities. Through collaboration and co-producing assessments with findings fed back to partners, including the local community, it should be possible to encourage local ownership, ensure better understanding of the situation and reduce conflict if an application were to be made for planning permission.

Recommendation 25: The Welsh Government should ensure that the Local Housing Market Assessment guidance and template include criteria relating to the Welsh language.

Recommendation 26: Local authorities should ensure that all schemes in the Social Housing Prospectus contain evidence of local housing need. A community assessment of housing need should be carried out every five years based on community council or town council areas. The process should be led by the Rural Housing Enablers.

7.6 Renting—social housing sector

Housing associations and local authorities should have a central role in responding to housing need in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

70% of affordable homes in Wales are developed by housing associations, otherwise known as RSLs (Registered Social Landlords) (Welsh Government, 2023d). This is despite associated risks that can impact development such as land availability, planning policies, phosphates, the impact of inflation on the cost and availability of materials, and developers going into administration. In addition, the requirements of the Social Housing Grants regime—namely development standards, acceptable cost guidance, grant rates and ensuring rents are affordable—all influence the viability of any development scheme. We have already noted that a crisis exists in the housing sector, particularly in rural and Welsh-speaking Wales. Urgent action is needed to look at how processes, developments and opportunities to work in partnership can be streamlined.

The Welsh Government's commitment in its Programme for Government to deliver 20,000 new low carbon social homes between 2021 and 2026 is a step in the right direction. It will be necessary to make sure that these are delivered.

Welsh Government investment in the construction of affordable housing is welcomed. However, rather than relying on annual confirmation of capital funding, three-year funding programmes would give housing associations and local authorities greater certainty and confidence to plan and develop housing. Naturally, as the Social Housing Grant is public funding, the Welsh Government wants to maximise the number of housing units developed. As a result of funding models that reflect this, larger developments are favoured as development costs per unit are then lower on average.

Capital grant funding to local authorities and housing associations that contribute towards the development of social rented housing is allocated by the Welsh Government in accordance with a Standard Viability Model. With a few exceptions, a grant rate of 58% exists for most social rented housing developments, with a rate of 35% towards intermediate rented housing development. But since the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, and as a result of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been greater flexibility in the allocation of the grant. The Welsh Government now looks

at each application on a case-by-case basis. On the basis of evidence received from a housing association and a local authority in north-west Wales, the Commission would support that rural developments receive up to 70% of grant funding towards the development costs of social rented housing, making small-scale development sites viable. We accept that the total amount of social housing developed within the current budget may be slightly lower as a result, but the Commission considers that taking this step is essential. There are also other grants available from the Welsh Government, such as the Temporary Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) and the Housing with Care Fund, which support additional supply of social rented housing, and these can be combined with the Social Housing Grant.

Recommendation 27: The Welsh Government should ensure flexibility in the social housing grant formula, as well as in any other relevant grant, in order to facilitate small-scale development sites in rural areas within areas of higher density linguistic significance. This should ensure that these homes are affordable to develop, adhering to the Welsh Government’s Standard Viability Models.

7.7 Housing supply

Waiting list figures suggest that 20,000 low carbon social houses will not be sufficient to meet the housing need.

There needs to be a significant increase across Wales in the supply of affordable homes for low or middle-income households to rent or buy. This is also true of rural Welsh-speaking areas. Achieving this would help support the sustainability of services, and also help regenerate town centres in areas of higher density linguistic significance. This could be done by building new properties, as well as making better use of existing empty housing stock and shops, through the work of local authorities, housing associations, community-led housing initiatives, and co-operatives.

7.8 The future of the *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan*

The Commission supports the *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan*, the Welsh Government’s approach in dealing with high numbers of second homes, and the second homes and affordability pilot in the Dwyfor area. These schemes provide opportunities to take action in communities with a high number of second homes looking at solutions to problems associated with this phenomenon. The *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* and the pilot in Dwyfor operate within Welsh-speaking communities and can consider the effects of housing policy on linguistic sustainability. Through a range of interventions, it is expected that they will help resolve issues related to housing affordability, access to local ownership, economic prosperity, community sustainability and the future of Welsh as a living community language.

Welsh-speaking communities exist within the context of an open housing market and their residents have less access to capital than is sometimes available in other parts of the United Kingdom. For this reason, they are likely to need continued support. The factors affecting housing affordability and availability in Welsh-speaking communities are unlikely to disappear in the short or medium term without changes in public policy tailored specifically to these areas.

There is a strong argument for extending the *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* beyond its current three-year lifespan, making it permanent.

It would also be possible to expand the work of the *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* to create a 'whole system' strategic vehicle to vary and implement housing policy in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Recommendation 28: The Welsh Government should make the *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* permanent. It should operate within areas of higher density linguistic significance.

7.9 Evaluating the *Dwyfor second homes and affordability pilot*

The Dwyfor pilot scheme has been in existence since June 2022 with the aim of developing housing solutions. Like any pilot, it provides an opportunity to trial policies, measuring and monitoring their impact, including on the local housing market and on the Welsh language. An independent evaluator has been commissioned to evaluate the interventions in the pilot scheme and has started its work. It will report throughout the pilot's duration, with a final report in October 2026.

Recommendation 29: The Welsh Government should ensure that the evaluation of the *Dwyfor second homes and affordability pilot* fully considers the impact on the Welsh language. If appropriate, interventions trialled in the Dwyfor pilot should be introduced in other areas of higher density linguistic significance.

7.10 Second homes

In recent years there has been heated debate surrounding the issue of second homes in Welsh-speaking communities. The Commission does not consider it appropriate to re-open this discussion as the issue has been addressed in the *Second Homes: developing new policies in Wales* report (2021b), the *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* (2022c), and in other documents. The discussion has led to a series of new policy interventions, in taxation policy, affordability, licensing and also the ability to make changes to the national planning framework and by extension to the local planning system.

Because many of these interventions are being rolled out for the first time, it is currently difficult to predict their long-term impact.

For that reason, the effect of these interventions should be monitored. It will be necessary to understand whether they are leading to a reduction in the number and percentage of second homes, and what their impact is on housing availability and house prices. It will also be necessary to affirm that converting second homes into primary dwellings facilitates local people's access to the housing market. Any unintended consequences will need to be evaluated, such as a possible reduction in the ability of the Welsh-speaking community to inherit property, and any possible impact on local people's property rights.

Crucially, it will be important to ask whether these measures, considered together, will benefit the Welsh language in areas of higher density linguistic significance, or have the unintended consequence of weakening it.

At the current time, the Commission is unable to answer these questions.

Perhaps the most significant long-term change is that the Welsh Government now allows local planning authorities to introduce what is known as an Article 4 Direction in respect of second homes and short-term holiday lets. This Direction enables planning authorities to require a planning application to be approved before a main primary dwelling can be converted into a second home or short-term holiday accommodation.

Such a step would be unprecedented. The consequences that might result from its implementation are unpredictable. If an Article 4 Direction were to be introduced, mechanisms would be needed to measure its effect, along with other interventions, on the local housing market and on the Welsh language.

Recommendation 30: Planning authorities introducing an Article 4 Direction should undertake regular evaluation to monitor any unintended consequences on the Welsh language and on the housing market.

7.11 Short-term holiday accommodation thresholds in relation to community sustainability

There is no all-Wales threshold that determines the level or numbers of second homes and short-term holiday lets deemed to affect the sustainability of a community. Some experts believe there is a lack of research and evidence in this area. In implementing an Article 4 Direction, planning authorities will need to carefully justify any threshold that is set.

Statistics, of course, are figures based on a specific point in time and an area that is above the threshold when an Article 4 Direction is introduced may, with time, drop below that threshold.

7.12 Community-led housing

Community-led housing is relevant to both housing and community development, and the two sections of the report that discuss this should be read in parallel.

Housing associations in Wales, and local authorities that still own their housing stock, have access to the Welsh Government Social Housing Grant to fund social and affordable housing. The grant is allocated by local authorities in response to the Social Housing Grant Prospectus. The rest of the funding used by housing associations and local authorities to build new multi-tenure homes and purchase existing properties for redevelopment comes, in the main, by taking out private finance.

It is not easy for community and co-operative housing initiatives to raise capital funds to purchase land or buildings and develop housing that will be affordable. Difficulties in this regard pose a major obstacle.

Several recent projects have successfully raised funds by selling community shares to finance the purchase of pubs, hotels or community shops. The *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* has established a revenue grant fund, Perthyn, to support community groups to prepare feasibility studies and business plans, valuations and surveys. However, development costs can be significant, and an additional funding source will be required in the majority of situations where adequate funding streams are not available. Commercial loans will be difficult to obtain to enable these initiatives to succeed,

and access to low interest loans, grants, guarantee arrangements or other equity investments will therefore be required.

It would help if capital funding could be made available to assist communities to purchase land or property and develop housing. This could be by offering loans, grants and equity investments. The Welsh Government should establish a dedicated loan fund, or offer equity in schemes, for facilitating community-led housing developments. In the case of equity offers, the Welsh Government would have an equity share in the property until the loan was repaid. This would be a different model of using public funding, where the Welsh Government would become more of an investor.

Recommendation 31: The Welsh Government should establish a dedicated loan fund offering low interest loans, or equity in schemes, to support community enterprises to purchase land or property to develop community-led housing developments.

7.13 Making better use of the existing housing stock

There are too many long-term vacant properties in Wales (22,457 in January 2023) (see Welsh Government, 2023f). This is a waste of a resource and can also lead to a deterioration in the fabric of buildings creating locations of possible anti-social behaviour. Vacant properties can include commercial properties, accommodation above shops and empty homes. Given the lack of opportunities to develop a stock of new small-scale housing that is viable, better use should be made of the existing housing stock.

A number of community initiatives such as Menter Môn, Y Galeri, Partneriaeth Ogwen, Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog, Yr Orsaf and Planed are making better use of empty buildings on a small scale. These efforts should be widely promoted as good practice where community ownership of assets can be facilitated, jobs and training opportunities created, and community hubs established.

Empty Homes Officers in local authorities across Wales have also had success in recent years using a range of financial incentives and enforcement powers to bring empty properties back into use. It is not always easy to use these powers and processes, and every effort should be made to simplify them.

On a wider scale, town and city centre transformation and regeneration schemes are realised in partnership between the Welsh Government, housing associations, local authorities, developers and other organisations. They bring empty buildings and land back into use, or demolish empty buildings, replacing them with homes and working spaces helping to regenerate town centres. Opportunities to bring together town centre regeneration policies and funded housing policies that include among their conditions a commitment to strengthen the use of the Welsh language should be supported.

Some local authorities have designated sums of money to try to tackle the housing crisis, such as through the Shared Prosperity Fund and the use of a tax premium charged on second homes and holiday homes. These steps are to be welcomed. All local authorities should look more strategically at the use of Shared Prosperity Fund funding, and the additional revenue that comes with charging a premium on second homes, thus making better use of empty properties.

Recommendation 32: In responding to local housing need, local authorities should make better use of the housing stock and vacant properties. Town centre regeneration policies should be interwoven with housing policies, and as a feature of that, conditions on grants or loans should include Welsh language considerations.

7.14 Section 106 agreements and social housing letting policies

Local authorities and national parks already have powers to place conditions on applications for planning permission. Conditions can be placed on the purchase, sale and letting of homes to determine who can live in certain dwellings, through the use of Section 106 Agreements under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Conditions can include specific residential and employment criteria. The local authority, housing association, housing developers or other relevant agencies are then required to comply with the conditions imposed.

7.15 Social housing: local connections and consideration of the Welsh language

In letting social housing, some local authorities and housing associations award extra points if the applicants have a local connection to the house to be let.

The exact definition of 'local connection' can vary between local authorities and can also vary between the conditions within Section 106 agreements set by planning authorities and local letting policies. However, a local connection is generally evidenced when the applicant or household member (someone who usually lives with the applicant as part of their household) has been living in the local authority area in the last five years or in the past (at any time). In some local authorities, extra points are awarded for having a community connection. Some local authorities also consider periods when the applicant has worked in the area.

In general, no conditions directly related to language are imposed when social housing is let. The Commission notes the importance of ensuring that everyone in the community, whatever their language, has access to essential services and resources, including housing. For this reason, the Commission would not support interventions that would result in local Welsh speakers accessing social housing at the expense of the local non-Welsh speaking population, for example.

However, policies supportive of the Welsh language in social housing in areas of higher density linguistic significance would not have to operate in such a rudimentary manner.

The Commission is interested in models of supporting Welsh speakers that would not be detrimental to non-Welsh speakers, but that could include the Welsh language as a consideration alongside a number of other considerations without causing unacceptable disadvantage to other groups in society.

The Commission notes the importance of the mobility of Welsh speakers within areas of higher density linguistic significance. In local labour markets, it is sometimes difficult to fill jobs where Welsh is required. Policies prioritising local people should not have the unintended effect of preventing Welsh speakers from moving into these communities.

Encouraging Welsh speakers who are not local to settle in an area of higher density linguistic significance can be beneficial to the language.

This raises the question of whether policies need to be developed to support Welsh speakers to move into areas of higher density linguistic significance in cases where they do not have a local connection, but where their presence would be beneficial for the local labour market and the viability of the Welsh language. Any such policy would have to exist alongside local connection policies, which apply to everyone in the community regardless of language, rather than replacing them. It would also have to comply with equality policies.

Recommendation 33: Local authorities and planning authorities should consider whether models can be developed for the letting of social housing or in drawing up Section 106 agreements, where the Welsh language may be one positive consideration alongside other considerations. Any model should be scrutinised to ensure there is no unacceptable disadvantage to the non-Welsh-speaking population, and to ensure compliance with relevant equality legislation.

7.16 Mortgages for houses with local restrictions

Mortgage provision for restricted properties is inadequate in terms of the number of borrowers prepared to lend, and the competitiveness of the mortgages offered.

This is true for properties subject to the conditions of Section 106 Agreements. In addition, it will be necessary to ensure that the implementation of an Article 4 Direction does not mean that fewer mortgages are available for properties affected.

The current situation makes it harder for people to buy restricted properties than should be the case. It can also make it more difficult for people to raise funds to self-build restricted properties. As a result, it undermines public trust and confidence in these mechanisms and in affordable housing initiatives more generally.

This issue causes concern in many Welsh-speaking communities. Many of these communities are located in rural areas where new developments are often subject to restrictions. Steps should be taken to ensure greater competitiveness in mortgage provision on restricted properties.

Recommendation 34: The Welsh Government should discuss with mortgage providers how to improve competition within mortgage provision for restricted properties. A framework should be established which measures the number of borrowers offering mortgages on restricted properties, and the interest rates offered in comparison to interest rates offered on unrestricted properties.

8 Town and country planning

8.1 The relationship between town and country planning and language planning

The relationship between town and country planning and language planning has been the subject of considerable debate. It is a multilayered relationship. The influence of both disciplines upon a range of wider policy issues is complex. Nonetheless, strengthening the link between town and country planning and language planning would be of particular benefit. As a discipline, language planning has advanced significantly in recent decades, and it is essential that language planning experts provide support and advice to those working in town and country planning as they review or develop future policies.

The Commission's call for evidence revealed deep concerns about the relationship between town and country planning and the Welsh language which extended across civil society, among professional bodies and planning authorities as well as among language movements and campaigners.

Town and country planning can make a key contribution to the sustainability of the Welsh language in areas of higher density linguistic significance. There is a need to examine the topic, review policies, propose improvements and in some cases develop new policies. Due to the complex nature of the field, this is a significant piece of work.

8.2 Some important considerations

The Commission considered a number of relevant policy and guidance documents in the field of town and country planning.

Planning Policy Wales is a statement of Welsh Government policies in land use planning (Welsh Government, 2024b), with the aim of ensuring that the planning regime in Wales contributes to sustainable development while improving social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being. The Commission is of the view that better policy guidance is needed in the context of applying sustainable development principles in regard to the Welsh language and, in particular, the long-term sustainability of areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 is the national development framework that sets the strategic direction for Wales over the next twenty years (Welsh Government, 2021c). In the Commission's view, the Plan should do more to recognise the spatial distribution of Welsh speakers and better guidance should be provided to Corporate Joint Committees as they go about delivering Strategic Development Plans.

Technical Advice Notes provide technical guidance to stakeholders regarding the interpretation of the requirements of national planning policy. The content of *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 20: Planning and the Welsh Language* is particularly important, along with its relevance to the other technical notes (Welsh Government, 2017b). A comprehensive review of *TAN 20* is needed in order to strengthen guidance and advice available to planning authorities as they prepare development plans and assess and make decisions on planning permission. It will also be necessary to consider the links with other relevant technical notes in regard to Welsh.

The *Development Plans Manual* provides guidance to planning authority officers responsible for preparing and implementing development plans (Welsh Government, 2020b). Better guidance on the Welsh language needs to be given in the *Development Plans Manual*. This should include clarification of and guidance on the relationship between the formulation and implementation of Integrated Sustainability Appraisals, Welsh language impact assessments and the development plan preparation process.

It would be useful to improve awareness and skills among some town and country planners in connection with the fundamentals of language planning. Similarly, we recognise that some language planners would benefit from more appropriate knowledge and skills in the field of town and country planning. The Commission would welcome a review of higher education provision to ensure that practitioners, graduates and students possess appropriate language planning skill sets within the context of town and country planning.

8.3 The Commission's next steps and the policy-making process

In the autumn of 2023, the Commission decided to examine existing policies with a view to making detailed recommendations in this area. A workshop was organised for town and country planning experts and language planners to discuss problems and complexities associated with both policy areas, policy priorities, and policy actions that could be taken to improve the situation.

In Welsh-speaking communities, areas of higher density linguistic significance can be an important mechanism for implementing some policies. It would be possible in these areas to use policy variation to meet the particular needs of Welsh-speaking communities. But policies also need to be looked at from a Welsh language perspective in a Wales-wide context.

Less progress has been made in terms of the Welsh language within town and country planning policy than in other policy areas. As a result, recommendations cannot solely or primarily concentrate on the variation of policy. The whole field needs to be re-examined.

Town and country planning needs to be considered in other parts of Wales as well as in areas of higher density linguistic significance. The Commission came to the conclusion that it would be unwise to discuss this area in detail in two separate reports (namely in this report, and then in the report to be published by 2026 on communities in other parts of Wales). It would be better to reach conclusions, and make relevant recommendations, in one document.

As the Commission has already undertaken a considerable amount of work in this regard, there is no need to wait until 2026 before publishing findings and recommendations. The Commission intends to publish a report that will make detailed recommendations regarding town and country planning by December 2024.

Recommendation 35: The Welsh Government should make changes to town and country planning policies and guidance in order to strengthen the relationship with sustainability objectives in regard to the Welsh language, and in particular in the context of community linguistic sustainability. Some of the changes should lead to new policies and approaches that will be operational within areas of higher density

linguistic significance, and others to policies and approaches that will be operational throughout Wales.

The Commission recommends that changes be made in the following areas:

- The Welsh Government should ensure that *Planning Policy Wales* provides better guidance in relation to principles of sustainable development regarding the Welsh language, and in particular, the long-term sustainability of areas of higher density linguistic significance.
- The Welsh Government should review *TAN 20* in order to strengthen the guidance and advice given to planning authorities as they prepare development plans and make decisions about planning permission.
- The Welsh Government should review the *Development Plans Manual* so that better guidance can be provided in relation to the sustainability of the Welsh language, and in particular the long-term sustainability of areas of higher density linguistic significance, as planning authorities produce Integrated Sustainability Appraisals.
- The Welsh Government should work with the Royal Town Planning Institute, language planners and universities to review higher education provision to ensure that practitioners, graduates and students have appropriate language planning skill sets with regard to town and country planning.

The Commission will make its recommendations in full in a dedicated report by December 2024.

9 Equality, diversity and inclusion

9.1 Inclusive Welsh-speaking communities

Welsh-speaking communities should be places where the Welsh language belongs to everyone. The Commission thus considered issues of equality, diversity and inclusion.

9.2 Welsh language and protected characteristics

The Welsh Government has a range of equality, diversity and inclusion policies. These are all-Wales policies and are relevant to Welsh speakers (including Welsh speakers with protected characteristics) in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Equalities policy in the United Kingdom primarily relates to protected characteristics. Language itself is not a protected characteristic according to the Equality Act 2010. Yet, for many Welsh speakers, it operates as if it were a protected characteristic. Moreover, speakers of minoritised languages have faced structural disadvantage in the past, and in some areas of Wales, as discussed in the section on Census 2021, it could be argued that Welsh speakers as a group still face relative disadvantage in some socioeconomic matters.

Because language is not a protected characteristic, language groups risk being excluded from discussions about equality, diversity and inclusion. But, as the Welsh-speaking group is a minoritised group, ensuring the prosperity of the Welsh language and its speakers is compatible with the wider emphasis within public policy on ensuring equity for individuals from minority backgrounds.

Furthermore, the Welsh-speaking group is not a homogeneous group. Diversity exists within the group, and a significant number of Welsh speakers belong to other minority groups as well, including groups with protected characteristics.

More research is needed to understand intersectionality between (and within) minority groups in Welsh-speaking communities. It is sometimes assumed that rural and semi-rural areas are typified by different patterns of protected characteristics to those often prevalent in metropolitan centres, and also that the lived experiences of minority group members differ between these areas. Not enough research exists to verify the extent to which this hypothesis holds true in Wales, or to what extent (if any) considerations to do with the Welsh language are relevant. A rural context, and the socioeconomic disadvantage of some areas, may be more significant than language.

As scrutinising the Welsh Government's all-Wales equality policies do not fall within the Commission's terms of reference, there is no attempt here to examine all nine protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010 in terms of their relationship with the Welsh language. Instead, we will focus on two specific areas in which the Welsh Government has recently published strategies, namely the *Anti-racist Wales Action Plan* (Welsh Government, 2022d) and the *LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales* (Welsh Government, 2023i). The Commission does not seek to make detailed policy recommendations here, but rather to understand where further policy work might need to be undertaken in the context of areas of higher density linguistic significance, and how that could be facilitated. Equality is as important in Welsh-speaking communities as it is in other parts of Wales.

9.3 Race, ethnicity and the Welsh language

Definitions of race and ethnicity can change over time, but in whatever way social categories are defined, racial or ethnic minorities have always existed within the Welsh-speaking community (Brooks, 2021). Today, ethnic minorities are a growing part of the Welsh-speaking community. Nevertheless, as in other western countries, Wales still faces issues of racism, ethnic prejudice, and forms of social disadvantage which are often structural in nature.

Issues connected to ethnicity and language can intersect within the lived experiences of individuals, and in this context it is worth noting that majority and minoritised languages, and their associated speaker groups, can often differ in terms of social power. Thus, issues of equality and inclusion within majority and minoritised linguistic communities may differ in some ways, and as a result, different policy solutions may be required in different situations. Although work is ongoing to better understand some of the implications of this (see Bermingham & Higham, 2018; Guma & Jones, 2021; Jones, 2015; Neal et al., 2021; Woods, 2022), further work is needed.

9.4 Census 2021: race and the Welsh language

There are many ways to define social categories in the field of race and ethnicity. The analysis used here of Welsh speakers from an ethnic minority background draws on figures and categories used by the Office for National Statistics in censuses between 2001 and 2021 in Wales.

In 2001, 5,536 Welsh speakers in Wales reported belonging to groups other than the white group. By 2011, the number had risen to 10,969, and by 2021 to 16,036. Between 2001 and 2011, and then between 2011 and 2021, there was a very significant growth in the numbers of Welsh speakers belonging to groups other than the white group.

Table 9.1: Race and the Welsh language

	Numbers of Welsh speakers			Change in numbers	Percentage change in numbers
	2001	2011	2021	2001 to 2021	2001 to 2021
White	576,832	551,047	522,259	-54,573	-9%
Mixed	2,910	5,027	7,405	+4,495	+154%
Asian	1,648	4,174	5,536	+3,888	+236%
Black	443	978	1,597	+1,154	+260%
Other	535	790	1,498	+963	+180%

In addition to absolute numbers, it is also useful to consider percentages. In Census 2021, 18% of the white group in Wales reported being able to speak Welsh, 16% of the mixed group, 6% (6.4%) of the Asian group, 6% (6.1%) of the Black group, and 6% (5.9%) of the

'Other' group (Trystan and Begum, 2023). The difference between the white group and the mixed group is therefore not very significant. But the difference between the white and mixed groups on the one hand, and the Asian, Black and Other groups on the other, is more substantial.

These statistics can be analysed by local authority. In those counties with a higher percentage of Welsh speakers, there is a significant difference between the percentage of the white population who can speak Welsh and the percentage of the Black and Asian population who can speak Welsh. In Gwynedd, for example, 66% of the white population can speak Welsh, but only 15% of the Black population and 14% of the Asian population can speak Welsh. A difference also exists between groups in local authority areas where the percentage of Welsh speakers is lower than the national average. However, the gap here is not as large. In the Vale of Glamorgan, for example, 12% of the white population can speak Welsh, 9% of the Asian population and 4% of the Black population.

The highest percentages of Welsh speakers in different ethnic groups are to be found however in counties with a higher percentage of Welsh speakers. In Anglesey, 56% of the white group, 51% of the mixed group, 22% of the Black group and 17% of the Asian group said they could speak Welsh. Anglesey has the highest percentages of Welsh speakers in groups other than the white group.

More research is needed. Currently, there are no MSOA or LSOA-level analyses of intersections between race and language, an obvious deficiency in terms of understanding of the field. In Gwynedd, for example, it is impossible to know whether there is a meaningful difference between Bangor (where the percentage of pupils in Welsh-medium education is lower than in the rest of the county) and the rest of Gwynedd in terms of the ability of different members of minority ethnic groups to speak Welsh. Without analyses at MSOA or LSOA level, it is also difficult to understand the significance of rural contexts, or the significance of the density of Welsh speakers in particular communities. It may be easier to integrate minorities linguistically in communities with a high density of Welsh speakers, but this assumption is difficult to verify. A fuller analysis of Census 2021 data could therefore contribute to public policy debate, for example about Welsh language provision in schools.

9.5 *Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and the Welsh language*

The Commission agrees fully with the Welsh Government's vision of an anti-racist Wales and wishes to see Welsh-speaking communities at the heart of this. Public policy in areas of higher density linguistic significance should promote equality, diversity and inclusion, and these social values should be core values in the community as well.

The Welsh Government's main policy document, the *Anti-racist Wales Action Plan*, includes a section referring to the Welsh language (2022d). Policy actions set out include: gaining a better understanding of the lived experience of people from ethnic minority communities; improving representation in the workforce; commissioning the National Centre for Learning Welsh to review strategies to promote access to Welsh; increasing the number of minority ethnic people attending Welsh-medium education; developing multilingual anti-racist resources; using appropriate Welsh language terminology; and ensuring Welsh-medium educational resources are anti-racist.

The Commission agrees with these actions, but it should be noted that there is no reference to race and ethnicity within the specific context of Welsh-speaking communities, or Welsh as a community language.

9.6 LGBTQ+ identities and the Welsh language

Individuals with LGBTQ+ identities have always been part of Welsh-speaking society. Their contribution has been multi-faceted, but this does not mean that homophobia has not existed or that it does not exist today.

As society has become more aware of diversity, there has been increased interest in important figures in Welsh language literature and history with LGBTQ+ identities such as Cranogwen and Prosser Rhys. This has coincided with a growth in contemporary Welsh language LGBTQ+ activity, for example in literature, theatre, music, visual media, and activities at the National Eisteddfod. In welcoming these recent developments, we should also acknowledge Welsh language debate in the public sphere that took place in the 1990s following the creation of the Welsh language pressure group CYLCH (*Cymdeithas yr Hoywon a'r Lesbiaid Cymraeg eu Hiaith* [The Welsh-speaking Gay and Lesbian Society]). This movement directly tackled homophobia within Welsh-speaking society, out-migration from Welsh communities and Wales, and prejudice against the Welsh language.

There is little qualitative evidence as to the possible (or otherwise) relationship between the Welsh language and the lived experiences of those with LGBTQ+ identities. There is no evidence that the Welsh language is at the root of negative experiences or lack of inclusion that some Welsh speakers with LGBTQ+ identities experience, although the negative experiences and lack of inclusion are often expressed through Welsh. It is possible that exclusion in Welsh-speaking communities may be the result of patterns of diversity in rural areas generally, as well as the unique challenges faced by these areas such as a lack of infrastructure that consequently impacts upon social networks.

It is important to note, however, that one study of the intersection of the LGBTQ+ identities of Welsh speakers raised issues of inclusion and representation within Welsh-speaking communities (Morris and Parker, 2024). The study's authors noted in a media article that 'an obvious theme was the feeling that traditional Welsh values can act as a barrier to feelings of belonging among LGBTQ+ people' (BBC Cymru Fyw, 2023).

9.7 Census 2021: LGBTQ+ identities and the Welsh language

Census 2021 was the first census to ask about sexual orientation and gender identity, by way of two voluntary questions for the population aged 16 or over. 2.4 million people in Wales (92.4% of the population) answered the question about sexual orientation. Of these, 2.3 million (89.4%) described their sexual orientation as 'Straight/Heterosexual', 38,000 (1.5%) as 'Gay or Lesbian', and 32,000 (1.2%) as 'Bisexual.' 7,000 (0.3%) chose 'other sexual orientation.' Together, 77,000 (3.0%) identified with LGB+ sexual orientation.

The percentage identifying as 'Gay or Lesbian' was highest in Cardiff (2.4%). But the percentage identifying as 'Bisexual' was highest in Ceredigion (2.6%), and there were also high percentages in Cardiff (2.4%), Gwynedd (1.6%) and Swansea (1.5%). Ceredigion and Gwynedd were the only local authorities in Wales with more people identifying as 'Bisexual' (2.6% and 1.6%) than 'Gay or Lesbian' (1.5% and 1.3%). The highest

percentages reporting 'other sexual orientation' were in Ceredigion (0.7%) and Cardiff (0.5%). The highest percentages who identified as 'Pansexual' were also in Ceredigion and Cardiff (0.2%). The percentage who identified as 'Asexual' was also highest in Ceredigion (0.2%). The percentage reporting 'Queer' was highest in Ceredigion, Cardiff and Gwynedd (0.1% each).

In total, 2.4 million people (93.7% of the population) answered the question about gender identity. Of these, 93.3% declared that their gender identity is the same as their sex registered at birth, and 0.4% that their gender identity is different to their sex registered at birth. The highest percentages that indicated a gender identity different to the sex registered at birth were in Cardiff and Ceredigion (0.7%). The highest percentage who identified as 'non-binary' was also in Ceredigion (0.2%).

Analysis of this data, cross-referenced with Welsh language ability, was not publicly available during the Commission's deliberations. But it is worth noting that Ceredigion and Gwynedd are among the local authority areas with some of the highest percentages in Wales of people with LGBTQ+ identities and transgender identities. This offers a different narrative to the suggestion that semi-rural counties might have less diversity in terms of LGBTQ+ identities and transgender identities when compared to other parts of Wales.

Ceredigion and Gwynedd are characterised by a high density of Welsh speakers. It is possible that the highest percentages of LGBTQ+ identities in these counties may be in university towns, and that there is a connection with students at these universities. But it is also possible that university staff with LGBTQ+ identities live in the wider region, and that the presence of universities makes these areas LGBTQ+ friendly destinations for populations not directly associated with the universities. Analysis at the MSOA or LSOA level would be beneficial to better understand some of these trends.

9.8 LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales

The *LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales* includes references to LGBTQ+ Welsh speakers and to the Welsh Government's strategy, *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers* (Welsh Government, 2023i; 2017a). One action relates to the Welsh language directly, which is 'Ensure that LGBTQ+ Welsh speakers have access to Welsh medium support services.' Reference is also made to the Welsh language within the narrative of the Action Plan. Section F, 'Communities, private and family life', states that 'addressing regional inequalities, particularly in rural Wales, and in areas where Welsh is the primary language will help all LGBTQ+ people feel a sense of belonging' (Welsh Government, 2023i: 29).

9.9 The need for further work

More research is needed in the field of equality, diversity and inclusion in relation to the Welsh language, and particularly with regard to Welsh-speaking communities. It would also be beneficial to better understand the relationship between rurality in Wales and protected characteristics.

Some themes regarding potential policy actions emerged during the Commission's discussions.

There was a feeling that providing Welsh-medium education for all children in areas of higher density linguistic significance would reduce the risk that members of certain groups were less likely to become Welsh speakers. The importance of Welsh language immersion centres to equality and inclusion within Welsh-speaking communities was also emphasised.

Celebrating Welsh-speaking role models with protected characteristics was also emphasised, as was the importance of ensuring that sufficient role models are associated with Welsh-speaking or rural communities. There was also a feeling that the overall visibility of, and ease of access to, relevant Welsh language services should be improved in rural areas with a higher density of Welsh speakers.

Improving workplace representation within Welsh-speaking communities was also discussed, including making intensive Welsh learning courses and sabbaticals available to members of communities that are underrepresented in the workplace.

The Commission concluded that it would be beneficial to revisit policy suggestions to ensure coherent action in the field, particularly in regard to the specific context of Welsh-speaking communities.

In order to establish a robust evidence base for that work, a first requirement is to look again at Census 2021 data to cross-reference the ability to speak Welsh with relevant protected characteristics. This should be undertaken at a local level, namely at MSOA or LSOA level, as well as at local authority level. Such an analysis will lay the foundation for further work. In the Commission's view, the best way to achieve this would be by setting up a task and finish group to develop further policy suggestions in relation to protected characteristics and the Welsh language, specifically in relation to Welsh-speaking and rural communities.

Recommendation 36: The Welsh Government should undertake a study of intersections in Census 2021 data between the ability to speak Welsh and relevant protected characteristics. The study should include more detail than that available at local authority level alone, and if it is possible to do so, it should include an analysis at MSOA level, or by combining LSOAs.

Recommendation 37: The Welsh Government should establish a task and finish group to examine issues of equality, diversity and inclusion in relation to the Welsh language. The group should give full consideration to these issues in the context of Welsh as a community language and in areas of higher density linguistic significance. Appropriate consideration should also be given to rurality.

10 Welsh-medium education

10.1 Background and context

Until the last third of the twentieth century, many Welsh-speaking communities were characterised by a very high density of Welsh speakers which enabled intergenerational language transmission to take place in a largely unproblematic manner. For this reason, the need for Welsh-medium education was not as evident in these communities as it was in more English-speaking parts of Wales where a network of Welsh-medium schools was established. Furthermore, as children in Welsh-speaking areas were required to master the English language, English-medium education offered itself as a way to achieve this. The mixed linguistic pattern of education provision within Welsh-speaking communities today, particularly in secondary education, is the historical legacy of this situation.

Today, the linguistic composition of Welsh-speaking communities has changed completely. Without the support of the education system, only in a few communities could children from households where Welsh is not spoken acquire the language. There are also children in Welsh-speaking communities from Welsh-speaking households who do not become fluent in Welsh. Even in communities with the highest density of Welsh speakers, English permeates the life of every child, via online media for example. In many communities, these social changes mean that linguistic models of educational provision which are based on historical patterns are no longer suitable.

In this context, the Commission came to the unanimous view that Welsh-medium provision in many Welsh-speaking communities is not intensive enough to sustain Welsh as a community language in the future. This is particularly true of secondary education. Huge steps forward will have to be taken.

Education has the ability not only to protect and promote existing Welsh-speaking networks but also to create new Welsh speakers. This is essential to maintain and support Welsh-speaking communities. No other policy field has as much influence on the ability to acquire and use language.

10.2 The Welsh Language Education Bill and the work of the Commission

This report was produced during the period between the publication of the Welsh Language Education White Paper and the publication of the Bill itself (Welsh Government, 2023g). The Commission had no knowledge of the contents of the Bill, and it could not reference the Bill to make policy recommendations. The Commission did not know either the extent to which proposals in the White Paper might be incorporated in the Bill. Some parts of this section may therefore have to be interpreted in the context of the new legislative and policy landscape proposed by the Welsh Language Education Bill.

10.3 The school as a linguistically inclusive community

The Commission recognises that there is an interrelationship between Welsh as a school language and Welsh as a language of the community. In communities where the school and the community reinforce each other linguistically, a positive environment is created for Welsh and for intergenerational language transmission. This needs to be taken into account as we consider how to organise education.

There is also evidence that providing Welsh-medium education to all pupils can reinforce a sense of belonging to the local community (Cunnington Wynn, 2014). It makes it more likely that young people will decide to stay in these communities. In the context of depopulation, this is also an important consideration.

Schools are a core part of the social network of their communities. Their contribution at the community level should be seen as a public good. This should be kept in mind as policy is developed. For example, it would be better in some instances to federate schools and share resources between them (in the use of technology for example), rather than close them.

10.4 Well-being of the child—social inclusion

Primarily, however, the Commission wishes to emphasise children's well-being. The Commission agreed with the then Minister for Education and Welsh Language when, in his foreword to the Welsh Language Education White Paper in 2023, he stated that 'every pupil in Wales therefore deserves to become a Welsh speaker' (Welsh Government, 2023g: 4). In this context, the Commission notes the specific circumstances of Welsh-speaking communities, and the particular need to ensure that all children living in these communities acquire the Welsh language with confidence and are literate in it.

In areas with a high density of Welsh speakers, Welsh is the language of many community activities, and is often the language of civic life locally.

It is vital from an equality perspective that all children living in these communities become confident in Welsh. This is a matter of community inclusion, of linguistic equity and of ensuring that all children feel that they belong.

The Commission is thus concerned that in some areas of higher density linguistic significance some children acquire the language and become confident Welsh speakers, while others are not afforded the same opportunity. The Commission is particularly aware of the need to ensure that certain social groups do not face structural disadvantage in terms of access to Welsh-medium education: children from various national and/or ethnic backgrounds, or with different backgrounds in terms of social class, should enjoy the same opportunities to become confident Welsh speakers.

In areas of higher density linguistic significance, the Commission envisages that Welsh will have an active role within the local labour market. Depriving children of the ability to speak Welsh fluently is detrimental in terms of equality of opportunity and undermines social mobility locally. All children should acquire registers in Welsh that will assist them in gaining employment in those parts of the economy where Welsh language ability is valued.

In this context, literacy in Welsh is important. All pupils should possess this vital skill. Literacy is essential if pupils are to possess a full range of skills in the minority language. Improving the literacy of pupils and students should be an important consideration at every stage of their education, including within the context of post-14 and post-16 education.

Ensuring that inclusive Welsh-medium education is available to all is the best way to improve children's language skills in the long term. The Commission accepts that this cannot be achieved immediately, and that the current priority is to move schools along a

language continuum. Nevertheless, there should be consensus that inclusive Welsh-medium education is the ultimate aim.

10.5 Becoming confident and literate in Welsh

Having given due consideration to all these matters, the Commission came to a firm conclusion. Upon completing their education, all children in areas of higher density linguistic significance should be confident in their use of the Welsh language and be literate in it.

Recommendation 38: Upon completing statutory education, all children in areas of higher density linguistic significance should be confident and literate in both oral and written Welsh, and this should be reflected in public policy.

Recommendation 39: An aim should be set that, within areas of higher density linguistic significance, all schools should in the fullness of time offer inclusive Welsh-medium education to enable all pupils from all backgrounds to acquire Welsh confidently and become literate in it.

10.6 Childcare, play and early years

A child's educational journey begins before the start of statutory education with childcare, play and early years provision. This is a key time for language acquisition. It also offers an opportunity for children from households where Welsh is not spoken to be immersed in the Welsh language. Central to immersion is the principle that a child should hear and begin to use the minority language as early as possible.

Given the importance of this age group, it is not clear why—in some cases—different language policies exist for two-year-olds (for example) compared to children in statutory education who are only a few years older. The primary sector in areas of higher density linguistic significance is often distinguished by a strong Welsh language policy. This is not necessarily true of the non-maintained nursery sector, even though it mostly caters for the same children. Although local authorities are unable to set a language policy for the non-maintained sector, it is difficult to justify this inconsistency. Most non-maintained nursery settings (for example, day nurseries or play groups) receive grants (and therefore public funds) that pay for childcare services such as Flying Start, the Childcare Offer and education for three-year-olds.

It would be sensible in areas of higher density linguistic significance to link language policy in the childcare, play and early years sector with language policy in statutory primary education. This would ensure more successful language acquisition, better social inclusion, more frequent use of Welsh and would also benefit the child's well-being. It would also ensure consistency in public policy.

Recommendation 40: Within areas of higher density linguistic significance, local authorities should encourage and support all non-maintained nursery settings and play groups to use Welsh language provision in early education, Flying Start and the Childcare Offer. There should be investment in the workforce to achieve the goal.

Statutory Education

10.7 Welsh Language Education White Paper proposals in regard to areas of higher density linguistic significance

The Welsh Language Education White Paper was published in March 2023 (Welsh Government, 2023g) and welcomed by the Commission. The Commission was particularly pleased with the White Paper's central proposition that the medium of instruction in schools in Wales should be moved along a language continuum. This will ensure more pupils having more contact with the Welsh language, with the aim of achieving public policy goals in relation to language acquisition.

The Commission also welcomed commitments made to the linguistic well-being of Welsh-speaking communities. The Commission agreed with the then Minister for Education and Welsh Language in his foreword to the White Paper that education policy needs to assist in 'protecting Welsh-speaking communities with high percentages of Welsh speakers but which have shown a decline' (Welsh Government, 2023g: 4).

The Commission welcomed the proposal that Welsh language targets set by local authorities could be varied in specific areas, and it could be possible to have higher expectations for Welsh-medium provision in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

In particular, the Commission welcomed clauses 59 and 89 of the White Paper:

As part of the authority's considerations in determining in which catchment areas it wants to see an increase in Welsh-medium provision, we propose that the authority will have to consider the demographics of the Welsh language in those catchment areas. In practice, evidence from the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities, tasked with making recommendations regarding areas of linguistic sensitivity, will form part of what Ministers will need to consider when setting targets for local authorities (Welsh Government, 2023g: 21).

In some local authorities, where the density of Welsh speakers is generally high and the Welsh language is an integral part of the social fabric of the area, the challenge is to protect these areas from language shift and to stabilise the density of speakers so that they remain Welsh-speaking communities. The evidence of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities in relation to areas of linguistic significance will provide a basis for setting higher expectations in such areas. In other local authorities, where there is a lower density of Welsh speakers, the challenge is to grow the number of Welsh speakers through the education system (Welsh Government, 2023g: 33).

10.8 Categorising schools according to language medium

Schools in Wales are placed in language categories according to the nature of their Welsh-medium provision. Non-statutory guidance currently informs this, but the White Paper proposed to give Welsh Ministers powers to set statutory descriptions for the categorisation of schools.

In the Welsh Government's non-statutory guidance, there are three categories of language use in schools. A Category 1 school is described as an 'English-medium school', a Category 2 school is described as a 'Dual language school', and a Category 3 school as a

‘Welsh-medium school.’ In the non-statutory guidance, a secondary school can also be designated as a Category 3P school, which is a ‘Designated Welsh-medium school.’

The Commission was not aware of the content of the Welsh Language Education Bill as it prepared its report. But the current definition under non-statutory guidance for Category 3 Welsh-medium secondary schools states that at least 60% of children should receive at least 70% of their ‘school activities (curricular and extra-curricular) through the medium of Welsh’. The definition of a Category 3P secondary school states that all children are to receive at least 90% of their ‘school activities (curricular and extra-curricular) through the medium of Welsh’ (Welsh Government, 2021e: 17).

For primary schools, there are no ‘Designated Welsh-medium’ schools, and the definition of a Welsh-medium school states that ‘from aged 7 onwards at least 80% of [a] learner’s school activities (both curricular and extra-curricular) will be in Welsh’ (Welsh Government, 2021e: 15).

The current situation in secondary schools in Welsh-speaking communities is of greater concern than the situation in primary schools.

Within Welsh-speaking communities, educational provision in the secondary sector is currently not strong enough from a linguistic point of view to halt the decline of the Welsh language, let alone reverse that process. There are not enough Category 3 or 3P secondary schools in these areas, and there is uncertainty whether the language policy of some Category 3 schools is sufficiently strong. The educational use of Welsh among older children and young people within the secondary sector also declines as they get older. This is reflected by the fact that the numbers continuing to study through the medium of Welsh at GCSE and A Level generally decreases in comparison to the language medium used by the same pupils earlier in their educational career.

If the Welsh language is to flourish in these areas, the presumption should be that public policy aims to increase the use of Welsh as a living community language. Schools in areas of higher density linguistic significance should therefore become confident Welsh-speaking communities themselves.

The Commission recognises that Welsh-medium secondary education has historically been provided through different models in different regions of Wales, and that there is inconsistency between the models of provision developed in the former counties of Dyfed and (the old) Gwynedd. Historically, in much of the former Gwynedd county council area, Welsh was adopted as the main language used as the medium for education, administration and social life of schools, with some exceptions (notably in the largest towns). In the former county of Dyfed meanwhile, two models were developed, namely (a) the parallel establishment of Welsh-medium and English-medium secondary schools within the same area, and (b) increasing the use of Welsh as a medium of education, administration and social life within bilingual schools that were often streamed by language.

The historical fact that different models of Welsh-medium education provision were developed means that secondary schools in areas of higher density linguistic significance will start their language journey from very different points. Recommendations that move schools along a language continuum will therefore require an element of flexibility.

One way to provide that flexibility would be to allow Welsh Ministers to exempt a few secondary schools in areas of higher density linguistic significance from the requirement to be Category 3 schools. These schools could therefore implement Category 2 policies for the time being. As some of these schools are currently Category 1, in some cases designation as Category 2 schools would be a step forward. We do not anticipate that more than a minimum number of schools would be exempt from the requirement to be Category 3 schools, almost invariably within towns of regional importance, and any exemption should be reviewed regularly.

A policy of exemption would mean that a minority of pupils would not receive a full Welsh-medium education. This is not the best long-term solution, but it could avoid disputes in towns of regional importance where English-medium secondary schools are currently located.

Exemption should not mean that the Welsh Government does not aim to ensure that 'within areas of higher density linguistic significance all schools should in the fullness of time offer inclusive Welsh-medium education that enables all pupils from all backgrounds to acquire Welsh confidently and become literate in it (see above, recommendation 39).'

Secondary schools in areas of higher density linguistic significance need to be moved along a linguistic continuum, and the journey's endpoint should be inclusive Welsh-medium education.

Recommendation 41: In areas of higher density linguistic significance, the intention should be that primary schools are Welsh-medium schools, and that schools in the secondary sector should be Welsh-medium schools (category 3) or Designated Welsh-medium schools (category 3P), except in the case of schools named by local authorities for exceptional reasons. If schools are not currently in these categories, they should be so within a reasonable period.

10.9 Welsh-medium provision within Category 3 schools

The Commission acknowledges that current guidance for Category 3 schools sets minimum requirements for Welsh-medium provision, and that schools are free to offer more provision if they wish. However, these current minimum requirements are not in themselves ambitious enough for some schools in some areas. In Gwynedd, for example, Welsh-medium provision in some Category 3 secondary schools significantly exceeds baseline percentages. We note too that guidelines for Category 3 and 3P schools mean that there can be crucial differences between the two types of school.

The Commission is concerned that the Category 3 model, which has a baseline provision of 60% of children receiving 70% of their education through the medium of Welsh, could contain weaknesses:

- It is theoretically possible for 40% of pupils to avoid any Welsh-medium education at all, although this is not normally the case.
- Planning for and accommodating varied linguistic requirements of this type is complex, and therefore challenging for the school administration and also teachers who often have to use both languages within the same classroom and in the same lessons.

- Catering for the language requirements of two cohorts of pupils in this way is not a prudent use of time and human resources, nor is it good pedagogical practice. In such circumstances, there will be a continual tendency for the English language to take precedence.
- Within this model, pupils who chose English-medium or partially English-medium education will also be inclined to self-define as an English-speaking group. It is very likely that English will be the language of interaction between the English-speaking group and the Welsh-speaking group, and this in turn will influence the linguistic practices of the Welsh speakers.
- A tendency may emerge for pupils from English-speaking backgrounds to be more likely to choose English-medium provision, thereby causing the Welsh-speaking group to be less inclusive.
- Consequently, it will be difficult for the school to be an inclusive Welsh-speaking community, a vital step in the wider project of creating an inclusive Welsh-speaking community in the vicinity.

Having considered this, the Commission concluded that the best model to cater for the educational requirements of pupils and future citizens are Welsh-medium schools on the pattern of the Category 3P category, or Category 3 Welsh-medium schools that are nearer to the linguistic threshold for Category 3P schools. These schools are also best placed to protect and reinvigorate the Welsh language as an inclusive community language and are a tool for reversing language shift.

It would therefore be best if the Welsh-medium provision of Category 3 schools in areas of higher density linguistic significance was nearer to the threshold for Category 3P schools than to the minimum requirement for Category 3.

In areas of higher density linguistic significance, Category 3 schools should aim to increase their Welsh-medium provision. Nothing prevents a local authority from being ambitious in regard to Welsh-medium education within its schools, or for a school to set ambitious plans for its own Welsh-medium provision. Doing this would increase children's confidence in Welsh, improve their Welsh literacy, and probably increase their social use of the language.

Recommendation 42: Within areas of higher density linguistic significance, local authorities in conjunction with schools should, within the boundaries of their language-medium category, determine the percentage of Welsh-medium provision that pupils are expected to receive within particular schools. This percentage should be ambitious enough to increase the Welsh-medium provision.

10.10 Data deficiencies regarding Welsh-medium provision

Few official documents or reports include data on the number and percentage of children who study over half of their education through the medium of Welsh. This is not shown on Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data.

The Commission also considered local authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs). A WESP contains data noting the percentage of children who study a particular percentage of their subjects through the medium of Welsh.

Some local authorities publish more detailed data than others in WESPs. However, no local authority publishes sufficiently detailed WESP data.

Furthermore, the WESPs of several local authorities do not measure against the baselines which, in current non-statutory guidance, define schools' language categories. Local authorities, whether through their WESPs or official reports, should publish how many children receive certain percentages of their education through the medium of Welsh, specifically 50% and 70%. Publishing such data would bring transparency to the measurement of performance, forming a basis for better public policy.

Recommendation 43: Detailed data regarding Welsh-medium provision within areas of higher density linguistic significance should be published. Local authorities should publish data with regard to the baseline of the language category of schools, and also measure how many and what percentage of children receive 50% and 70% of their education through the medium of Welsh. Local authorities should publish such data for all schools (and should also publish the authority-wide data in their WESP).

10.11 Welsh-medium education progression

One of the hallmarks of many children's educational journey in areas of higher density linguistic significance is that their exposure to Welsh-medium education decreases as a pupil gets older.

As pupils move from the primary to the secondary sector, there is a drop in the number and percentage of children receiving most of their education through the medium of Welsh. There is then a further drop in number and percentage in post-14 education, and again in post-16 education.

This trend has several unfortunate connotations. One is the psychological tendency to connect Welsh with childhood experiences, and English more closely with adulthood and the world of work. This tendency is part of the way majority Western cultures have conceived of minoritised languages and is related to language shift to the majority language.

This weakness is exemplified by the fact that pupils as they get older are less likely to sit exams through the medium of Welsh.

Increasing the numbers of those studying a range of post-14 and post-16 qualifications through the medium of Welsh (and sitting exams in Welsh) is key to ensuring a future workforce that will be confident and literate in Welsh. It would also be likely to increase the number of students studying through the medium of Welsh later, in tertiary and vocational education, and in universities. Areas of higher density linguistic significance should have defined targets, and resources to support them in meeting these targets.

10.12 Estyn's role in improving Welsh-medium provision

External regulators play an important role in evaluating the effectiveness of Welsh-medium education provision. In areas of higher density linguistic significance, Estyn should inspect this provision in a way that encourages higher expectations. Estyn should verify the percentage of pupils receiving Welsh-medium education within a school, paying particular

attention to progression and the percentage studying post-14 and post-16 qualifications through the medium of Welsh.

Estyn's role also includes inspecting local authorities, currently on a six-year cycle. Estyn should have a role in evaluating the progress of local authorities towards realising the aims of their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs). It should do so formally and regularly, every two years for example.

Recommendation 44: Estyn should develop supplementary inspection guidance for inspecting Welsh-medium provision in areas of higher density linguistic significance, including as the language of post-14 and post-16 education. It should also look at the percentage studying post-14 and post-16 qualifications through the medium of Welsh.

Recommendation 45: Working with local authorities, Estyn should formally inspect progress in Welsh-medium provision against the aims of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans every two years, submitting their conclusions to the local authority Cabinet.

10.13 Voluntary and foundation schools

Voluntary and foundation schools should be subject to national policies on Welsh-medium provision. If voluntary and foundation schools do not move along a language continuum, attempts to move other schools along a language continuum may be undermined.

Recommendation 46: Voluntary and foundation schools should follow national and local authority policies in regard to Welsh-medium provision.

10.14 Social use of Welsh

Extra-curricular activities conducted through the medium of Welsh play a crucial role in reinforcing Welsh as a social language.

The existence of communities where Welsh was the main means of communication ensured the survival of the language. Within the context of the unstable bilingualism that exists in areas of higher density linguistic significance today, strengthening Welsh language institutions that can form language communities will be key.

Amongst the institutions that could be thought of as communities in and of themselves, schools are the most important. As they are moved along a continuum in the direction of the normalisation of Welsh-medium education, care should be taken to ensure that Welsh becomes the primary medium of their administrative, social, extra-curricular and cultural life—that is, the habitual language of school life except in special or exceptional circumstances.

We recognise that the *Siarter Iaith* (Language Charter) has been successful in various ways in increasing the social use of Welsh in primary and secondary schools. However, its effectiveness is not adequately evaluated, and the Commission is of the view this could be done better through regulation.

Estyn does provide some useful commentary on the social use of Welsh in schools. It would be useful to include this as a theme in Estyn's Inspection Framework in order to

monitor the success and implementation of the *Siarter Iaith* within schools. The aim should be to move schools along a continuum, so that Welsh becomes the primary language of their administrative, social, extra-curricular and cultural life.

Recommendation 47: The Welsh Government should place a duty on local authorities to evaluate the extra-curricular and social use of Welsh, including the effectiveness of the *Siarter Iaith* in primary and secondary schools, and to report on this on an annual basis. Estyn should inspect the operation of the *Siarter Iaith* within the wider context of the school.

10.15 Welsh language immersion centres

Helping non-Welsh speaking newcomers to learn Welsh is a matter of priority. This can be done most effectively in Welsh language immersion centres.

There is a strong case for expanding and intensifying this type of provision, specifically in areas of higher density linguistic significance, ensuring that appropriate resources are available. Immersion centres address more than one aspect of public policy, namely equality strategy as well as language strategy.

Immersion centres are essential for maintaining and supporting the infrastructure of Welsh-medium education. Without a network of centres, there is the potential for latecomers to the local education system to change the formal and informal language of schools.

From an equality perspective, immersion centres promote inclusion, while equipping latecomers with a vital skill to be able to integrate into their new communities. These centres often cater for children who have moved to Wales from other parts of the United Kingdom, as well as from outside the United Kingdom.

While recognising that the grant provided to all local authorities in Wales for immersion provision is extremely useful, there should be recognition that significant and consequently more costly provision is required in Welsh-speaking communities. Because immersion centres are so important, their budgets should be protected and expanded, even at times of fiscal austerity.

Opportunities should be taken to share good practice on immersion centres. Investment in research is also necessary to continue to develop effective methodologies in the field, and to make them widely available. Various elements of specific training could be developed nationally for staff and future staff as teaching in a centre of this kind is a specialist skill.

The expansion of immersion techniques in areas of higher density linguistic significance could also be considered, by ensuring that the National Centre for Learning Welsh provides opportunities for parents/carers and families to learn Welsh at the same time as their children, and that a range of partners (local *Mentrau Iaith* and the National Centre for Learning Welsh, for example) provide opportunities for the family unit to gain confidence and use their Welsh socially.

Recommendation 48: The Welsh Government and local authorities should ensure that Welsh language immersion centres receive sufficient resources to achieve their aims.

10.16 Education workforce recruitment

The Commission recognises that recruiting into the education workforce is a growing national challenge. Determined efforts will be required to recruit within areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Resources should be prioritised for staff in schools that aim to increase their Welsh-medium provision. Many strategies will be required, including sabbaticals for staff to learn and refresh their Welsh language skills. This should be part of local authority strategic planning, with provision available locally and contextualised according to the need of the school. There should be collaboration with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to identify suitable and appropriate opportunities for staff, in order to ensure strategic oversight and expert leadership in the field.

Recommendation 49: Within areas of higher density linguistic significance, the Welsh Government should plan to meet the needs of the education workforce, ensuring that staff are confident as plans are put in place to increase Welsh-medium provision in schools.

10.17 Tertiary and vocational education

There is not enough Welsh-medium provision in tertiary and vocational education provision in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

In its latest report, published in 2021, the Committee of Experts, the committee that reports to the Council of Europe on the United Kingdom's compliance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, noted that the United Kingdom had reached the highest levels of compliance in relation to the Welsh language in most fields. However, this was not the case for technical and vocational education. Indeed, Welsh-medium technical and vocational education is one of three areas in which the United Kingdom was recommended to take action (Council of Europe, 2021: 14). The Commission supports the position of the Committee of Experts and echoes the call to expand the provision of technical and vocational education through the medium of Welsh.

Recent research on mobility in England shows that, by the age of 30, 40% of graduates have left the area where they lived at the age of 16, compared to 20% of non-graduates (Britton et al., 2021: 11). Further and specific research is needed on the situation in Wales, but in England at least, young people pursuing vocational courses appear to be more likely to stay in their communities than young people attending universities. From a language planning perspective, this is a further reason for expanding Welsh-medium provision in the tertiary and vocational education sector. There is also a need to improve provision more widely, such as education to improve students' Welsh language skills, institutions' language ethos, and develop more additional activities through the medium of Welsh.

It is important that courses and training which serve areas of higher density linguistic significance are linked to the needs of the local economy. A premium should be placed on training and skills that facilitate access to the workforce locally. This is particularly relevant in situations where there may be major economic and employment developments underway such as the proposed nuclear power station in Anglesey.

The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) will be responsible for funding and overseeing post-16 education and research from August 2024, and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has been appointed to advise the Commission on its duties in regard to the Welsh language. As well as working with stakeholders to ensure adequate provision, CTER should set targets as a means of incentivising progress on Welsh-medium provision.

11 Community-based language planning

11.1 The importance of community-based language planning

Implementing the socioeconomic recommendations of this report will provide stronger foundations for the Welsh language in areas of higher density linguistic significance. However, it will still be necessary to influence the interpersonal use of Welsh within communities. To do this, purposeful and energetic community-based language planning will be needed, supported by resolute public policy, adequate resources, and the freedom to take risks and pilot new projects. Given the interpersonal nature of language, this endeavour will need to be at the heart of society and people's interactions.

To make this a reality, the Welsh Government and local authorities need to commit to community-based language planning. Organisations such as Mentrau Iaith, Mudiad Meithrin (the organisation for Welsh-medium playgroups) and Urdd Gobaith Cymru (the Welsh language youth organisation) contribute to the field. Other third sector and community organisations also work naturally through the medium of Welsh. The voluntary work individuals do in support of the Welsh language within communities is just as important.

There are challenges of course, the most significant of which is financial. Austerity, and the consequences of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, have had a negative impact on community-based language planning. The loss of European programmes, such as LEADER and the Rural Development Plan fund (RDP fund), which allowed third sector bodies to deliver projects that had a positive impact on the Welsh language, has been a blow. New programmes funded by the previous United Kingdom Government (the Levelling Up Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund) did not necessarily prioritise the promotion of the Welsh language to the same extent. Moreover, reduction in public expenditure is forcing local authorities to focus their resources on their statutory duties, and on providing services to society's most vulnerable groups. As a result, other work often has to be conducted by the third sector, and bodies such as community groups, and organisations such as Mentrau Iaith, have had to fill gaps.

Nevertheless, there are reasons to be optimistic. There are organisations, networks and individuals in Welsh-speaking communities capable of supporting the Welsh language as a community language. For these to have the strongest possible impact on language use, there should be a public policy commitment to strengthen them.

Recommendation 50: The Welsh Government should ensure a commitment to community-based language planning in all its community-related strategies within areas of higher density linguistic significance. Similarly, local authority corporate plans, Public Service Boards' well-being plans and relevant strategic programmes prepared by Corporate Joint Committees should give due regard to the importance of community-based language planning in areas of higher density linguistic significance and provide adequate resources to it.

11.2 Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 promotion standards

As part of making effective community-based language planning a reality, strategic leadership will be required at local authority level, targeted at communities. One way of providing a policy framework to do this in Welsh-speaking communities would be through the appropriate use of promotion standards included in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

In areas of higher density linguistic significance, promotion standards could be used to place a new duty on relevant bodies—local authorities, national park authorities and Corporate Joint Committees—to develop a community-based language planning strategy.

The Commission believes this could help evolve public policy in a manner that benefits the Welsh language, including targeting interventions in a number of fields of sociolinguistic importance to which we refer in this report. It could also provide a necessary focus for community-based language planning at the micro and meso level in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Section 31 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 defines ‘promotion standard’ as ‘a standard (relating to any activity) that is intended to promote or facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely.’ Schedule 4 to the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 includes two promotion standards, Standard 145 and Standard 146.

Standard 145 reads as follows:

You must produce, and publish on your website, a 5-year strategy that sets out how you propose to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in your area; and the strategy must include (amongst other matters)—

- (a) a target (in terms of the percentage of speakers in your area) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in your area by the end of the 5 year period concerned, and
- (b) a statement setting out how you intend to reach that target;

and you must review the strategy and publish a revised version on your website within 5 years of publishing a strategy (or of publishing a revised strategy).

Standard 146 then places a responsibility on the body concerned to evaluate the success of the strategy as follows: ‘assess to what extent you have followed that strategy and have reached the target set by it...’.

The Commission believes that promotion standards are particularly relevant for Welsh-speaking communities because of their recognition of the importance of language use. Applying such standards to areas of higher density linguistic significance would be particularly beneficial.

Creating within promotion standards a particular obligation with regard to areas of higher density linguistic significance would mean that a specific strategy would have to be developed for promoting the use of Welsh in these areas. This could create a framework for community-based language planning at local authority level within these areas.

Recommendation 51: Standard 145 within Schedule 4 to the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 should include a further obligation in addition to those stated at (a) and (b). (c) would relate to areas of higher density linguistic significance and should read as follows:

(c) [the strategy must include] a document detailing how specific and appropriate provision for areas of higher density linguistic significance is made in your area, with particular emphasis on strengthening and increasing the use of Welsh as a community language.

11.3 Improving data to measure the impact of community language plans

Better data needs to be available to plan for community-based language planning and to measure its impact. As well as core data about language skills, qualitative data is needed about attitudes, confidence and language use. In addition to census figures, a combination of other measurements and additional methods of collecting information would provide an essential comprehensive picture for effective language planning. Aspects of census data can provide useful information about the level of language transmission within households, as *Prosiect BRO*'s statistical work for this report, and the *National policy on Welsh language transmission and use in families* policy, demonstrate (Welsh Government, 2021d). The Welsh Language Use Survey has also offered data on language ability, confidence and frequency of the use of Welsh, but a lack of consistency, and its size, hamper efforts to measure the impact of language planning meaningfully.

It is difficult to measure the viability of community networks that sustain the Welsh language. Although *Prosiect BRO* will help us better understand the situation, a robust framework is required, and there should be investment in the collection of consistent and regular data to ensure firm foundations for community-based language planning.

Recommendation 52: The Welsh Government should, in collaboration with academic researchers and stakeholders, develop a framework to measure the impact of community-based language planning in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

11.4 Intergenerational language transmission

Intergenerational transmission of Welsh is core to the survival of the language. It is a process that takes place at home and through socialisation within the wider community.

The Welsh Government policy, *National Policy on Welsh language transmission and use in Families*, aims to 'support families [where at least one adult can speak Welsh] to develop and expand their use of Welsh within families' (Welsh Government, 2021d: 10). The policy was based on research by Cardiff University commissioned by the Welsh Government (Welsh Government, 2015). The Government, in conjunction with Mudiad Meithrin, are currently trialling the implementation of the policy through interventions based on the behavioural sciences.

The policy notes that for Welsh speakers in north and west Wales, when compared with Welsh speakers in areas of south-east Wales;

... the transmission of Welsh isn't a decision, but an unconscious behaviour. For many, Welsh was the main language they used with their children at all times... These mostly came from Welsh-speaking families, had Welsh-speaking partners, and reported that they were confident in speaking Welsh (Welsh Government, 2021d: 12-13).

The Commission's analysis of Census 2021 data raises concerns that such unconscious behaviour is no longer always present, even in areas with the highest density of Welsh speakers. In light of this evidence, the Commission considers intergenerational language transmission to be a priority. Work is needed to support language transmission within families and communities.

This should emphasise language transmission in the household but also recognise that language is a wider social phenomenon. For this reason, the role of the community, peers, and others should be considered. Work should be based on evidence, behavioural sciences, and best practice from similar fields, in Wales and other countries, that are not directly related to the Welsh language (such as parental literacy and encouraging parent-child reading).

The research that fed into a new transmission policy was a review of interventions made in the field (Welsh Government, 2015). But, it would be fair to say that little has been done on wider language socialisation; for example, the influence of non-Welsh peers and parents on the growth of Welsh. Here, it would be beneficial for language transmission policy to look at Basque to see what lessons might be learned.

One of the aims of the *Cymraeg for Kids* programme (the successor to the *Twf* project) is to influence the language practices of new parents by highlighting the benefits of speaking Welsh with young children. As part of this work is delivered by the health sector, and because of the connection between the health sector and parents, we need to investigate how this contact can be maximised to convey positive messages about the Welsh language.

The childcare, early years and play sector is discussed in the section on education. The pre-school age cohort is a vital group for the socialisation of the use of the Welsh language and ensuring language transmission within families and the community. In the community, potential exists to provide more Welsh language social activities to develop and maintain the practice of speaking Welsh with young children, and to support language use in the social networks of parents, grandparents and guardians, and indeed develop their language skills.

Recommendation 53: The Welsh Government and local authorities should ensure that language transmission, both in the household and in the form of language socialisation outside the family, is central to community-based language planning. Appropriate evidence (including international evidence), behavioural sciences, and best practice in related fields such as parental literacy, and the encouragement of reading between parent and child, should be examined. There should also be research into how to benefit as fully as possible from the connection between parents and the health sector in order to convey positive messages about the Welsh language.

11.5 Supporting children and young people to use Welsh socially

Strengthening Welsh language social networks among children and young people in areas of higher density linguistic significance is essential. From a language planning point of view, no sector has seen more damaging cuts to Welsh language community-based public services than the youth service. As local authorities were forced to focus on investing in essential services for the most vulnerable young people, other services, such as youth clubs, disappeared in many areas.

The Welsh Language Implementation Participation Group (IPG) of the Welsh Government-led Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board wishes to increase Welsh-medium youth services. The Commission would like to see a specific and distinct focus on provision in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

In the light of the influence of technology and global social media where English dominates, reinforcing young people's desire to use Welsh socially is paramount. Urdd Gobaith Cymru, the Wales Federation of Young Farmers Club and Mentrau Iaith work with young people to help them use Welsh with confidence. It is also important to increase language awareness among older young people. Children and young people should be encouraged to take pride in their communities, giving them confidence in their Welsh-speaking identity. It is also important to develop community leaders, a field where the Wales Federation of Young Farmers Clubs has excelled.

The work of Mentrau Iaith and others in nurturing young Welsh language bands and generating interest in contemporary Welsh music is an example of the kind of work that needs to be done. The capacity of Mentrau Iaith and the Urdd should be increased to enable them to provide more informal opportunities to support the Welsh language around the school so that the school, as a Welsh-speaking community in its own right, extends beyond the classroom.

Specific attention needs to be paid to the sports and leisure sector within areas of higher density linguistic significance. Everything possible should be done to ensure that sports and leisure clubs make extensive use of the Welsh language when coaching children and young people. Research by Sport Wales shows that 50% of Welsh-speaking school children in west Wales and 44% of children in north Wales take part in sport three or more times a week (Sport Wales, 2022).

Ensuring more use of the Welsh language in sports clubs would have an extremely positive impact on young people's language use. One recommendation made in a research report about the future of Welsh as a community language on Anglesey was 'to try to influence community leisure activity clubs and coaches to consider the Welsh language as part of their activities' (Hodges et al., 2023: 5). There is no reason to assume that sport is not important for language use in other Welsh-speaking communities too.

To ensure more frequent use of the Welsh language in sports clubs, work needs to be done with sports governing bodies and individual clubs to produce qualified coaches who can speak Welsh, as well as to promote the need to use Welsh with children and young people.

Recommendation 54: The Welsh Government and local authorities should ensure that supporting children and young people to use Welsh with confidence is central to community-based language planning. This should be jointly planned at local authority level with input from the Welsh Language Implementation Participation Group of the Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board. As a central part of this, relevant organisations should ensure the continuation and development of language planning at the micro level.

Recommendation 55: Sports governing bodies should require sports clubs (or in cases where this is not possible offer guidance) to encourage further use of Welsh in areas of higher density linguistic significance, including developing plans to qualify more Welsh-speaking coaches. Data should be collected about the language skills of coaches.

11.6 Welsh language activities in Welsh-speaking communities

To maintain the social use of Welsh in areas of higher density linguistic significance, efforts will have to be made to preserve the language as part of the fabric of the community. It is vital that Welsh-speaking community networks are supported, and that newcomers to these communities are supported to integrate linguistically. Nevertheless, it can sometimes be difficult for public policy to contribute to the work of maintaining Welsh-speaking networks in communities: they arise organically in these communities and those who contribute to them are largely volunteers.

There are many voluntary organisations in Welsh-speaking communities that support the language: Merched y Wawr (the Welsh women's organisation), Young Farmers Clubs, choirs, local eisteddfodau, literary and cultural societies, entertainment clubs, lunch clubs, and so forth, as well as a large number of community organisations that were not formed to directly promote the use of Welsh but conduct their activities in Welsh naturally. The voluntary and community-based nature of these organisations is to be treasured. But support should be available to them if they so wish.

There are situations with potential for more Welsh language social activity. In some communities, where language shift has been far-reaching, the chapel or church is the only Welsh language space remaining. If circumstances permit, and with the consent of their members, consideration should be given as to whether they might have a role as Welsh language community centres. Likewise, village halls are an important meeting point that could, with a little support, reinforce use of Welsh within the community. Papurau bro (Welsh language community newspapers) are another example of community provision that could benefit from additional support.

There are some organisations within Welsh-speaking communities which do not shoulder a sense of responsibility towards Welsh as a community language. It is important that these increase their understanding of the importance of the community use of Welsh. It might be possible to influence them via mechanisms such as conditions attached to grants, leases or collaborative projects.

11.7 Linguistic integration into the Welsh-speaking community

There should be opportunities for adults moving into Welsh-speaking communities to learn and use the Welsh language. The existence of a comprehensive network of Welsh language courses available to everyone, in communities and online, is incredibly important, and the National Centre for Learning Welsh and others can ensure access to a range of suitable courses. At the same time, there should also be strategic opportunities for groups that are central to the intergenerational transmission of Welsh to learn Welsh. The benefit that could come from providing Welsh lessons to parents and family around the school has already been discussed. If schools were developed as Welsh language community spaces, the education of children and young people could be coupled with opportunities for parents to learn Welsh.

International research by academics from the Basque Country, for example, shows that opening schools to families and the community leads to improved performance indicators of all kinds, including in contexts when pupils are taught through the medium of a different language to their home language, and in deprived areas (see Zubiri, 2023). There are examples of good practice too in Welsh-speaking communities and there would be merit in building on this.

Attempts should be made to increase awareness of the Welsh language among newcomers. Work has been undertaken by Mentrau Iaith and local authorities to deliver information packs to newly arrived newcomers, but more intensive action is needed. A wider partnership, including GP surgeries and housing associations for example, would be able to provide a much more effective distribution network. The Welsh Government's Cultural Ambassador scheme offers further potential in supporting newcomers to integrate linguistically into the community.

There is also a need in Welsh-speaking areas to help individuals who can speak 'a considerable amount of Welsh', but who for various reasons do not make extensive use of the language. There should be attempts to increase their fluency and confidence. The recent study of Welsh in Anglesey concluded that the 'fluency' of Welsh speakers 'is one of the main factors affecting community language use within the research study' (Hodges et al., 2023: 55).

11.8 Community language planners

A range of organisations in Wales act as community language planners in a way that supports the Welsh language. A number of these receive core funding from the Welsh Government to contribute to achieving the objectives of the *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers* strategy (Welsh Government, 2017a). We have already noted the importance of the work of a number of these organisations, such as Mentrau Iaith, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, the Wales Federation of Young Farmers Clubs, Mudiad Meithrin and papurau bro. These organisations make an important contribution to the field of community-based language planning.

It is now over 30 years since the first Menter Iaith was established in the Gwendraeth Valley. Since then, many areas across Wales have created a Menter Iaith to promote the community use of Welsh. This often happened organically as enthusiastic individuals came together to try to reverse the decline of Welsh locally. There are other examples of

Mentrau Iaith being part of a wider organisation such as Menter Iaith Môn which is part of Menter Môn, the economic and community regeneration company. Some Mentrau Iaith operate within local authority structures. Naturally, therefore, governance structures and accountability models vary.

Mentrau Iaith work closely with other language planning organisations in receipt of grant funding from the Welsh Government. They create partnerships with a wide range of organisations and community groups for the benefit of the Welsh language. As they work closely at a local level, Mentrau Iaith have a thorough knowledge of the community, and are therefore ideally placed to identify community needs as well as obvious gaps in provision that may hinder Welsh language development.

To be effective, community-based language planning in Wales will need to be more intensive than it is at present. Mentrau Iaith are one essential vehicle to achieve this. Their work should be as strategic as possible and resources should be prioritised to ensure maximum impact. In some cases, this will mean that Mentrau Iaith may need to reposition their priorities.

A community-based language planning workforce needs to possess the most up to date knowledge about language planning. Appropriate training programmes should be provided for staff at different stages of their career. The programmes should focus on language planning, language awareness, community development, changing language behaviour and so forth.

Core funding available to organisations from the Welsh Government to undertake community-based language planning varies considerably. More often than not, it is based on historical allocations. In the context of Mentrau Iaith in particular, this means not all are equipped to implement and carry out work to the same extent. Nevertheless, some Mentrau Iaith have developed various funding models to attract funding from other sources, for example activities that offer a stable financial income, or they have a commercial arm to create income.

The Commission acknowledges that the level of funding allocated to community-based language planning organisations has not increased. To address language shift effectively at a community level, the Commission believes that significant additional investment is needed to increase resources. However, there might also be a need to refocus work currently undertaken.

Recommendation 56: The Welsh Government should increase the resources available to organisations that work in the field of community-based language planning to ensure they have the necessary capacity to respond to the linguistic needs of communities. Any new funding should be based on criteria relating to reversing language shift at a community level.

11.9 A language use and language transmission pilot on a social housing estate in north-west Wales

The Commission is very concerned by indications in Census 2021 data that there is language shift to English within towns in north-west Wales which until now have been considered as relatively safe centres of Welsh language use. There is also evidence that

rates of language transmission are lower in families in Approximated Social Grade D and E categories (semi-skilled occupations, unskilled, unemployed, etc). This is discussed in our analysis of Census 2021 data. It shows that there are twice as many children unable to speak Welsh in households in Approximated Social Grade categories D and E where at least one adult can speak Welsh compared to similar households in Approximated Social Grade categories A and B (managerial occupations, advanced professional, etc).

For this reason, the Commission would support a pilot to promote language use and language transmission on a social housing estate in north-west Wales. The pilot should bring together several organisations, including support agencies in addition to community-based language planning organisations. The pilot would trial initiatives to try to increase the rates of language transmission in households and to socialise children through the medium of Welsh. Early years providers and local schools could be part of the scheme to try to positively engage with children and their parents/carers. Further education organisations could potentially be key partners in developing young people's skills and connections with the workplace.

Recommendation 57: A pilot should be held on a social housing estate in a town in north-west Wales. The pilot should be co-ordinated by a social landlord in consultation with the community and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders including a range of community-based language planning organisations. The aim of the pilot would be to trial interventions to try and reverse language shift on the housing estate.

12 List of recommendations

General principles

Recommendation 1: Welsh is a national language that belongs to everyone in Wales as well as to its speakers in the rest of the world. To strengthen Welsh as a living national language, it needs to be strengthened as a community language. Welsh-speaking communities should be empowered, and the sustainability of the Welsh language strengthened in Welsh-speaking communities, and public policy should fully reflect these aims.

Areas of higher density linguistic significance

Recommendation 2: The Welsh Government should designate 'areas of higher density linguistic significance' in Wales.

Recommendation 3: Areas of higher density linguistic significance should:

- increase consideration of the Welsh language within a policy framework.
- allow policy intervention, variation and emphasis in favour of Welsh as a community language.
- ensure that policy variations respond to the social and linguistic needs of these areas.
- provide the necessary capacity to empower communities to reverse language shift.

Recommendation 4: The designation of areas of higher density linguistic significance should not prevent universal provision (effective throughout the territory of Wales) being made for the Welsh language in some policy fields. In such cases, there should be no requirement to vary national policy.

Recommendation 5: An area should be designated as an area of higher density linguistic significance if the percentage of speakers in the area is equal to or greater than a national threshold set by the Welsh Government. In addition, local authorities should have discretion to designate an area as one of higher density linguistic significance if an area borders on such an area, or on the basis of the density of Welsh speakers as a percentage of its population.

Provision should be made for the designation of areas of higher density linguistic significance as follows:

'Areas of higher density linguistic significance'

- (1) A local authority has a duty to designate an area within its area as one of higher density linguistic significance if the percentage of Welsh speakers within that area is equal to or greater than X%.
- (2) A local authority may also designate another area within its area as one of higher density linguistic significance:
 - (a) if it adjoins an area designated in accordance with subsection (1) above.

- (b) if it considers that it should do that based on the density of Welsh speakers in that area as a percentage of its population, even if that percentage is below X%.
- (3) In exercising their functions, Welsh Ministers and local authorities must pay special attention to the viability of the Welsh language within areas of higher density linguistic significance.
- (4) A local authority has a duty to collaborate with other local authorities by sharing expertise and knowledge relevant to their duties and powers under this section.

Recommendation 6: There should be a presumption in favour of designating X% (the threshold mentioned in recommendation 5) as 40%. The Welsh Government should make the final decision on X% following the publication of further findings from *Prosiect BRO*'s research, also taking into account the views of other academics and statisticians and having consulted with stakeholders including local authorities.

Recommendation 7: The Welsh Government should introduce new primary legislation to establish the framework for designating areas of higher density linguistic significance. The percentage commensurate with X% (i.e. the threshold mentioned in recommendation 5), and the definition of an 'area', could be specified in regulations.

Recommendation 8: A unit should be established within the Welsh Government to develop and co-ordinate public policy relevant to areas of higher density linguistic significance. A council or panel of experts that possess skills and experience in various relevant policy fields (such as the economy, housing, community development etc) should be established to advise the unit.

Economy

Recommendation 9: The Welsh Government should ensure that an economic development strategy, specifically tailored to the economic needs of areas of higher density linguistic significance, is formulated and implemented. The strategy should add value to existing economic policy by promoting additional approaches to economic development, including prioritising policies and activity that will provide for the foundational needs of the population and household well-being (including improving service infrastructure, social infrastructure, residual income, and effective language planning).

Recommendation 10: The Welsh Government should offer additional support to community initiatives and businesses in order to strengthen Welsh as a community language in areas of higher density linguistic significance, including:

- support to develop the skills necessary for growing, sustaining and managing larger scale enterprises.
- facilitating access to assets and funding sources.
- support to develop networks and processes for developing partnerships.
- further support for communities and workforces to buy or own a portion of businesses in the community that are up for sale.

Recommendation 11: The Welsh Government should ensure that the Welsh language is a central consideration in agricultural policy. There should be support for the family farm, and the principle of the importance of the family farm should be reflected in other policies such as environmental policy.

Recommendation 12: The Welsh Government should develop a plan that prioritises community benefit and sustainable activity within the visitor economy sector as well as the viability of the Welsh language. In addition, the principles of *Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035* should be considered by other local authorities and national parks.

Recommendation 13: Health boards and universities should adopt and increase the number of schemes that promote local employment. Individuals should be offered flexible access to training courses and career pathways throughout their careers. Good practice should be shared to support similar developments in other parts of the public sector.

Recommendation 14: The Welsh Government, local authorities and relevant public bodies should ensure that public spending, through grants and the procurement process, guarantees household well-being in local communities, social value, and that opportunities are created to increase the use of Welsh. The aim should be to increase the capacity and development of indigenous businesses.

When feasibly possible, therefore, public funding in areas of higher density linguistic significance should:

- support Welsh language use and acquisition processes.
- support procurement processes and local supply chains.
- ensure community benefit.
- create or maintain Welsh language spaces.
- properly contribute to a 'sense of place'.
- seek, within some economic models, to maximize the business' involvement with, or ownership by, the local community and workforce.

Recommendation 15: In order to address out-migration of young people from areas of higher density linguistic significance, the Welsh Government should ensure that:

- information and data are collected regularly about young people and mobility in areas of higher density linguistic significance.
- research is commissioned to deepen understanding of specific issues such as who moves, from where, to where, when and why; what support might motivate people to stay or return; how to target and attract people most likely to support the economy and language in areas of higher density linguistic significance; and how to help and welcome other Welsh speakers to settle there.
- an ongoing communication and support plan is developed to incentivise young people to stay, return or settle. The plan should be based on further data and research about young people's aspirations and decisions, developing a positive narrative, and aligning with labour market needs as well as young people's priorities and aspirations.

The Welsh Government should place responsibility on a single body to deliver and co-ordinate this.

Recommendation 16: The Welsh Government should establish a body to lead and co-ordinate a range of activity in relation to economic development and the Welsh language within areas of higher density linguistic significance. Its boundaries would therefore extend beyond the four current counties of the ARFOR programme. The body should have expertise in language planning and economic development.

The terms of reference for this body should include responsibilities for:

- developing a range of economic development policies or strategies in the context of areas of higher density linguistic significance.
- mainstreaming economic policies in relation to areas of higher density linguistic significance.
- influencing wider economic development structures.
- developing partnerships and sharing capacity and expertise on the ground.
- developing understanding of the relationship between the economy and the Welsh language.
- leading and co-ordinating efforts to attract young people to stay, return or settle in areas of higher density linguistic significance in order to stimulate enterprise and counteract depopulation.

This body should take the form of one of the following two options:

Option 1: In this option, ARFOR, or a body similar to ARFOR, would be established as a permanent incorporated entity that would have its own executive. Local authorities would be represented on its board, but the body would be independent of individual local authorities. Its capacity could also be strengthened by transferring to it a portion of mainstream programme funding available for regional economic development. Such a body would be a suitable vehicle for achieving the above objectives without unduly disrupting the fabric of existing economic development structures.

Option 2: In this option, the body would be a higher-level entity, creating an economic development agency for the west. It would be organised through a board of local authority and Welsh Government representatives to ensure consistency and joint strategic planning. Funding and resources from mainstream Welsh Government programmes that promote economic development regionally could be transferred to it. Transferring additional economic development functions could be considered, to further strengthen its capacity.

In the context of Option 2, it would be best to avoid a situation where economic, town and country planning, and transport policies were developed separately according to different timeframes. Requirements could therefore be placed on local authorities to consult with this new body in those areas. Corporate Joint Committees could also be required to consult with the body as they develop Strategic Development Plans and Regional Transport Plans.

Recommendation 17: The Welsh Government should establish a Centre of Excellence to develop a better understanding of the interrelationship between the economy and the Welsh language. The centre should co-ordinate and develop a strategic research and data

programme to support wider policy work in regard to the economy. The centre could be located within the body outlined in recommendation 16.

Welsh language workplaces

Recommendation 18: Public sector organisations should use a common framework for measuring proficiency in Welsh to support the improvement of Welsh language skills within the workforce, and as part of the recruitment process. This framework should be based on the CEFR.

Recommendation 19: Leaders of public bodies in Wales should follow the course, 'Leading in a Bilingual Country'. Academi Cymru should also develop a 'Leading in a Welsh-speaking Community' course suitable for leaders of organisations and workplaces in areas of higher density linguistic significance. Such a course could also be useful for community, third sector and private sector leaders in those areas.

Recommendation 20: The Welsh Government should use Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 standards to ensure that public sector organisations subject to the Measure in areas of higher density linguistic significance state the extent of their use of Welsh as an internal language, as well as the steps they will take to move the organisation concerned along a language continuum within a given timeframe.

Community development

Recommendation 21: The Welsh Government should devise and support a programme to disseminate successful community development models across areas of higher density linguistic significance by drawing on existing local expertise and good practice. Successful models could also be implemented in other parts of Wales.

Recommendation 22: The Welsh Government and other relevant funding bodies should change the current system of awarding financial support to community organisations and groups so that they can develop medium-term and longer-term projects. Most importantly, the lifespan of existing grants should be extended from one to three years to ensure the longevity and success of schemes.

Recommendation 23: The Welsh Government should invest financially in community initiatives within areas of higher density linguistic significance by providing them with grants and/or long-term loans at preferential rates. To ensure that the process of transferring assets to the community is beneficial to the Welsh language, conditions and requirements should be placed on grants and/or loans so that Welsh language social capital is central to any scheme.

Recommendation 24: The Welsh Government should offer to help community groups develop a network/s that can support them assess and increase competence and capacity in their respective areas of activity, and share good practice and expertise across the network.

Housing

Recommendation 25: The Welsh Government should ensure that the Local Housing Market Assessment guidance and template include criteria relating to the Welsh language.

Recommendation 26: Local authorities should ensure that all schemes in the Social Housing Prospectus contain evidence of local housing need. A community assessment of housing need should be carried out every five years based on community council or town council areas. The process should be led by the Rural Housing Enablers.

Recommendation 27: The Welsh Government should ensure flexibility in the social housing grant formula, as well as in any other relevant grant, in order to facilitate small-scale development sites in rural areas within areas of higher density linguistic significance. This should ensure that these homes are affordable to develop, adhering to the Welsh Government's Standard Viability Models.

Recommendation 28: The Welsh Government should make the *Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan* permanent. It should operate within areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Recommendation 29: The Welsh Government should ensure that the evaluation of the *Dwyfor second homes and affordability pilot* fully considers the impact on the Welsh language. If appropriate, interventions trialled in the Dwyfor pilot should be introduced in other areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Recommendation 30: Planning authorities introducing an Article 4 Direction should undertake regular evaluation to monitor any unintended consequences on the Welsh language and on the housing market.

Recommendation 31: The Welsh Government should establish a dedicated loan fund offering low interest loans, or equity in schemes, to support community enterprises to purchase land or property to develop community-led housing developments.

Recommendation 32: In responding to local housing need, local authorities should make better use of the housing stock and vacant properties. Town centre regeneration policies should be interwoven with housing policies, and as a feature of that, conditions on grants or loans should include Welsh language considerations.

Recommendation 33: Local authorities and planning authorities should consider whether models can be developed for the letting of social housing or in drawing up Section 106 agreements, where the Welsh language may be one positive consideration alongside other considerations. Any model should be scrutinised to ensure there is no unacceptable disadvantage to the non-Welsh-speaking population, and to ensure compliance with relevant equality legislation.

Recommendation 34: The Welsh Government should discuss with mortgage providers how to improve competition within mortgage provision for restricted properties. A framework should be established which measures the number of borrowers offering mortgages on restricted properties, and the interest rates offered in comparison to interest rates offered on unrestricted properties.

Town and Country Planning

Recommendation 35: The Welsh Government should make changes to town and country planning policies and guidance in order to strengthen the relationship with sustainability objectives in regard to the Welsh language, and in particular in the context of community linguistic sustainability. Some of the changes should lead to new policies and approaches that will be operational within areas of higher density linguistic significance, and others to policies and approaches that will be operational throughout Wales.

The Commission recommends that changes be made in the following areas:

- The Welsh Government should ensure that *Planning Policy Wales* provides better guidance in relation to principles of sustainable development regarding the Welsh language, and in particular, the long-term sustainability of areas of higher density linguistic significance.
- The Welsh Government should review *TAN 20* in order to strengthen the guidance and advice given to planning authorities as they prepare development plans and make decisions about planning permission.
- The Welsh Government should review the *Development Plans Manual* so that better guidance can be provided in relation to the sustainability of the Welsh language, and in particular the long-term sustainability of areas of higher density linguistic significance, as planning authorities produce Integrated Sustainability Appraisals.
- The Welsh Government should work with the Royal Town Planning Institute, language planners and universities to review higher education provision to ensure that practitioners, graduates and students have appropriate language planning skill sets with regard to town and country planning.

The Commission will make its recommendations in full in a dedicated report by December 2024.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Recommendation 36: The Welsh Government should undertake a study of intersections in Census 2021 data between the ability to speak Welsh and relevant protected characteristics. The study should include more detail than that available at local authority level alone, and if it is possible to do so, it should include an analysis at MSOA level, or by combining LSOAs.

Recommendation 37: The Welsh Government should establish a task and finish group to examine issues of equality, diversity and inclusion in relation to the Welsh language. The group should give full consideration to these issues in the context of Welsh as a community language and in areas of higher density linguistic significance. Appropriate consideration should also be given to rurality.

Welsh-medium education

Recommendation 38: Upon completing statutory education, all children in areas of higher density linguistic significance should be confident and literate in both oral and written Welsh, and this should be reflected in public policy.

Recommendation 39: An aim should be set that, within areas of higher density linguistic significance, all schools should in the fullness of time offer inclusive Welsh-medium education to enable all pupils from all backgrounds to acquire Welsh confidently and become literate in it.

Recommendation 40: Within areas of higher density linguistic significance, local authorities should encourage and support all non-maintained nursery settings and play groups to use Welsh language provision in early education, Flying Start and the Childcare Offer. There should be investment in the workforce to achieve the goal.

Recommendation 41: In areas of higher density linguistic significance, the intention should be that primary schools are Welsh-medium schools, and that schools in the secondary sector should be Welsh-medium schools (category 3) or Designated Welsh-medium schools (category 3P), except in the case of schools named by local authorities for exceptional reasons. If schools are not currently in these categories, they should be so within a reasonable period.

Recommendation 42: Within areas of higher density linguistic significance, local authorities in conjunction with schools should, within the boundaries of their language-medium category, determine the percentage of Welsh-medium provision that pupils are expected to receive within particular schools. This percentage should be ambitious enough to increase the Welsh-medium provision.

Recommendation 43: Detailed data regarding Welsh-medium provision within areas of higher density linguistic significance should be published. Local authorities should publish data with regard to the baseline of the language category of schools, and also measure how many and what percentage of children receive 50% and 70% of their education through the medium of Welsh. Local authorities should publish such data for all schools (and should also publish the authority-wide data in their WESP).

Recommendation 44: Estyn should develop supplementary inspection guidance for inspecting Welsh-medium provision in areas of higher density linguistic significance, including as the language of post-14 and post-16 education. It should also look at the percentage studying post-14 and post-16 qualifications through the medium of Welsh.

Recommendation 45: Working with local authorities, Estyn should formally inspect progress in Welsh-medium provision against the aims of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans every two years, submitting their conclusions to the local authority Cabinet.

Recommendation 46: Voluntary and foundation schools should follow national and local authority policies in regard to Welsh-medium provision.

Recommendation 47: The Welsh Government should place a duty on local authorities to evaluate the extra-curricular and social use of Welsh, including the effectiveness of the *Siarter Iaith* in primary and secondary schools, and to report on this on an annual basis.

Estyn should inspect the operation of the *Siarter Iaith* within the wider context of the school.

Recommendation 48: The Welsh Government and local authorities should ensure that Welsh language immersion centres receive sufficient resources to achieve their aims.

Recommendation 49: Within areas of higher density linguistic significance, the Welsh Government should plan to meet the needs of the education workforce, ensuring that staff are confident as plans are put in place to increase Welsh-medium provision in schools.

Community-based language planning

Recommendation 50: The Welsh Government should ensure a commitment to community-based language planning in all its community-related strategies within areas of higher density linguistic significance. Similarly, local authority corporate plans, Public Service Boards' well-being plans and relevant strategic programmes prepared by Corporate Joint Committees should give due regard to the importance of community-based language planning in areas of higher density linguistic significance and provide adequate resources to it.

Recommendation 51: Standard 145 within Schedule 4 to the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 should include a further obligation in addition to those stated at (a) and (b). (c) would relate to areas of higher density linguistic significance and should read as follows:

- (c) [the strategy must include] a document detailing how specific and appropriate provision for areas of higher density linguistic significance is made in your area, with particular emphasis on strengthening and increasing the use of Welsh as a community language.

Recommendation 52: The Welsh Government should, in collaboration with academic researchers and stakeholders, develop a framework to measure the impact of community-based language planning in areas of higher density linguistic significance.

Recommendation 53: The Welsh Government and local authorities should ensure that language transmission, both in the household and in the form of language socialisation outside the family, is central to community-based language planning. Appropriate evidence (including international evidence), behavioural sciences, and best practice in related fields such as parental literacy, and the encouragement of reading between parent and child, should be examined. There should also be research into how to benefit as fully as possible from the connection between parents and the health sector in order to convey positive messages about the Welsh language.

Recommendation 54: The Welsh Government and local authorities should ensure that supporting children and young people to use Welsh with confidence is central to community-based language planning. This should be jointly planned at local authority level with input from the Welsh Language Implementation Participation Group of the Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board. As a central part of this, relevant organisations should ensure the continuation and development of language planning at the micro level.

Recommendation 55: Sports governing bodies should require sports clubs (or in cases where this is not possible offer guidance) to encourage further use of Welsh in areas of higher density linguistic significance, including developing plans to qualify more Welsh-speaking coaches. Data should be collected about the language skills of coaches.

Recommendation 56: The Welsh Government should increase the resources available to organisations that work in the field of community-based language planning to ensure they have the necessary capacity to respond to the linguistic needs of communities. Any new funding should be based on criteria relating to reversing language shift at a community level.

Recommendation 57: A pilot should be held on a social housing estate in a town in north-west Wales. The pilot should be co-ordinated by a social landlord in consultation with the community and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders including a range of community-based language planning organisations. The aim of the pilot would be to trial interventions to try and reverse language shift on the housing estate.

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