

International Relations and Welsh Language Planning group meeting

10am-11.30am, 1 July 2020

Microsoft Teams

Attendees

- Susie Ventriss Field, WCIA
- Kevin Rahman-Daultrey, Size of Wales
- Gareth Coles, Voluntary Arts Wales
- Claire O'Shea, Hwb Cymru Africa
- Catrin James, CWVYS/Urdd Gobaith Cymru
- Barbara Davies, Size of Wales
- Gill Peace, WCIA
- Elin Maher, Mentrau Iaith Cymru

Minutes from November 2019 meeting with the Minister

ACTION – Ruth Marks – suggested more frequent contact with officials to discuss and feedback on activities, Minister agreed – practicalities of this to be established.

Ruth has had limited dialogue with Welsh Government on this. Catrin and Claire both note good engagement with civil servants in this area. The group noted that the Minister has been quiet during the pandemic.

ACTION – Michael Maragakis – WG officials to share the new Youth Work Strategy and implementation Document with the Minister.

Catrin said that the Youth Work Strategy is on hold because of Covid, but it would be good to know what's happening now with ERASMUS. As well as the future of the scheme, there is concern around insurance on already confirmed placements.

ACTION – Welsh Language Workforce - Trudy Heald – WG officials to discuss with WCVA how to develop this provision

WCVA has had very limited dialogue with Welsh Government on this.

Actions:

Chase Welsh Government for follow-up on these actions.

Balancing Welsh Language and International Relations elements of portfolio

Ben noted this is essentially two portfolios tied together. How should the need to scrutinize both functions be managed? A bit of both at each meetings or alternated across meetings?

Gareth noted the Deputy Minister's responsibilities for culture, heritage and sport – should we be seeking a meeting with him given the effects of Covid on these areas?

Group felt it was appropriate for each Minister to meet separately with each part of the sector, as each is facing different threats.

Catrin commented it was important to ensure that the Welsh language is being nurtured as an international asset, as per the International Strategy.

Action:

Push for meetings with both the Minister and the Deputy Minister on their own portfolios.

Agenda items for next Ministerial Meeting

Group noted that much is happening at the moment regarding equality and culture.

UK Gov Department for Media, Culture, Digital and Sport has issued guidance for opening cultural venues safely, but not heard anything from Welsh Government. Group would like officials to link with DCMS to see what might work. Catrin is pushing for guidelines for the youth work sector.

Group talked about the UK Government merger of the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development. Some Welsh organisations are funded through DFID – Hwb Cymru Africa for instance will lose money. Group queried why the Minister has made no comment on this.

Group asked what Welsh Government is doing to make sure BAME people have the opportunity to access Welsh language training and that any efforts to do so are reaching as wide an audience as possible and being tracked. Catrin said Welsh Government have worked with Race Council Cymru to improve access and there have been examples that could be highlighted. Elen said Welsh Centre for Adult Learning had seen an increase in learners during lockdown. It might be useful to ask Minister on how to bring bodies together to improve access and do training collectively. Is there anything intensive that can be done to help people make up any time missed? How is the Minister helping with the transition from 'face to face' to online platforms for Welsh learning? Issues around support for Welsh language childcare groups are brought up.

Barbara commented on evidence to show that there will be an increase in pandemics as deforestation happens and she is developing a strategy to show how Wales can be a 'no deforestation nation' – as part of this, she would like to hear the Minister's actions around trade.

ERASMUS was brought up. Group unsure if this is the responsibility of the Minister or Jeremy Miles. Need info on what support Welsh Government are giving to continue exchanges.

Susie noted that there is a shrinking number of International NGOs in Wales. Oxfam Cymru will only have one person left working internationally. Funding is falling. The Minister should factor this into her planning – there are international aspects of the Future Generations Act.

Group commented on the UK PM's rebuilding programme. Will there be consequential funding for Wales from this? Anna noted that Ruth Marks goes to Cabinet meetings at Welsh Government – this could be a question to take there.

Group discusses issues around funding, including being denied funding for one project because they already receive funding for another. Anna said funders are finding demand for their streams is slowing. Catrin said organisations still need money for day to day survival and funding needs to shift to longer term or there will be a crisis in six months. Anna said there may be a need to survey the sector on these points.

Susie said Welsh Government needs to listen more to what the international communities her organization funds want now and what they will need after Covid.

Elen commented on the loss of the local connection during this period – it could be perceived as not needing localized systems. Ben said that parts of the sector are concerned that funders may look to digital as a replacement for face to face services, and there are doubts this is as effective. Organisations with little funding may be pressured to go this way.

Anna noted that diversity has come up in different ways through this meeting. These areas may need to be raised through the TSPC.

Actions:

Gareth and Catrin to link with each other re DCMS guidelines.

Group to push for meeting with Jeremy Miles re ERASMUS and trade, if these are relevant to his portfolio, and with Dafydd Elis-Thomas re sport and culture.

Elen to circulate information about fund for coworking with Basque nations.

WCVA to circulate talking points from this meeting to group before drafting final agenda for future meeting with Minister.

Potential discussion points for future meetings with Minister/Deputy Minister/Counsel General

- Funding - the immediate, medium and long-term financial resilience of the sector.
- Issues around diversity – showcase sector work in this area and discuss BAME involvement in Welsh language.
- How is Welsh being nurtured as an international asset.
- Issues with move to digital working, including loss of ‘local flavour’ in service provision.
- Brexit – what is the Minister’s role in trading relationships?
- The Minister’s role in enabling organisations to keep dealing with more normal day to day concerns.
- Minister’s thoughts on Foreign Office/DFID merger.
- Leadership from the Minister’s department during the crisis.
- Future planning for ERASMUS.
- Shrinking number of International NGOs in Wales.
- Consequential funding for Wales from UK Government’s building programme.