

Strategic Planning Group

Report to	Strategic Planning Group
Date of Meeting	17 January 2022
Lead Member	Councillor Mark Young – Lead Member for Planning, Public Protection and Safer Communities
Report Author	Bethan Morris, Planning Officer
Report	Welsh Language Background Paper Considerations

1. What is the report about

- 1.1 This report provides information on considerations that are being taken into account in preparing a Welsh Language Background Paper for the next LDP 2018 to 2033.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 All policies in the next LDP 2018 to 2033 have to be supported by way of evidence. This report highlights considerations that can be taken into account in developing policies that support the Welsh Language and therefore should be addressed in the Welsh Language Background Paper.

3. What are the recommendations?

- 3.1 That Members of the SPG discuss the recommendations for how to best support Welsh Language in the policies of the LDP 2018 to 2033 and address the Background Paper.

4. Report Details

- 4.1 Cymraeg 2050 is the national strategy for increasing the number of Welsh speakers to a million by 2050. It has three themes; increasing the number of Welsh speakers, increasing the use of Welsh and creating favourable conditions – infrastructure and context. In terms of the local development plan and controlling

planning it is this third theme that can be predominantly supported particularly in creating favourable community conditions.

- 4.2 Technical Advice Note (TAN) 20, Planning and the Welsh Language was issued in October 2017 and is the current guidance for the next LDP 2018 to 2033. It states that the impact on Welsh language and the sustainability of communities has to be considered when preparing an LDP. The impact has to be assessed within the Sustainability Appraisal. LDP policies however cannot introduce any element of discrimination between individuals on the basis of their linguistic ability.
- 4.3 TAN 20 indicates that matters to be assessed may include housing scale and location of growth, employment land, community facilities and education infrastructure as well as planning obligations and signage. Evidence is required to support any new policies.
- 4.4 Since TAN 20 was introduced Welsh Government have updated Planning Policy Wales and published Future Wales – The National Plan 2040. The Future Wales outcomes indicate that development can be managed to ensure that there are jobs and homes to enable the Welsh Language to remain central to those communities' identities and development can encourage the creation of education and social infrastructure to enable the Welsh Language to develop as a natural thriving part of communities. Future Wales does not have any specific policies on the Welsh Language and therefore in ensuring Welsh is recognised and considered in the next LDP the focus has to remain on TAN 20 and Planning Policy Wales.
- 4.5 Planning Policy Wales Edition 11, February 2021, recognises that in creating and sustaining communities it enables the Welsh Language to thrive. Welsh Language is part of the social and cultural fabric and therefore should be seen as part of social and cultural wellbeing goals and placemaking. Having strong placemaking policies that encourage cohesive communities with a distinct sense of place and identity supports the Welsh Language. Policies cannot discriminate on the basis of linguistic controls. Welsh language impact assessments must be undertaken as part of the Sustainability Appraisal and can also be required in respect of large developments that are not allocated in the LDP and are in areas of particular sensitivity.

- 4.6 Integrating Welsh Language as part of placemaking and cohesive communities and protecting cultural including linguistic identity as a way for LDPs to support the Welsh Language has been strengthened by recent publications. On 2 March 2021 Welsh Government published a paper on Second homes: developing new policies which considers the future of Welsh as a community language (Second Homes 2021). It highlights the problems facing specific parts of Gwynedd, Pembrokeshire, Anglesey and Ceredigion where second homes are pushing out local residents and diminishing Welsh speaking communities. Dwyfor, Gwynedd is identified as facing the greatest threat and it is noted that tackling the problem of second homes alone will not be enough to stabilise the Welsh language particularly given other socio-economic changes including those resulting from Brexit and Covid 19. It highlights the socio economic, social and cultural challenges facing communities such as depopulation, the growth of economic practices of 'working from home' that change the linguistic balance of communities, shrinkage in the public sector due to budget cuts, possible shrinkage in the agricultural sector resulting from Brexit and the long term nature of land ownership. It concludes that Welsh speaking areas will face the biggest challenge to their linguistic and cultural integrity for decades and recommends establishing a Commission to make recommendations regarding the future of the Welsh Language as a community language.
- 4.7 Covid 19 has had an impact. The effects of Covid-19 on Welsh language community groups – survey findings (Effects of Covid-19) was published on 10 December 2020 and Welsh Government issued a response to these concerns on 13 July 2021. It has highlighted the importance of digital inclusion, the contribution of sports clubs and art performance groups, increasing the use of Welsh by researching community development models and social enterprise models as well as considering intergenerational balance and county promotion strategies.
- 4.8 In attempting to tackle the concerns raised in Second Homes 2021 and the Effects of Covid 19 2020 & 2021 there is an open Welsh Government consultation on Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan which commenced on 23 November 2021 and runs to 22 February 2022. Dwyfor, characterised as a Welsh-speaking heartland, has been chosen as a location for trialling and evaluating interventions and their cumulative impact. Officers will ensure that they remain up to date on the progress of this consultation and its recommendations building it into the Welsh Language Background Paper where appropriate.

- 4.9 All these current updates on national policy, national trends will be incorporated into the background paper so that local policies are in conformity. National data, such as the reports on The Cymraeg 2050 strategy will be utilised where appropriate. The Welsh Language Background paper for the next LDP 2018 to 2033 however has to have a local context and assess local data that then recommends and supports local policies in the LDP.
- 4.10 Although a Census was undertaken in 2021 the results of that Census are not yet available and may not be available for a number of years. The 2019 Sustainability Appraisal sets out the 2011 and 2001 Census details in terms of Welsh speakers and notes that there was a decrease from 26.4% of the population to 24.6% of the population in the 10 year period. The South and rural areas of the county, with the exception of Llangollen, have the greater percentage of Welsh speakers. There is no clear trend between an increase in the population and its impact on the number of Welsh speakers and therefore it is not possible to predict a trend between the creation of new development and its impact on Welsh speakers where it could be both positive and negative.
- 4.11 In terms of the next LDP 2018 to 2033 it is possible for those locations with a high number of Welsh speakers to be described as sensitive and attempt to curtail development in those locations. This however could have a negative impact on those communities, such as where an affordable housing need has been identified or where the economy of the community is at risk and needs to adapt.
- 4.12 It is therefore recommended that, within the Welsh Language Background, where there are high levels of Welsh speakers in a settlement, the local character and distinctiveness of the settlement should include a reference to a Welsh linguistic identity and the cultural aspects of the community. (The title of the background paper should then also include a reference to culture.) This description will then be integrated into the final Settlement Hierarchy Report to ensure that the next LDP 2018 to 2033 clearly describes the character of the settlements and should be assessed when policy considerations include cultural well-being, social infrastructure and local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.13 In terms of local policies within the LDP 2018 to 2033 it is recommended that in defining and justifying the policies set out in the Draft Preferred Strategy consideration is given to:-

- a) Strengthening the placemaking policy so that it is clear that all new development must have consideration of the social and cultural fabric of the community and encourage a cohesive community that supports its distinct sense of place and identity. (A reference to creating distinctive and cohesive communities in the policy could allow for Supplementary Planning Guidance and gives flexibility in being able to clarify and fully define requirements at a later date.)
- b) Linking the Welsh Language policy to the Welsh Language Background Paper and Settlement Hierarchy Paper. (It is also recommended that the Welsh Language Background Paper title includes a reference to Culture and that it then includes links to Social and Cultural Wellbeing.)
- c) Linking the Welsh Language policy back to placemaking.
- d) The Welsh Language policy or justification text to highlight the benefits to businesses of encouraging Welsh Language for social and cultural wellbeing and distinctiveness.
- e) Within housing policies ensuring that the point of local needs and the ability of local residents to be able to afford those homes, whether they are market homes or affordable homes, is clearly expressed and sets out evidential requirements of applicants where appropriate.
- f) Town Centres and Retail development policies to include reference to maintaining and enhancing the cultural and social character of the town. (Will assist Denbigh, Ruthin & Corwen.)
- g) Visitor economy and accommodation policies to be carefully drafted to ensure balance is achieved and social and cultural identities are not lost.
- h) Include a reference within the policies to supporting any new digital infrastructure.
- i) Include a reference within the policies to supporting community facilities.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Officers will incorporate the outcomes of members' discussion on the above recommendations into work being undertaken on the next LDP 2018 to 2033.
- 5.2 Members are asked whether they would like this report and information on the LDP 2018 to 2033 to be referred to the Welsh Language Steering Committee. Officers would greatly appreciate input from the Welsh Language Steering Committee that could then be incorporated into the Welsh Language Background Paper.