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FFERMIO

08456 000 813

iaith y

PRIDD



Disclaimer: This report is based on direct comments made by contributors from farming and rural families who participated in this study, either through contributing on film at regional agricultural shows or at the National Eisteddfod; by attending a series of specific Events; or completing an on-line questionnaire. The information received has not been validated in any way. This work is the opinion of those who were part of the project.



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'Iaith y Pridd' / The Language of the Land

The relationship between the Welsh language and members of the agricultural industry and their activities is already known. Due to the fact that a greater percentage of workers in the agricultural industry speak Welsh than in any other sector in Wales and the proportion of Welsh speakers in the industry (43%)¹ is significantly higher than that of the population as a whole (19%)², there is a strong connection between the future of agriculture and the future of the language. The importance of these links has been identified recently by the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner³ and *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* (the Welsh Language Society)⁴. Given the strength of this relationship, it was felt that consideration should be given to the extent to which the industry can support the Welsh Government's ambitious target for a million Welsh speakers by 2050. By using the wide network of Farming Connect membership as a starting point, the opinions and ideas of a sample of the industry were sought in order to find out if there is a willingness and opportunity within the industry to take practical action to increase the use of the Welsh language and the number of Welsh Speakers.

¹ Welsh Government, 2019: Agriculture in Wales 2019, p.15 <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/agriculture-in-wales-evidence.pdf>

² Census 2011

³ <http://www.comisiynyddygybraeg.cymru/Cymraeg/Newyddion/Pages/Effaith-Brexit-ar-y-Gymraeg.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/brexit-could-cause-devastation-welsh-15348571>

I. Summary

The “Iaith y Pridd” project enabled Farming Connect to give members of the farming community an opportunity to voice their opinion on the following question - “How can agriculture contribute to the aim of reaching a target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050?”. Opportunities were provided to contribute ideas via focus groups, interviews in agricultural shows, an “agri-booth” and an online questionnaire. Having analysed all the comments received, it is believed that the research shows there is:

An opportunity to act by protecting and extending the use of the Welsh language in agricultural circles, both on a Governmental policy level and a community level.

It is recommended that the Welsh Government operate by:

- i. Ensuring that policies and the benefit payment system support industry on the family farm.
- ii. Ensuring that the design system supports rural enterprises and communities.
- iii. Formalising the support for Young Farmers Clubs in order to promote the Welsh language at county and national levels.
- iv. Working with the post-16 sector to strengthen the Welsh language provision on courses that are linked with agriculture and funding a system to publish and translate agricultural education resources for the sector.
- v. Funding a facilitator role to coordinate the partners that are interested in maintaining and growing the Welsh language within agriculture.

This last point will lead to operating communally in the short term, by:

- i. Establishing a buddy scheme between members of the agricultural community, and also between those involved in the agricultural industry and individuals from relevant sectors.
- ii. Encouraging the agricultural Unions to recognise individuals who could take responsibility for the Welsh language in their respective unions.
- iii. Stimulating, enabling and supporting young members of the agricultural community to learn digital skills in order to create content that promotes a positive image of the Welsh language in their communities before broadcasting them online.
- iv. Encouraging the development of leisure movements for people after becoming too old for the YFC.
- v. Starting an online scheme to learn Welsh with an agricultural twist.
- vi. Opening chat groups/Welsh classes for learners in agricultural assembly points.

In the long term, we will consider:

- Granting PGI Status to the Welsh language by recognising it as a Special Characteristic and strengthening the development of Welsh language labels on food products.
- Supporting livestock markets, as they offer a social opportunity to use the Welsh language and they are a socio-economic stimulator for the environment of the language.
- Supporting provisions for those who aren't Welsh speakers in order to translate content for their rural business and promoting products / services. Normalising the use of Welsh by agricultural movements / bodies / agencies / businesses.
- Making the Welsh language more visible in places where non-Welsh speaking farmers assemble.

2. Introduction

In Wales as a whole, 19%⁵ of the population are Welsh speakers. The percentage of the population who can speak Welsh **and** who earn their livelihood in the agricultural sector is higher, and 43%⁶ of those who are employed in agriculture are Welsh speakers. This percentage is higher than in any other industry in Wales. Clearly, there is a living connection between the existence and the future of the Welsh language and the agricultural industry. Of course, the percentage of the Welsh-speaking population in the agriculture sector is higher than 43% in parts of the North and West, and is lower in those agricultural areas in the East. However, although the Welsh-speaking ability of farmers varies from one area to another, the industry provides a direct link and common thread between them, whether they live in Ceredigion or Newport. Therefore, the question which was asked in the “*Language of the Land*” report is as follows – Is it possible for language to move along the natural routes which exist between Welsh-speaking and non-Welsh-speaking agricultural areas? If so, how can this happen on a practical level, and does the farming sector have a role to play in protecting and extending the use of Welsh, thus contributing to the Welsh Government’s effort to reach a target of a million speakers by 2050?

3. Terms of Reference

The aim of the “*Language of the Land*” project is to consider how the Welsh-speaking agricultural community in Wales can contribute towards achieving the Welsh Government’s aim to reach a million Welsh speakers by 2050. In order to do this, it was necessary to consider which factors support the language at present, and to ask what action is needed to protect the existing strengths, before considering whether there are any opportunities to transfer some of those strengths in order to increase the use of Welsh in those agricultural communities where the language is not so strong.

In order to understand the current situation within Welsh-speaking agricultural areas (areas of comparatively high employment in the agriculture sector and a comparatively high percentage of Welsh speakers), it was necessary to speak with a sample of people who live in those communities. In the same way to get an insight into the current situation within agricultural communities where the language is not so strong (areas of comparatively high employment in agriculture but a comparatively low percentage of Welsh speakers), it was also necessary to gain an insight into the opinions of people who live in those areas.

⁵ 2011 Census

⁶ Welsh Government, 2019: Agriculture in Wales 2019, p.15

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/agriculture-in-wales-evidence.pdf>

4. Methodology

Grass-roots evidence needed to be collected from Welsh speakers about what they were doing, and the activities which take place in their communities to support the language. It was also necessary to gather the opinions of non-Welsh speakers from the agricultural areas in order to understand their assessment of the existence of the Welsh language in their communities; their wishes and needs in regards to the language in the area, and to get an idea of the willingness and desire which exists to support the language in the area. In order to get the best chance of attracting general and detailed responses, and to consult with a wide range of stakeholders, it was decided to invite comments via multiple methods.

FOCUS GROUPS – opportunities were provided in Carmarthen, Builth Wells, Bala, the Llŷn Peninsula and Tregaron for Farming Connect members to meet and discuss under the guidance of a facilitator. Discussions lasted for 90 minutes on average and contributions were recorded to camera. A total of 43 people attended the focus group meetings.

AGRICULTURAL SHOWS – a reporter and camera man travelled to Lampeter, Haverfordwest and Llandeilo shows. Interviews were held in the shows through the medium of Welsh and English with members of the agricultural community from a wide variety of backgrounds. A total of 21 individuals gave their opinions and were recorded on camera.

“AGRI-BOOTH” – at the Royal Welsh Show and the National Eisteddfod, Llanrwst, an opportunity similar to a ‘photo booth’ was provided. Individuals were given the opportunity to enter the booth of their own accord, where a camera had been set up to record their views and opinions in the privacy of the ‘booth’. Two questions were displayed near the camera and the participants were invited to respond to these. The opening question was, *“What is the best thing about living in rural Wales?”* The second question addressed the core aim of the ‘Language of the Land’ project in more detail and asked, *“How can the agricultural community contribute to the Government’s aim of reaching a million Welsh speakers by 2050?”* A total of 172 responses were received.

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE – this method attracted 177 responses. By recording opinions online, this provided another opportunity to contribute ideas and experiences on how to increase the use of the Welsh language in agricultural communities.

A total of **413 responses** were received via the Focus groups, Shows, the Agri-Booth and the Online questionnaire.

5. Main Themes

A number of individual and specific issues were identified in the responses of contributors to the *'Language of the Land'* project, as well as a number of general and detailed action points. After analysing the responses gained from the methodology applied, they were grouped into six general themes, namely

- i. The subsidies system;
- ii. The Planning system;
- iii. Supporting activities on the land;
- iv. Young Farmers' Clubs;
- v. Education & educational resources;
- vi. Life beyond the farmyard

It was also possible to identify two general classes of responses which are common to the six themes.

Firstly, a large section of the responses mentioned taking action to protect the language in its habitat, or suggestions on how to avoid endangering the language in its strongholds. Secondly, a section of responses (somewhat fewer in number) gave suggestions on how to expand the use of the language outside its traditional strongholds and to create links and new methods to increase the use of the language in communities which are currently comparatively non-Welsh-speaking. In analysing these 'protective' and 'expansive' responses, it became evident that the 'protective' ideology was stronger among respondents from areas where the language is currently strong. One respondent noted, "we're more aware of what we have to lose". These responses also tended to focus on methods of protecting and supporting the rural communities where the use of the language is strong, and expressed the view that the language would thrive if the community was thriving, and that this in turn would provide a strong foundation on which to build any linguistic growth. It was felt that the growth of the language would be in danger if this foundation became unstable. The 'expansive' ideology was more evident in respondents from areas where the situation of the Welsh language is not traditionally as strong. Rather than focusing on methods of supporting rural communities, the 'expansive' responses tended to focus on actions in their communities which would support direct use of the language.

"Without rural communities the language will decline slowly, rather than grow."

"We need more opportunities to learn Welsh and to meet other Welsh speakers"

5.1 The Subsidies System

Without fail, and in all four methods used to gather opinion and evidence for this study, farmers maintained that the structure and implementation of the subsidies system was vitally important in order to support and develop the Welsh language. The view was expressed that payments which **support the family farm** enable families to remain in rural, agricultural areas and that this, in turn, supports schools, communities and thus, the Welsh language. It was stressed how supporting a number of small farms (as compared to one large farm) would provide work for several families and, consequently, would promote a living community and language. Respondents expressed a desire to **cap subsidies** linked to the area of land owned, and to focus instead on the relationship between the payments and the **number of people who earn a living from the farm**.

“It’s vital to maintain our ‘small’ family farms and to invest in them, this in turn will keep our communities and schools open and thriving.”

“If you capped the payments...it would stop these big companies coming in and buying thousands upon thousands of acres”

5.2 The Planning System

Accepting that the Welsh language prospers in areas where there is a living community, there was a great deal of discussion on the need to introduce planning regulations in a manner which **support farmers who wish to venture and diversify**. It was stressed how developing the rural economy means supporting livelihoods, communities and the Welsh language. The need to **facilitate the building of homes on farms for the next generation** was expressed. Another matter for discussion was how owners of second homes are pricing young people out of the local market, pushing them from their communities and harming the prosperity of the Welsh language by contributing to rural depopulation and the outward migration of young people. The view was expressed that the second home situation was more damaging to agricultural communities than other communities, because the need for rural housing which is close to holdings is greater in the agricultural sector than other sectors, and the future of the Welsh language depended more on agricultural communities than other communities. It was expressed that efforts to raise additional council tax on holiday homes had failed in some areas, as owners of holiday homes had now started to register the buildings as tourist businesses thus avoiding paying any Council Tax. An appeal was also made for the planning system to act to **protect Welsh place names**, in order to ensure that the language was visible to local residents and visitors.

“There is a need...to ensure that farmers’ sons and daughters can get planning permission to build a shed to start another business”

“There is room...to help young people, Welsh-speakers, to build houses to help them get land, to get homes in their local areas”

5.3 Supporting Activity on the Land

Those who contributed to the “*Language of the Land*” project expressed a desire to see their **land being used productively, rather than moving to manage land in a passive manner**. The general feeling was that there was a growing emphasis on farmers moving more towards developing woodlands and providing ecosystem services. A number of the contributors expressed their fears regarding the effects of ‘rewilding’ interventions in particular. It was stressed that rural depopulation can occur as a result of repurposing agricultural land from the production of food to providing environmental ‘goods’ alone. ‘Natural processes’ and passive methods of land management provide less activity in the rural economy for those who are dependent on a productive agricultural sector (such as contractors, providers of goods and services, labourers, vets, etc.), consequently, this will lead to the decline of the Welsh language in the wider sector as the agricultural sector contracts. The opinion was also expressed that **growth in other sectors, in particular the tourism sector, would not provide the same incentive to use the Welsh language, and as a result would not fill the gap** left as a result of any decrease in activity in the agricultural sector.

“By ensuring a prosperous agricultural industry there will be opportunities for young people to stay in the industry and continue to use Welsh, whether directly...or in the industries which are associated with farming...”

“If the payments are going to... focus on everything but production, if the focus is going to be wholly environmental, well there is a danger [for example] that some tenant farmers, and we already see it happening, will be given their marching orders... because the landlord can see a way... to take payments for the environmental work [themselves]”

5.4 Young Farmers’ Clubs

This is a theme which sparked comments in all of the methods used to collect evidence. Time and again, a call was made for the need to use public money to fund the Welsh-language activities of the YFC organisation. It was suggested that one way to do this would be to enable the local authorities to fund the Welsh-language activities of clubs in their areas. Without exception, the YFC Movement was recognized as being the vanguard in supporting the Welsh language in rural communities, and was seen as a movement which could play a key role in taking the language to non-Welsh-speaking communities where the clubs and structures are already in place. Given sufficient financial support, it was held that Wales YFC could develop its bilingual digital material, hold *eisteddfodau* in non-Welsh-speaking areas and introduce more competitions for Welsh learners in order to encourage non-Welsh-speaking areas to learn about Welsh language life and culture. Despite expressing a desire to see YFC receive financial support in this respect, it was also noted that there was a need for the movement to remain independent from statutory structures. Therefore, it was proposed that the financial support should be given as a **fixed grant to promote the Welsh language and specific associated activities**, rather than moving towards a system where the Government would provide the movement’s core funding.

“There has been an increase in the use of the language within the YFC movement in Clwyd because officially everything has to be bilingual, and gradually over the period it has strengthened in those areas where... English is mainly spoken”

“The Young Farmers’ Movement continues to hold shows and markets, etc., where there is a flurry of activity in Welsh”

5.5 Education and Educational Resources

Comments were received referring to the need to **establish Welsh lessons with the contents to be based on agricultural themes**, and to hold lessons in rural centres such as livestock markets and agricultural shops such as Wynnstay or Clynderwen & Cardiganshire Farmers. It was held that these lessons would appeal to non-Welsh-speaking farmers also, as well as workers in the supply sector and agricultural services, who would see a practical use and commercial value to acquiring these language skills. It was also asked whether there was an opportunity to hold **'conversation groups'** in these centres for farmers and other individuals in the wider sector who are learning Welsh, with fluent Welsh-speaking farmers leading the discussion. There were also discussions regarding the need to provide simple training to these community leaders, in order to improve their confidence and ability to lead conversations. Reference was made to the fact that *Undeb Amaethwyr Cymru* (Farmers' Union of Wales) was considering developing a "Say Something in Welsh" course with an agricultural theme, but no details were given on the current development of this idea, and it was asked if it would be possible to provide public money for such an initiative.

The possibility of **establishing a twinning system** was discussed, which would invite non-Welsh-speaking members of the agricultural community to spend time with Welsh-speaking farmers. Farm work could be undertaken in return for Welsh lessons! The possibility of extending this language exchange scheme beyond workers directly involved in agriculture was also discussed, and to include other individuals from the rural sector, for example, individuals from the conservation sector. It was felt that this would help to increase understanding between the sectors by focusing on positive action on behalf of the Welsh language. Despite the desire to fulfil this aim, it became clear from the focus group discussions that some farmers would be unwilling to bear the increased workload associated with such a scheme. It was proposed that there was a need for a **formal structure to support the twinning system**, perhaps with an individual (individuals) to assist with the arrangements and possibly with an element of practical support to participants.

Strong feelings were expressed regarding the need to **support rural schools** in order to support a living community and language. It was proposed that a "Farmers for Welsh medium Education" ("Amaethwyr dros Addysg Gymraeg") group could be established on a National level to lobby for the protection of rural schools (similar to RhAG (Parents for Welsh medium Education)).

The importance of **providing post-16 agricultural education through the medium of Welsh** was highlighted. It was felt that the current provision was insufficient, and students expressed their frustration that the Welsh-language provision was in reality a translation provision – i.e. relatively few of the modules were provided in Welsh, but students could present their work in Welsh and it would be translated into English to be marked. One student felt that this put them at a disadvantage compared with their peers who were studying through the medium of English, since it was not their work which was being marked, but the work of the translator. This meant that they were also missing out on practical opportunities to expand their Welsh agricultural and agri-scientific vocabulary due to the fact that the subject was taught almost entirely through the medium of English. Older individuals commented that this situation had been identified decades ago and had been the subject of reports, but that the provision had recently declined further. It was felt that there was a profound need to **commission and produce Welsh-language resources for the further education and higher education sectors**, by establishing a system similar to the one which provides and translates educational resources on behalf of the primary and secondary education sectors.

“Could a young girl or boy with an interest in learning Welsh go and get a summer placement on a [Welsh speaking] farm in, I don't know, Carmarthenshire?”

“Offer free Welsh lessons in places local to us, not in the towns”

5.6 Life beyond the Farmyard

One theme which linked every response to the question “What is the best thing about living in the country?” was the feeling of community and belonging which is associated with our rural areas and agricultural communities. The strength of this feeling is one of the main attractions in **keeping young people in the communities they were raised and attracting individuals back** to those rural communities. The **importance of structures and social organisations** such as YFC, ‘Merched y Wawr’, local shows, choirs and sports clubs was also emphasised as a means of providing and supporting **a living context to the language** and communities which support it. It is the communities themselves which support the majority of these organisations, and the importance of acting to establish a strong community foundation is evident in the responses.

The perception that there is no work to be found in rural areas was also questioned and it was maintained that more work needed to be done to promote the fact that employment opportunities exist.

It was identified that there was a gap in the provision for farmers post-YFC age (i.e. 26+). The possibility of **establishing leisure organisations for this older age-group** was mentioned in order to support Welsh-language activities and contribute to supporting and expanding the use of the language. However, it was also recognized that this age-group was likely to feed into societies such as those named in the previous paragraph.

The need to provide **opportunities for non-Welsh-speaking farming communities to get to know the language and act through the medium of Welsh** was also highlighted. It was suggested that such areas would welcome the Welsh language if the opportunity was provided.

“The prosperity of the language will be ensured by the social use of the language, rather than by formal arrangements.” (Contributor quoting Suzanne Romaine)

6. Findings

The research undertaken by the “*Language of the Land*” (which is based on the opinions of those who participated in the study), suggests that there is an opportunity here to act by protecting **and** extending the Welsh language in agricultural circles, both at Government policy level, and at community level.

It is suggested that the opportunity should not be lost to take advantage of the important *resource* which exists, (namely a large number of Welsh speakers) and the fact that they share common ground (namely agriculture) with non-Welsh-speaking communities.

As this report has collected a wealth of ideas regarding methods of taking practical action, and that the natural links which exist between agricultural organisations and bodies offer opportunities and a foundation from which to take action, action *should* be taken to ensure the prosperity of the Welsh language within Agriculture. This could be done on two levels:

At a Governmental level, the following actions could be undertaken:

- i. Ensure that policies and the subsidies system support activity on family farms, and cap subsidies which are associated with land ownership. The payment system should be based on the number of people who earn their living from the farm and prioritising passive management of farmland should be avoided.
- ii. Ensure that the planning system supports the development of rural initiatives/agricultural diversification, and protects members of the agricultural community from being pushed out of their communities because of a lack of housing and because second homes/holiday homes are dominant in those areas.
- iii. Formalize the support given to Young Farmers' Clubs to promote the Welsh language at a county level and nationally.
- iv. Work with the post-16 sector to strengthen the Welsh-language provision on courses which are associated with agriculture and to fund a system to publish and translate agricultural educational resources for the sector.
- v. Fund the post of facilitator at a national level (possibly within an organisation, office or relevant scheme) to lead on the task of co-ordinating partners with an interest in developing the role of Welsh in agriculture. Under the leadership of the facilitator, a body of members could be established that would operate the following practical plans.

On a Community level, the following actions could be undertaken:

Under the instigation and guidance of the facilitator (referenced above), a body of members could be established to implement the following practical plans:

- i. Establish a twinning programme between members of the agricultural community and also between farmers and individuals in related sectors
- ii. Encourage the agricultural Unions to identify individuals to be responsible for the Welsh language in their unions.
- iii. Stimulate, enable and support the younger generation of farmers to acquire digital skills in order to create content which promotes a positive image of the Welsh language in their community and broadcast it online.
- iv. Encourage the development of leisure organisations for people beyond the YFC age-group.
- v. Establish an online Welsh language learning scheme with an agricultural slant.
- vi. Establish Welsh conversation groups/classes for learners in agricultural meeting places.

In the long term, it is proposed that the facilitator and the partners could turn their attention to the following:

- Developing PGI status for the Welsh language. Contributors were eager for Welsh to be recognized as a Noted Characteristic, and to be included in grant applications / procurement processes / tenders. A recommendation was made that those who can prove they are acting to protect/develop the language can score additional points as is evidenced against other criteria.
- Strengthening the development of Welsh-language labels on food products, thus providing an opportunity for agricultural produce to extend the use of the language in the wider community. Support livestock markets as they provide a social opportunity to use the Welsh language, and are a platform for the language to be heard by non-Welsh-speaking farmers, and as a socio-economic driver for the environment of the language. Support the provision of translated materials for non-Welsh-speakers to be used for their rural businesses/ initiatives and to promote products/services.
- Normalise the use of the Welsh language among organisations/bodies/agencies/businesses which are associated with agriculture.
- Make the Welsh language more visible in places where non-Welsh-speaking farmers meet, in order to normalize the language.

7. Conclusions

This report and the primary evidence which was recorded provides a clear and firm context to the challenges and opportunities facing the Welsh language and the industry which supports it. One of the significant findings which is not clear from those listed is the success of the combined multiple methods of enquiry and engagement used. By casting the net wide, a number of different voices were brought together from across Wales, from different backgrounds and age-groups. The true wealth of the contents of the report is the individual voices which combine to create, validate and reinforce the findings and recommendations contained here. This report is not the end of the journey, rather, it is a strong start for an even wider discussion.

One of the contributors referred to a quotation by Suzanne Romaine, when discussing her work 'Vanishing Voices' in 2005:

“Language shift occurs not because there is more choice but because there is less”.

This report highlights the choice which is available in the agricultural sector to protect the Welsh language now and to identify some of the factors which could threaten that choice, whilst also underlining the opportunities to expand the choice in order to grow and develop the language in the future. The findings of the 'Language of the Land' study suggest that the relationship between the various factors – both positive and threatening – which face the agricultural industry, rural Wales and the Welsh language, overlap to such an extent that it there is no point, nor is it possible, to separate one from the other – in protecting and expanding an individual factor, the other will also benefit, but by threatening an individual factor, they will all lose out.

“Is it possible to rescue threatened languages?... Yes... But only by following careful strategies... and only if the true complexity of local identity, language ability and global interdependence are fully appreciated”.

- Joshua Fishman

