



Economic Strategy and Regulation Division
Welsh Government

By e-mail: RegionallInvestmentinWales@gov.wales

19/12/2025

Dear Colleague,

Consultation: Proposals for an approach to the UK Local Growth Fund in Wales

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in the consultation above. Our response concentrates on the issues in question in the context of the Welsh language.

Among the guiding principles which will steer Local Growth Fund plans and investments, we welcome principle (f) to 'Integrate equality, sustainable development and the Welsh language in all of our investments'. However, we would have expected more references to the Welsh language throughout the consultation document, as well as in the integrated impact assessment, which does not refer to the Welsh language at all.

We welcome the statement that the approach to the Local Growth Fund in Wales will deliver against the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 since 'a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language' is one of its well-being goals. It is noted that the approach will also correspond to the Welsh Government's economic policy, *Economic mission: priorities for a stronger economy*. It is a cause for concern that the report by Aberystwyth University, [Looking beyond ARFOR](#), found that this mission does not include any references to the Welsh language.

The consultation document discusses the importance of well-connected, strong and resilient communities as economic assets, and investing in sustainable economic opportunities for young people. We agree with the strategic objective to improve local economic infrastructure, including transport, digital connectivity, and community assets to support sustainable communities. These matters are all relevant to Welsh-language communities. In its report, [Empowering communities, strengthening the Welsh language](#), the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities argues that one of the reasons why

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communities with a high density of Welsh language speakers are seeing a consistent decline in the number and percentage of speakers is that they 'face significant structural challenges including an ageing population and continuous out-migration of young people'. One of the reasons why young people leave are the significant and structural economic challenges which mean that there are fewer economic opportunities to entice young people to stay or return to these communities.

The importance of the economy in the context of the Welsh Government's Welsh language policy

The Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050* strategy notes the importance of community and the economy, and sets a goal to support the socio-economic infrastructure of Welsh-speaking communities. The strategy discusses the significance of areas with a high density of Welsh language speakers and the need for language planning and economic development to go hand in hand, in order to create Welsh-speaking communities that are economically and linguistically viable. It notes that the economy is integral to creating the appropriate social conditions for Welsh speakers to remain in Welsh-speaking communities, or return to them. Among the factors that can be influenced in the context of economic growth, the Government in the strategy recognizes the prestige placed on the Welsh language, the location of jobs in the public sector, clusters, ensuring that the Welsh language is seen as a valuable skill in major developments, and opportunities to use those skills. However, the consultation document 'Proposals for an approach to the UK Local Growth Fund in Wales' does not refer to *Cymraeg 2050* at all despite that strategy's emphasis on the economy in the context of Welsh language communities.

Placing economic development in a regional context in Wales, the consultation document announces an intention to ensure that funding works alongside other regionally targeted investments to support jobs and growth, including City and Growth Deals. Since the summer of 2024 the Welsh language standards have placed a duty on the Corporate Joint Committees, which implement the City and Growth Deals, to consider the effects of policy decisions on the Welsh language. This requirement should ensure that the Committees give conscientious consideration to the Welsh language when making strategic and budgetary decisions.

However, a cause for concern once again is the finding in [Looking beyond ARFOR](#) that the Welsh language has consistently been a marginal consideration in the development of the North Wales Growth Deal, the Mid Wales Growth Deal and the Swansea Bay City Deal. According to the report, the long-term impact of the City and Growth Deals will be very substantial considering the high levels of public and private investment involved, but it appears that they do not give serious consideration to the ARFOR programme, nor to the Welsh language. The City and Growth Deals provide investment worth billions of pounds and offer strategic direction for economic developments throughout Wales for a period of 15 years. Compared to this, a small investment made in the ARFOR programme, which was created to support the economy of



the areas with the highest density of Welsh speakers within the local authority boundaries of Ceredigion, Gwynedd, Carmarthenshire and Anglesey.

The relevance of the Welsh language to the investment priorities

There are opportunities to strengthen the priorities and strategic objectives presented in the consultation document by considering the relevance of the Welsh language to them. For example, one objective is to invest in heritage, tourism, or cultural assets. This objective should refer specifically to the Welsh language. So too should the objectives that refer to improving qualification and/or skills levels, and tailored demand-led skills support and training for high growth potential or regionally important sectors. The consultation document warns that the workforce in Wales is shrinking, leading to staff shortages, including in some sectors where demand is predicted to grow, such as health and social care. The importance of addressing the gaps in the current provision is emphasized.

This is very relevant in the context of the Welsh language as there is an increasing demand for a bilingual workforce in Wales today. There are now over 130 organizations under the Welsh language standards system, including some of the largest employers in Wales. We also know that the Welsh language is a skill valued by organizations beyond the standards system. These include small and large businesses, some of which have received the Welsh Offer recognition from the Welsh Language Commissioner. *Cymraeg 2050* emphasizes the need to ensure that young people have an opportunity to continue developing bilingual skills to support a thriving economy, and a culture shift towards recognizing the benefits of having a workforce within the economy that is increasingly bilingual.

We also believe that the Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050* strategy, the ARFOR programme, and the report of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities¹ need to be considered in the context of developing regional economies. The consultation document should recognize and consider the significance of this growth fund in the context of the Welsh Government's vision for the Welsh language, especially in terms of supporting the socio-economic infrastructure of areas with a high density of speakers.

The consultation document also refers to the importance and potential of expanding the green economy in Wales. There is a clear link between the need to support the economic prosperity of Welsh language communities and the exciting opportunities that exist due to net zero economic developments. There is potential for the economy of the western areas of Wales to be strengthened because of the economic opportunities of the green transition, especially as these areas possess many relevant natural resources.

¹ [Empowering communities, strengthening the Welsh language](#)



Welsh language impact assessment and the policy making standards

Although the consultation document includes questions seeking opinions about the likely effects of the Local Growth Fund on the Welsh language, it does not appear that these effects were considered when presenting the consultation. When the Welsh Ministers publish a consultation document which relates to a policy decision, the Welsh language standards require that document to **consider** and **seek views** on the effects that the policy decision under consideration would have on—

- (a) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and
- (b) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Mainstreaming the Welsh language into this consultation and the work that ensues would strengthen the results for Welsh language speakers throughout Wales. I hope the comments above will help with that work.

Yours faithfully,

Efa Gruffudd Jones
Welsh Language Commissioner