

CFA10 Dr Thora Tenbrink

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol |
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Cymraeg i bawb? | Cymraeg for all?

Ymateb gan: Dr Thora Tenbrink | Evidence from: Dr Thora Tenbrink

1. What are the main barriers that prevent wider use of the Welsh language in areas with fewer Welsh speakers, and what might help to change this?

There are many indications that highly formal language such as that used in official written communications is a major barrier. We are currently researching this, aiming to find out more about why Welsh speakers should choose English in certain circumstances. Especially in times where learning Welsh is promoted, it is imperative to provide as many accessible options for using the language as possible, rather than having to wait till the more complex 'written Welsh' demands can be met. Notably, even native Welsh speakers of a local dialect often don't feel confident to write or read in Welsh, even if they speak (informal) Welsh all the time. The discrepancy is stronger in Welsh than in other languages and I believe can be really harmful for further promotion of the language.

2. What sort of spaces and opportunities might encourage greater use of, and increase confidence in, the use of the language in areas where day-to-day use of the language is limited?

Across various community engagement projects, we find that language plays a major role, as it is part of people's culture and identity. Hence, the more opportunities there are for people to come together and engage for something, the better - and these opportunities need to cater for the language/s that people identify with.

The Welsh language is closely intertwined with place attachment, appreciation of the natural environment and cultural heritage and history. There are fantastic opportunities here to get people on board through language - especially if this doesn't presuppose complete mastery of the language.

Our most recent research actually shows a positive correlation between Welsh language abilities and connection with the natural environment. That is, Welsh speakers feel more connected to nature than non-Welsh speakers in Wales. This can be built upon. Nature is a 'Welsh thing' - activities and engagement in this regard can be attractive to others, drawing people to the language through the means of positive engagement (and vice versa).

3. Can you share examples of successful initiatives or activities that have encouraged Welsh language use in areas where use of the language is limited?

4. What sort of spaces and opportunities might encourage greater use of, and increase confidence in, the use of the language in areas where day-to-day use of the language is limited?

5. What impact, in your view, do cultural events such as national Eisteddfodau or Welsh language festivals have on Welsh language use, particularly in areas with fewer Welsh speakers?

6. How might these events (whether large or small in size) be adapted or improved to better serve communities with fewer Welsh speakers?

7. Are there any other matters you would like to draw to the Committees attention about the Welsh Government's approach to supporting the Welsh language in areas with fewer Welsh speakers?