



Jacques Protic

22 October 2015

Dear Mr Protic,

Thank you for your email of 4th October relating to the Welsh language.

I am sorry to say that I do not agree with the way you have characterised either the Welsh language or the current philosophy of Welsh Labour. It is putting the cart before the horse to question why Wales is being promoted as a bilingual nation since devolution. Wales was a bilingual nation long before 1999, and Welsh as a language of education and the community has a centuries' old tradition. It is wrong to say therefore that the language has been imposed on the country in some way, indeed it is as much part of Wales as the mountains and rivers themselves. This is something that great Welsh Labour politicians, like Jim Griffiths and Cledwyn Hughes recognised and celebrated and I believe they would have been proud to see how a Welsh Labour Government today tries to support and promote the language in a way that is inclusive – taking us away from the bad old days where language was a political football.

In relation to schooling, Welsh first became a compulsory subject for all pupils in Wales in 1990 and ever since devolution began we have been up front with the people of Wales about our commitment and aims for the language. Our *laith Pawb* strategy in 2003 set out the aim to create a bilingual Wales where people could choose to live their lives through the medium of Welsh or English and we have continued to build on this commitment to secure a thriving future for the language, through our Welsh Language Strategy “*laith Fyw*”.

We published our Welsh-medium education strategy in 2010 which set out the Welsh Government's vision for an education and training system that responded in a planned way to the demand for Welsh-medium education. The aim was to facilitate an increase in the number of people of all ages able to use the Welsh language with their families, in their communities and in the workplace. In 2013 the National Assembly followed this up by passing the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act which required all local authorities to prepare and submit a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) which would

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

contain a local authority's proposals and targets on how it would improve the planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh in its area.

To build on this, we recently commissioned Professor Graham Donaldson to map out a radical new approach to the curriculum, including the teaching of Welsh in our schools. His report was based on an extensive engagement process known as 'The Great Debate' to involve everyone with a stake in the future of Welsh education in this new approach, from teachers to parents, to learners and businesses. The response to his report was one of the biggest to any Welsh Government engagement exercise since devolution began, with over 700 responses, including over 300 from children and young people themselves. The Welsh Government has now accepted all of the recommendations in Prof. Donaldson's report, including that Welsh will remain compulsory in all schools up to the age of 16. As Professor Donaldson outlined in his report, 'The cultural, cognitive and practical benefits of learning Welsh as a living language provide a strong case for its inclusion as a compulsory element in the school curriculum'. I would therefore challenge any assertion that we have not sought to engage with, and seek consent from, the Welsh public in how we intend to develop the language in Wales.

I would also similarly contest the statement that we are 'damaging' young people in primary schools by giving them the opportunity to learn Welsh. Not only is the joy of learning a language good in itself, linguistic skills are rapidly becoming one of the most important tools a young person can acquire to compete for jobs in the new global economy. As a bilingual country we already have a great deal of knowledge in our primary and secondary schools sector and in our university language departments about how best to learn and teach languages and that is why recently the Minister for Education Huw Lewis outlined the Welsh Government's attempt to harness this advantage through its new *Global Futures* strategy which aims to increase modern foreign language learning in our primary and secondary schools and ensure we deliver the increase in confident linguists our economy and society needs over the next few years.

Devolution has given us the opportunity to make decisions in Wales, for Wales. Having a Welsh Labour Government leading that work in the Assembly has given Wales the opportunity to be proud of its traditions and at the same time be confident and outward looking about competing on the international stage we want Wales to play on over the coming years.

I am honoured to lead that work and will continue to do so in the same transparent and open way we have done over the last few years.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carwyn Jones', written in a cursive style.

CARWYN JONES

