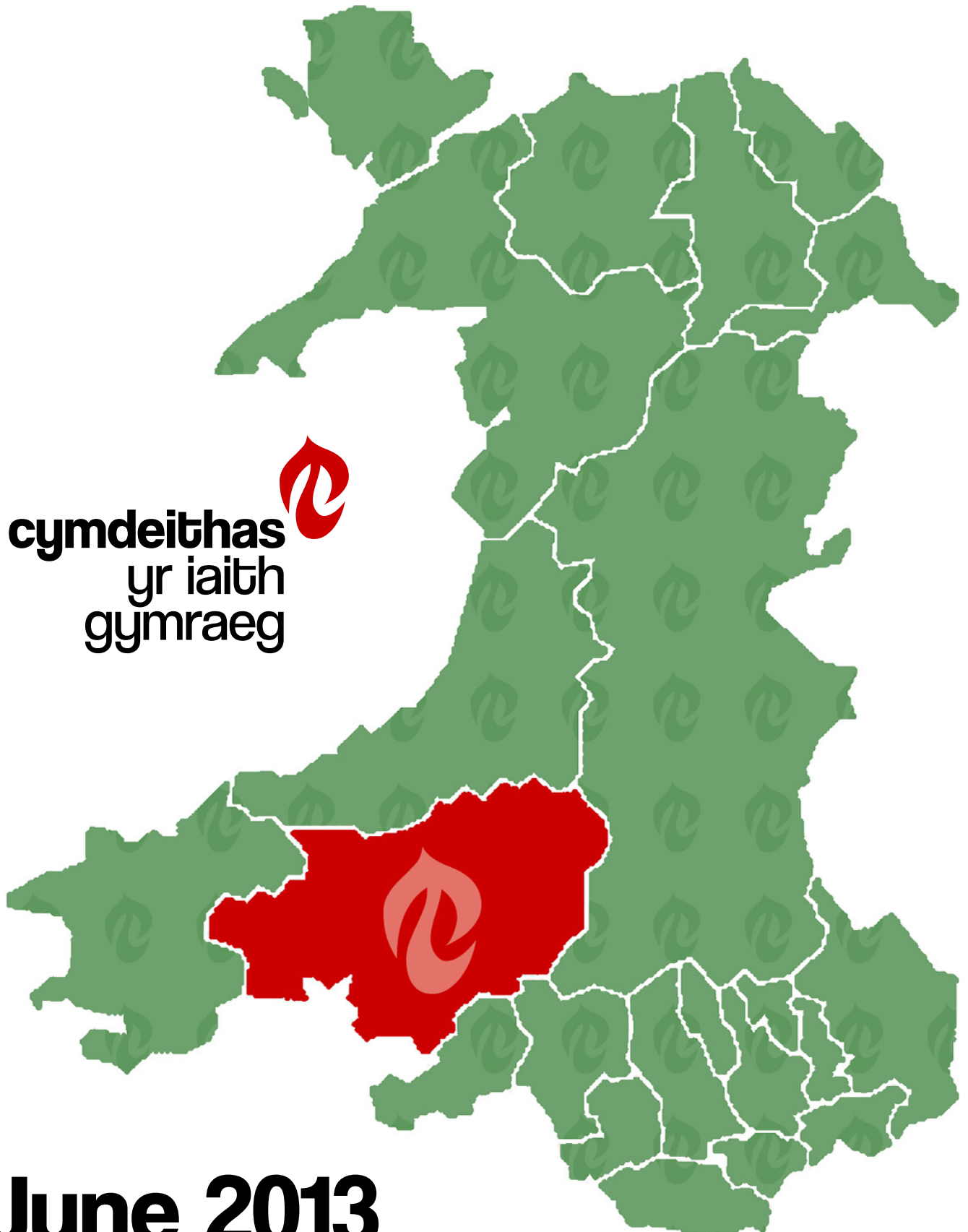


‘Siarter Sir Gâr’

Carmarthenshire Welsh Language Charter



cymdeithas
yr iaith
gymraeg

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Foreword

In light of the 2011 Census results showing a 6% drop in the percentage of Welsh speakers in Carmarthenshire, we have published 'Siarter Sir Gâr' 2013. Here are Cymdeithas yr Iaith's recommendations on how to tackle the crisis facing the Welsh language and Welsh speaking communities in Carmarthenshire.

We call on Carmarthenshire County Council to recognise that there is a crisis, and to take urgent action to prevent further deterioration. We believe that the County Council has a responsibility to work directly to achieve the objectives of 'Siarter Sir Gâr' through its own activities, and to provide guidance to partners and other organizations in situations where it does not have the direct power to act.

There is a real need for urgent action and strong and clear leadership by Carmarthenshire County Council to reverse the decline in the Welsh language. If the trends of recent years continue, the Welsh language in Carmarthenshire will slip to a position where it is no longer a living community language. As a response to the Census figures, thousands of people have signed a statement insisting that they do not want to see this happen, and they want to live through the medium of Welsh in Carmarthenshire. We therefore challenge the County Council to create the conditions that will ensure a prosperous future for the Welsh language and Welsh-speaking communities in Carmarthenshire.



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1. Welsh as the Official Language

The County Council should draw up a plan to transition its administrative language from English to Welsh. This would give a clear example, and give the people who work for the Council the chance to use the language in their day-to-day work. If the County Council, as one of the main employers and service providers in the county, adopted the Welsh language as its main medium of work, then this would increase the confidence of the county's residents in the language. The motivation of school students and adult learners to master the language would also increase.



2. Welsh-medium Education in every Community

1) We call for the recognition that the ability to communicate and carry out work in Welsh is an essential educational skill and no pupil or student should be deprived of this skill. There is educationally sound evidence from various countries showing the positive value of bilingualism, and no pupil should be under a disadvantage, as much work in contemporary Wales is dependent on the ability to perform tasks in both languages. To achieve this, we call for:

a) Strengthening Welsh medium primary schools in the county by ensuring the provision of effective centres for latecomers to enable them to join the main educational stream of their community school within a term or two. This extends the principle of inclusion to latecomers, and ensures mainstream education in community schools is not disrupted. Given the Census results, this should be a matter of priority, ensuring that every non Welsh speaking pupil moving into the county will spend their first term in such a centre, so they can be integrated immediately afterwards into education in their community and have the best possible chance.

b) A plan and timetable to move the non-Welsh medium primary schools up the language continuum so that pupils are not deprived of a fundamental educational skill.

c) A plan and timetable to move secondary schools in the county that offer a number of subjects through the medium of Welsh (if there is demand) along the language continuum. Students cannot gain the essential educational skill to communicate and carry out their work in Welsh if their experience of the Welsh language is limited mainly to the primary sector. Indeed, abandoning Welsh language education during the transition to the secondary sector may disrupt education and cause negative attitudes. Development needs to be structured in the 2B secondary schools - Ammanford, Towy Valley and Whitland - by ensuring that all pupils from the Welsh-medium primary schools will be automatically registered for the Welsh stream, and to work to change the category of these schools to category 2A so that no pupil will be disadvantaged educationally. We need an urgent review of the anomaly of Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn - a school that teaches primarily through the medium of English, although all its feeder primary schools are Welsh-medium schools. This is now a matter of urgency, as a result of the reorganization on the other side of the border in Llandysul.

ch) An urgent plan for pupils in primary and secondary schools who are taught entirely through the medium of English, and who are totally deprived of the educational skill of being able to fulfil their work in Welsh. We ask the County Council to respond without delay to our call on central government to abolish the whole concept of "Welsh as a Second Language," as the Welsh language belongs to everyone. All English medium schools in the county should begin to deliver some of the curriculum through the medium of Welsh, and we propose as starting points (i) Physical Education (ii) Local community Studies and (iii) ensuring that Welsh is essential to any nursery unit associated with the county's schools.

d) A specific qualification by the providers of vocational courses (Coleg Sir Gâr and schools) to ensure that every student's ability to communicate and work through the medium of Welsh is certified before they receive accreditation for completion of their vocational course. These Welsh language modules would be tailor made for the individual courses.

dd) In-service training courses for teachers in the county (e.g. PE) to put this into practice.

e) That the Council organizes a major publicity campaign to convince parents - based on sound educational evidence that is widely available internationally - of the advantages of bilingual education, and to explain why the Council on an educational basis can't allow

pupils to be deprived of the ability to communicate and fulfil their work in Welsh. Carmarthenshire Education Authority's role is to offer strong guidance in this matter, as "promoting the Welsh language" is an objective of the Council's own corporate strategy.

- 2) We call for education that empowers pupils in terms of their understanding of their communities and how they can influence them, and doing this by:
 - a) Setting up a working group to investigate best practice in the development of Community Studies in cross-subject projects in schools.
 - b) Consulting with school councils as a natural part of the planning process and other public consultations. This should be done through the medium of Welsh so the pupils get used to discussing the future of their communities and develop a sense of responsibility for their communities.
 - c) Ensuring that an introduction to local communities is key to education and language learning in the centres for latecomers. Family sessions should also be encouraged.
- 3) We call for our educational institutions to be recognised as part of the fabric of our communities with a broad mission, rather than being seen as a public service to be organized centrally. We call for an end to the bureaucratic strategy of depriving communities of their schools, and to begin the process of open-ended discussions with communities on how they can develop the use of their schools and their resources as assets to revitalize our Welsh speaking communities. The exact model will differ from community to community, but will be based on the following principles -
 - a) planning the best model of a village school in collaboration with local people and their responsibility for it.
 - b) developing a range of innovative models which may include combining hall / school / services in one viable resource in the village, set up a trust to take care of the building. The Authority would rent space for the school and then the Council or another agency would make use of surplus space in the building.
 - c) that the neighbouring schools would work together educationally in a model (whether in a federation, cluster or multi-site school) that best suits the needs of the local communities in order to provide the broadest educational experience for pupils.
 - ch) the maximum possible contact between the school and the community so that the school becomes a powerhouse for the Welsh language in the community, a place to integrate non-Welsh speaking newcomers, and to be used to develop new skills and initiatives.



3. Maintaining and Developing Welsh Language Communities

The 2011 Census results have clearly demonstrated that local or national planning policies have not succeeded in halting the decline in those communities with a high enough percentage of Welsh speakers where the language is the natural language of communication in everyday life. Three paragraphs in the Policy Plan for Wales document and a Technical Advice Note made obsolete in the year 2000 deal with unitary development plans: that is the amount devoted to language planning policy in Wales. Although the policy recognizes that the planning system should take into account the welfare of the language, the reality is that there is nothing to ensure a sustainable future for Welsh-speaking communities. In the same way, Carmarthenshire Council's planning policy documents (The Unitary Development Plans and proposed Local Development Plan) contain statements approving policy regarding the protection and promotion of the Welsh language. However, in light of other policies that conflict with that objective and the lack of effective mechanisms to put in place policies to do with the Welsh language, the local planning system doesn't fulfil its role in supporting, promoting or the development of Welsh-speaking communities.

As a first step towards making right this failure, it is necessary that the Welsh Government and local authorities, including Carmarthenshire County Council in particular, recognizes that the planning system has a key part to play in ensuring a future for Welsh communities.

- 1) The Welsh Government should establish an independent agency to provide clear and authoritative advice to planning authorities in Wales regarding the impact that housing developments are likely to have on all planning applications within language sensitive areas. To this end, and because of the crisis facing the language in Carmarthenshire, the County Council should establish a pilot trial as soon as possible.
- 2) The County Council should urge the Welsh Government to reopen the process of revising TAN20 (Technical Advice Note on Planning and the Welsh Language) urgently to create strong and effective guidelines to manage the planning system in language sensitive areas.
- 3) Given the results of the Census, the County Council should review its proposed Local Development Plan recognizing that the plan may no longer reflect the challenges facing the language in Carmarthenshire. The New Plan should be based on local needs and on strengthening communities and the Welsh language.
- 4) We call on the Council to adopt a comprehensive Housing Policy for the Protection of Welsh-speaking communities, ensuring adequate housing to meet local needs, including affordable housing, housing for rent and the use of purchase assistance schemes. In terms of affordable housing it is necessary that the County Council resists requests from developers to reduce the percentage of affordable housing in new estates. We welcome the County Council's decision to build bungalows for rent in Llanelli for the first time since the 1980s. The Council should also facilitate the development of housing for rent in more rural communities for local people.
- 5) There has been an increase in the number of empty homes in Carmarthenshire from 3,600 to 5,300 over the past decade according to the Census, and the Council has identified 2,000 houses

that have been vacant for decades. Instead of allowing thousands of new houses to be built under the proposed Local Development Plan, the Council should prioritise restoring these houses as part of community regeneration.

6) We also call on the Government and the County Council to reconsider Technical Advice Note 6 (TAN 6) - Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities. The aim of this policy is to create "sustainable rural communities" by "ensuring that sufficient land is available to provide homes and employment opportunities for local people", but some of the conditions of TAN6 are too harsh or are applied too strictly by the planning authorities. These rules should be eased and the ability to speak Welsh should be added as one of the factors to be considered.

7) Public transport policies should be reviewed to ensure that it is practically possible for young people to live in Welsh-speaking village communities and rural areas and travel easily to places of work and recreation.



4. The rights and needs of Welsh language speakers within the Health Care system:

In general, strengthening the rights to use the Welsh language when receiving services is absolutely critical in the effort to secure the future of Welsh as a living language. In terms of health and care, it is more than that – very often, it is a matter of need, not just choice that Welsh language services are provided for people in the context of health care and social services. It is therefore essential that a Welsh language service is available and will be offered routinely to all who'll come into contact with these services. Carmarthenshire County Council has a major role in this respect – as a provider of care and social services – they should ensure that each of these services is provided in Welsh for Welsh speakers in the county. The Council can also give important guidance to other organisations that provide care, health and social services, and should ensure that any service provider it commissions meets these needs when providing the service.

- 1) The Council should ensure Welsh language training for all sectors within the health and social care sector and provide ongoing support to enable staff to work through the medium of Welsh.
- 2) Staff training programs should emphasise the impact of linguistic sensitivity on the effectiveness of care, and develop a program for managers to raise awareness of the impact of language on the effectiveness of care services.
- 3) Training programs should be put in place to increase staff ability to provide services in Welsh and provide training to increase the confidence of current Welsh speakers to use the language at work.
- 4) Healthcare and social services' staff should wear the "Iaith Gwaith / Working Welsh" logo, and incorporate the "Iaith Gwaith / Working Welsh" logo on workers' uniforms.
- 5) Community care should be provided according to the linguistic needs of the client at all times. This means offering a service in Welsh as a matter of routine at all times, and recording the client's linguistic need to ensure that the staff dealing with the client have the necessary language skills. Regular audits should be made of this provision to ensure that standards are maintained.
- 6) The language provision of outside companies that provide community care should be monitored closely to ensure that they also provide care in the language the client needs.
- 7) Residential care should be available in the language the client needs, care homes should comply with these standards and each home should have a language policy.
- 8) There is a need to ensure that there are sufficient residential home staff, who speak Welsh, working on every shift in order to meet the language needs of the residents. This needs to be taken into consideration when appointing new staff.

5. Young People and the Welsh Language

A wide range of leisure services are available to young people in the county and the County Council provides Welsh medium education, but the fact that the Council's current leisure provision is mainly in English confirms the idea that the Welsh language applies to education alone. Every department should complement rather than undermine the efforts of the education department and ensure that all children are bilingual by the time they complete their school education. It is therefore important that recreation and entertainment activities are available through the medium of Welsh and there is easy access to it.

- 1) We call on the Council to ensure that all the supplementary education, leisure and entertainment services it provides will be available in Welsh, e.g. sports and instrumental lessons, youth clubs and youth services, and that any organization that provides youth services on behalf of the Council or with the support of the Council – through a cash grant, use of Council venues / resources etc. are also provided through the medium of Welsh.
- 2) The Council should pro-actively plan to ensure that a wide range of leisure and recreation opportunities are provided through the medium of Welsh to young people in their communities throughout the county.

