

Introduction

What is a Menter Iaith?

A Menter Iaith is a body that promotes and develops the Welsh language on a local level. There is a Menter Iaith in almost every Welsh county. The name translates into English as 'Language Initiative.'

What about Menter Iaith Conwy?

Menter Iaith Dinbych-Conwy was established in 1998 as a voluntary body based on a partnership between Canolfan Iaith Clwyd, Menter Dyffryn Clwyd and Menter Colwyn. It had a membership and a steering committee (with officers) and its activities were governed by a constitution. Some of its members were individuals whilst others were representatives of various organisations.

In September 2003 it was decided to abolish Menter Iaith Dinbych-Conwy and establish two separate organisations, one for each county. This led to the formation of Menter Iaith Conwy and Menter Iaith Dinbych. The main reason for separation was the growth of the Menter's activities, plans and staff. The new arrangement has led to better administration, particularly in financial matters, and each of the Mentrau is now more in tune with its own plans in its own county. Since its establishment the number of staff at Menter Iaith Conwy has increased and facilities have improved.

Menter Iaith Conwy Ltd. Committee Members

Chairman – Gwyn Roberts

Treasurer – Member without Portfolio

Secretary - Teleri Hughes - Staff

Baudewijn Morgan – Welsh Learners

Eirian Jones - Voluntary Sector

Eleri Evans – Staffing Matters

Wyn Jones – Staffing Matters

Tecwyn Ifan – Member without Portfolio

Huw Prys - Member without Portfolio

Eryl P Roberts – Rural Area

Meirion Davies - Staff

Description of the area served by Menter Iaith Conwy

Along the coast and on the county's easternmost boundary there are communities such as Towyn, Abergele, Colwyn Bay and Llandrillo-yn-Rhos where the population born in Wales is often as low as 50% or less. The demographic change behind this (and which is still happening) has had a substantial effect on the percentage of Welsh speakers along the coast, which on average is less than 25%. Primary education is provided mainly through the medium of English in these areas, although parents can choose to send their children to the Welsh medium schools that have been established in Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and Abergele. Children can then proceed to Welsh medium secondary education at Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy and Ysgol y Creuddyn.

To the south of the A55 there are rural communities with a much higher percentage of people who were born in Wales, and a higher percentage of Welsh speakers as a result. The percentage of Welsh speakers in this area is between 60% and 80%. The vast majority of the primary education provided in this area is mainly Welsh medium, although there are a few exceptions.

It is in the light of these facts we have identified our main points of action and decided on the Menter's Structure. It is possible to divide the strategy into four areas, namely:

- 1. Outcomes**
- 2. Points of Action**
- 3. Area Committees**
- 4. Specific Plans – Community Development**

1. Outcomes

The Menter has considered where it can have the greatest effect using its present resources. We believe that it is by working to achieve the following outcomes that we can be most effective:

- Increase the social use of the Welsh Language among children, families and young people**
- Increase the social use of the Welsh Language in high % (rural) communities and in the coastal communities**

These aims and objectives are based on our knowledge of the county and on the situation of the Welsh language within it.

We have differentiated between the rural and the coastal areas due to the linguistic nature of the two areas. The work patterns of our core staff are based on serving both areas and their specific area committees.

2. Points of Action

Priority areas – in which the Menter will lead

- Integration / Learners / Incomers***
- Youth / Emigration / Employment***
- Community Use, Children and Families, Language transmission***

Secondary areas - in which the Menter will co-operate with prominent partners.

- Education***
- Business***
- Volunteering***

3 Area Committees

We work through local committees which have their own volunteers. Our Area Officers assists the committees to create a local work program.

The Coastal Area

- Penmaenmawr and Llanfairfechan, i.e. The Pen-lan Area Committee**
- Llandudno and Area, i.e. The Creuddyn Area Committee**
- Abergele**

The Rural Area

- Penmachno
- Between the Conwy and Clwyd valleys, i.e. The Berfeddwlad Area Committee
- Llanrwst
- Cerrigydrudion

4. Specific Plans – Community Development

Menter Iaith Conwy believes that there is an opportunity to create a bright future for the Welsh language by producing exciting and innovative schemes that will touch on a number of our main action areas. Through implementing these schemes we believe it will be possible to go beyond mere promotion the language. Our intention is to create Welsh medium employment, and make the language an integral part of the area's economic and social infrastructure.

At present we are working on two such plans;

- *The Outdoor Pursuits Leaders Training and Employment Agency.*
- *Cyfieithu Cymunedol.*

Menter Iaith Conwy Outdoor Pursuits Leaders Training and Employment Agency

Background

Recent research by Bangor University showed that only 5% of staff involved in training at outdoor activity centres in the counties of Conwy, Gwynedd and Môn are Welsh speaking. This is in an area where, taken as a whole, 55% of the population is Welsh speaking. We believe that this imbalance leads many Welsh speakers to perceive the outdoor activity sector as something foreign or alien, which in turn makes them shun the sector as a career choice. This is a great shame as the outdoor sector is one of the few industries that can provide that could provide long term employment in rural areas. This could be a great help to Welsh speaking communities. At present, many young people are leaving their rural communities to look for employment. Work also needs to be done to change the attitude of Welsh speakers people towards considering the outdoor sector as a potential career option. Regarding relevant employment, the highest percentage of Welsh speakers is in the agricultural sector. There is considerable potential for farmers to diversify into Outdoor Pursuits. (Agriculture, hunting and forestry – 11533 (40%) 2005, 'Profiting Economically on language and culture' by Innovate Observation, Cardiff School of Business). It is essential that people in this sector, a sector that is shrinking, are given every opportunity to diversify.

What are we doing about this?

Essentially we are;

Assisting Welsh speakers to train in the outdoor pursuits

Find work for them

Create jobs by encouraging young people to chose Welsh medium activities

Cyfieithu Cymunedol

Cyfieithu Cymunedol translates as 'community translation' and that's what Cyfieithu Cymunedol is – a community translation company. The aspect that gives the company its 'community' element is the fact that it offers reduced rates to charitable and community organizations. This has allowed many local groups who couldn't afford translation previously to now provide materials bilingually. In addition to this, the simultaneous translation service that the company provides has enabled local groups to conduct their meeting through the medium of Welsh whilst offering an English translation to non Welsh speakers.

As well as offering an important service to the community sector, we believe that Cyfieithu Cymunedol has a value as a Social Enterprise that can offer training and employment to young Welsh speakers. By now Cyfieithu Cymunedol is nearly a sustainable company and we aim to continue the development of the scheme and offer a wider service with more work opportunities.

Welsh Medium Social Enterprises

We employ an officer to assist and support the local groups that have formed under Menter Iaith Conwy to identify opportunities to improve the Welsh language provision regarding resources and services. It is also an intention to work with other Welsh speaking communities to allow them also to follow a similar path. By developing local enterprises such as these there will be more opportunities to create new jobs and to foster an enterprising spirit within Welsh speaking communities. This in turn will ensure that the Welsh language has a solid foundation as an economic skill. By employing an officer to assist groups to identify needs and to develop the capacity to meet those needs we can strengthen Welsh communities and enterprises.

The two core aims of the scheme are to increase capacity:

- To identify funding bodies to develop smaller community projects
- To use the evidence that we have on the need for Welsh medium services to establish Social Enterprises that deliver such services.

Menter Iaith Conwy's long term strategy is to assist enterprises such as these to become financially sustainable, thus creating additional income streams for Menter Iaith Conwy.

This will also help to create new jobs that will decrease emigration numbers.

Our plans;

- ***Yr Hen Orsaf***
- ***Renewable Energy – Rural Areas***
- ***Child Care – Coastal Areas***

Without the area committees we would not be aware of the need for such services.

- ***Yr Hen Orsaf, Llanrwst.***

This plan was originally called 'Cynllun yr Hen Ysgol' which translates as 'The Old School Project.' However, due to the lack of cooperation with the owners of the Old School we have changed our plans and have chosen a new site. Thus 'Cynllun yr Hen Ysgol' became 'Cynllun yr Hen Orsaf' (The Old Station Project)

The Hen Ysgol company will continue to lead the project. The aim is to develop the old station building and create a recording facility and an Apple Mac computer room for design work. All of the resources will be multiuse and multimedia and can be used to offer new and exciting community activities, all through the medium of Welsh.

The development plans have already been drafted and the company is eager to work with us.

We believe that this development could be a creative catalyst that will sustain and give a new lease of life to the Welsh language in the Conwy Valley. We want to reflect the success of the Galeri in Cearnarfon. If the whole scheme is successful we believe that it is possible to create four core jobs and up to fifteen direct and indirect jobs.

- ***Renewable Energy – Rural Areas***

Following our work with Uwch Aled Area Committee and evaluating the "Prosperous Welsh Communities" framework, we realized that a lack of infrastructure and economic activities is one of the areas that is threatening the Welsh language as a living community language.

We believe that alternative energy is a great opportunity to create resources and jobs for high % rural areas.

- ***Child Care – Coastal Areas***

We have noticed that there is a need for a Welsh medium Nursery on the coast. We hope to do further research on this matter and work with prominent partners such as Mudiad Meithrin.