

Huw Dixon,
Cardiff

17th Feb 2009

Dear Mr Isherwood,

Consultation LC 5 (Welsh Language LCO)

I am providing my personal response to the invitation issued by legislative committee 5 in respect of the above.

General Consultation.

1. Should the National Assembly for Wales be able to make laws on the promotion and use of the Welsh language?

No, I do not think that the National assembly should have this power. Wales is part of Britain, and non-Welsh speakers form the large majority of the Welsh population, particularly here in the South. The objective of the Welsh assembly should be to improve the economic performance, health and education of the Welsh population. It should not waste its time and our resources on further promotion of the welsh language. The Welsh language act 1993 already provides sufficient support for the Welsh language (possibly a little too much), and no further action is required.

2. Should the National Assembly for Wales be able to make laws about which services the public should be able to receive bilingually

No, I do not think that the National assembly should have this power. If the NAW expands the number of insitutions that have to provide a bilingual service to include private business, this will have two effects. First, it will reduce employment in Wales, by raising the costs of business. Second, it will further exacerbate the imbalance of job opportunities in Wales: people well be hired by firms not on the criterion of ability, but on the fact they can speak welsh. This already happens in

the public sector. This is in effect a form of discrimination against non-welsh speakers which I find offensive and unjust.

3. Should the National Assembly for Wales be able to make laws on the freedom of persons to use the Welsh language with each other?

No. Whilst I think people should be free to use the Welsh language wherever and whenever they want (as with any other language), I do not think that this is really an issue that should be a matter of legislation.

Detailed Consultation.

4. See 1 above.

5. I do agree that the Welsh language board should be abolished and its powers passed to the democratic institution of the assembly.

6. This list is not at all innocuous. I can see that there is a (weak) argument for requiring the privatised utilities (h) (i)-(iv) to provide a basic bilingual service (bills in Welsh etc.). However, all the others can potentially lead to great costs.

I object strongly to (h) (v), (vi) and (vii), and all of (b)-(g). The Welsh assembly should be aiming to get the best possible services provided and value for our money. In all of these cases, there is a strong possibility of imposing costs on business and meaning that Wales ends up with second class services.

7. “public authorities”. It should just apply to as narrow a definition as possible.

8. I think that “postal services” should be as narrow as possible, and certainly exclude the likes of DHL etc (unless they opt in).

9. The money the Welsh Assembly gets is provided by the British taxpayer, (along with S4C). I think that there should be no contractual restrictions imposed on recipients of public money in respect of the Welsh language. I reiterate: if such restrictions are made, then we in Wales will almost certainly end up with worse services which cost more. It may generate even more jobs for welsh speakers, but at the cost of the 80% of us who are not fluent in Welsh.