

Dear Committee,

**Ref: Call for information – proposals regarding the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2023-24**

Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2023-24.

Coleg Cymraeg creates training and study opportunities in the Welsh language by working with further education colleges, universities, apprenticeship providers and employers. We inspire and encourage everyone to use their Welsh skills. The aim of the Coleg is to build a Welsh and bilingual education and training system that is open to all and to develop a bilingual workforce.

Our response to the consultation will focus on those elements of the Budget that are relevant to the remit of the Coleg.

We very much welcome the Committee's focus on specific areas and the fact that further education and higher education are central to that scrutiny.

The Coleg was established in 2011, and extensive Welsh-language and bilingual provision has now been developed in all major subjects delivered at Welsh universities. The Coleg's new Academic Plan outlines our plans for the next five years, and one of the main objectives is not only to embed and strengthen the current provision but also to attract new audiences to Welsh and bilingual higher education, including those that are less confident in using their Welsh, as well as people from a Black, Asian and ethnic minority background.

In 2018 the Coleg assumed responsibility for Further Education and Apprenticeships, and we have since begun to implement ambitious plans to develop provision for all learners in these sectors over the coming years, whatever their Welsh language skills. There has been clear progress in the further education and apprenticeships sector since the Coleg received a dedicated budget in the 2022-23 financial year to invest in new provision at colleges and apprenticeship providers. But in order to embed the Welsh language across the further education and apprenticeships sector in a way that is sustainable over the long term, it is key that that funding continues and increases over the coming years.

The Coleg welcomes the constructive discussions that have taken place over recent years with the Welsh Government and the opposition parties regarding the need to invest in the development of the Welsh language in the further education sector and the apprenticeships and higher education sector in order to achieve the objectives of the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy. Ensuring opportunities for people to continue to nurture and develop their Welsh skills after they have left school, and to prepare them for working in bilingual workplaces, is absolutely key if we are to achieve the aim of doubling the daily use of the language in our communities.

There was an appropriate increase in our budget this year from the Government and this, in addition to the budget forecasts received for 2023-24 and 2024-25, means that the investment in our colleges and apprenticeship providers can continue to increase. A budget was received during 2022-23 to also implement two projects in the field of initial teacher education – an agenda that is very important considering the shortage in the number of people training each year to teach in the Welsh and English medium sectors.

The increase in the budget received in 2022-23 and that which is outlined for 2023-24 and 2024-25 is consistent with the Government's commitments in its Programme for Government for this term, and also with the content of the Co-operation Agreement between the Government and Plaid Cymru:

1. [Programme for Government 2021-2026:](#)

"Expand the role of and increase funding to the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the National Centre for Learning Welsh."

2. [Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru Co-operation Agreement:](#)

"Expand the role of and increase funding to the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the National Centre for Learning Welsh."

3. [Cymraeg 2050 work programe, 2021-2026:](#)

"The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the National Centre for Learning Welsh both have important roles to play in Welsh language acquisition and learning.

15. In collaboration with the regional consortia and local authorities, expand the role of the National Centre for Learning Welsh to support the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools and provide a language learning pathway from school to post-compulsory education.

16. Expand the role of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, and develop proposals for the Welsh-medium Education Bill to place the Coleg on a statutory footing.

17. Provide additional funding over 5 years to the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to expand Welsh-medium provision in further education, apprenticeships and higher education.

18. In conjunction with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, develop targets to increase linguistic progression between statutory and further education and apprenticeships.

19. Increase learning, assessment and progression through the medium of Welsh by establishing the new Tertiary Education and Research Commission, through the proposed Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill, with strategic duties associated with promoting Welsh-medium tertiary education."

With the establishment of the new Tertiary Education and Research Commission and the specific duties that it has for promoting Welsh-medium research and provision and encouraging participation in that provision, the expectations on the whole sector to make meaningful progress in the development of Welsh will rise, which is to be welcomed.

Strategic talks have started in order to agree on the most effective way of planning and funding post-compulsory Welsh-medium and bilingual education and the core and leading role of the Coleg in that regard. The content of the proposed Welsh Education Bill, and the White Paper before that, will also be key in terms of establishing structures and a firm legislative framework to support the progress that the Government wishes to see.

We look forward to continuing our discussions with the Government and members of relevant Senedd Committees to ensure that this key agenda receives the priority it deserves in the Government's Draft Budget 2023-24 and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr John Matthews**  
**Chief Executive**