



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

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## **WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT**

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**Title:** Welsh Language (Wales) Measure  
**Date:** 4 March 2010  
**By:** Alun Ffred Jones, Heritage Minister

Members will wish to be aware that the proposed Welsh Language (Wales) Measure will be laid today 4 March 2010. I will be making a Legislative Statement in plenary next week to introduce the proposed Measure.

The proposed Welsh Language Measure sets out a new legislative framework for the promotion of the language in all aspects of life in Wales. It draws on the experience gained over the past two decades in order to modernise and strengthen the legislation governing the use of Welsh in the delivery of key services for the people of Wales. Through the creation of a robust new legal framework, the provisions of the Measure will be a cornerstone of the Government's wider commitment to the development of a bilingual Wales.

The Measure will make provision legislate in four key areas:

In line with our One Wales commitment the proposed Measure contains provisions intended to confirm the official status of the Welsh language. This

is intended to provide a clear signal as to the [official] status the language enjoys and will enjoy in Wales.

The Measure will establish the office of Welsh Language Commissioner. The Commissioner will have wide ranging functions and powers to promote and facilitate the use of the language and to promote equality between the Welsh and English languages. The Commissioner will be assisted by an Advisory Panel that will have a strategic role, but which will not be involved in day-to-day issues. Once the Commissioner has been appointed, he or she will take on responsibility for the work currently undertaken by the Welsh Language Board. The Measure also provides flexibility to allow some of the Board's functions to be transferred to Welsh Ministers, should we deem it appropriate for that to happen.

Thirdly, the Measure will provide that, over time, Welsh language schemes will be replaced by Welsh language standards. Our intention is that standards should streamline the process of placing duties on organisations, whilst introducing greater consistency within and across sectors. They will also build on the level of Welsh language services provided at the moment and help clarify for Welsh speakers the level of services they can expect to receive. Standards will, in effect, create rights for Welsh speakers with regards to the provision of services. The Commissioner will have more powerful enforcement powers than have been available to the Welsh Language Board. Decisions made by the Commissioner in respect of imposing or enforcing standards will be capable of being appealed to a new Welsh Language Tribunal.

Finally the proposed Measure gives the Commissioner the power to investigate complaints from Welsh speakers who believe that their freedom to use Welsh with one another has been interfered with. It also requires the Commissioner to report annually to the Welsh Ministers about the adequacy and effectiveness of the law in protecting that freedom.

The past twenty years have shown very clearly the advantages of having a legal framework which underpins the Government's support for the language. They have also demonstrated the importance of having a strong advocate for the language independent of Government. We think that the time is now right to strengthen that legal framework and to introduce an even more powerful advocate for the language.

The provisions set out in the proposed Measure provide crucial foundations that will underpin this Government's wider policies for the Welsh language. They represent a clear signal of our commitment in this area. These are measured and sensible proposals designed to ensure that the Welsh language continues to thrive.

I look forward to working with you over the coming months as part of the scrutiny of this proposed Measure.