

Mr Alun Pugh AM  
c/o Welsh Language Board Merger Consultation  
Directorate for Culture, Welsh Language & Sport  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

3<sup>rd</sup> May 2006.

Dear Alun

**Re: Merger of the Welsh Language Board**

I am writing on behalf of the FSB in Wales with regard to the above subject. As such, this letter represents the FSB's official response to the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG's) proposals to merge the Welsh Language Board as part of the broader merger process, which commenced in July 2004.

The FSB in Wales has no particular views about the administrative structure of the Welsh Language Board or preferences for the structure, which will be responsible for delivering these functions post-merger. However, as you will appreciate, a great number of our members have very strong views regarding the survival, sustainability and support of the Welsh language as businesses and therefore an integral part of the communities in which they operate.

Many of our members operate businesses within the key Welsh speaking heartlands where Welsh is the language of their daily business and many others in areas, which might normally be considered as English speaking, where they integrate the Welsh language into their business.

The FSB has previously been very supportive of the moves by the Welsh Language Board to assist businesses to increase their use of the Welsh language either in delivering their services on a person-to-person basis or within the administrative work of their business. We feel very strongly that this approach should be fostered by the WAG and developed to allow businesses, where practicable and where it is desired, to increase their use of the

language and to better serve those who would prefer to interact through the Welsh medium.

However, we have always been and remain strongly opposed to any further legislative articles or a new Welsh Language Act, which would legally compel private enterprises to incorporate the use of the Welsh language into all aspects of their business. We are very concerned that such a move, if adopted, would do much to dissipate the goodwill currently fostered by a significant portion of the business community in Wales towards the language.

Many of our members are concerned that to compel businesses to use Welsh by law would simply add to the regulatory burden, which they feel is already burgeoning. There is concern about the likely cost of such moves, that this might dent competitiveness compared to other businesses within the UK and that this could pose significant problems with relation to skills and employment issues.

However, in the quest to promote greater daily use of the language, we would like to see an extension of schemes currently administered, which offer advice and support to Welsh businesses to help them maximise and improve their use of the language recognising not only the cultural benefits but also recognising that in some sectors, there are also anecdotal commercial benefits too.

Whatever the structure of the new body responsible for delivery of the WLB's functions, we feel strongly that it needs to be responsive not only to the cultural and sociological demands but also those demands and realities of the business community, recognising the pressures already placed on that important section of society.

Yours sincerely

Ben Cottam  
Welsh Policy Adviser