

## **Legislation Committee No. 5**

### **The Proposed National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Welsh Language) Order 2009**

#### **Consultation Response**

#### **IG14(o) Central Monmouthshire Rural Forum**

Email to [legislationoffice@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:legislationoffice@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

From Jenny Lewis, Administrator Central Monmouthshire Rural Forum

Date 9 March 2009.

#### **Consultation on Welsh language enabling legislation**

Central Monmouthshire Rural Forum is a long established association of 11 community councils across the communities of Central Monmouthshire. It is facilitated by the MCC area working team, and meets at least every six weeks to discuss issues of common interest with appropriate speakers attending to ensure that the community councils are well informed on all public service issues

At the last meeting it was felt that they should respond as a whole to your 'Have Your Say' poster on the Welsh language. The points made in a heated discussion were as follows:

- The consultation seems to be aimed only at those who have access to the internet. Apart from the element of choice not to go on line, there are still some areas of rural Monmouthshire where internet connections are very much hit and miss.
- It was felt that point 3 re the freedom of persons to use the Welsh Language with each other is rather alarmist, and whilst it may be aimed at translation facilities being available everywhere, it does not read like that
- The cost of always having translation facilities at every meeting, formal and informal, in a County in which there are very few Welsh speakers, if the National Assembly decide that this should be the law, would be absolutely prohibitive and will mean that with the best will in the world, the local authority public engagement programme will be cut drastically.
- The members of the forum felt that decisions about local need are best made locally, and that the Assembly, within primary legislation, is not best placed to recognise the different needs of local communities. Welsh communities are, it is felt, similar, but not the same, and any attempt to make blanket judgements about how communities should grow and develop from Snowdonia to the borders of Gloucester are doomed to failure

- It was a particular concern that legislation, if passed by the National Assembly, could affect community councils. The thirty three community councils in Monmouthshire are at the true grass roots of our communities; they are already deluged by consultation exercises, with deadlines that they find hard to meet. Not only could they not afford translation facilities, they fear that further translation timetables will eat into the actual time available for consultations.
- Finally there was an overall feeling that at a time when the Assembly Finance Minister is issuing dire warnings about the amount of money available to provide local services in the future, expecting public services and government in Wales to take on additional costs to deliver legislation about the Welsh language will lead to cuts in essential services.

I have been asked to send these comments directly to the web site on behalf of the forum and to copy the response to the Monmouthshire AM Nick Ramsay.