



Legislation Committee No. 5  
Legislation Office  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

20 March 2009

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Consumer Focus Wales Response to the Consultation on the National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Welsh Language) Order 2009**

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Welsh Language) Order 2009. As the 1996 Welsh Consumer Council publication states, language is a consumer issue and the consumer voice has long been missing from the debate.<sup>[1]</sup>

In line with the Welsh Assembly Government, and indeed our own, principles of citizen centred public services, we strongly believe that the user should be at the heart of the service.<sup>[2]</sup> This means legislation shaped from the user or consumer perspective and based on citizen needs and experiences. We support the notion that the National Assembly for Wales is best placed to legislate on the matter of the Welsh Language and best placed to reflect the needs of consumers in Wales.

However, we feel more research is needed to determine what consumers want and need in respect of Welsh Language provision so that the National Assembly for Wales can truly deliver against these principles.

In order to achieve this, further consultation is needed with service users on what services should be included within the Matter, as well as the extent to which Welsh Language provision should be made available for those sectors or services. Presently, we do not feel confident that the LCO includes an exhaustive list of 'key services'<sup>[3]</sup> and would like to see more work done with consumers as to what they feel is a key public facing service. This might include, for example, banks, supermarkets or public transport. We are not saying there should be legislation in these areas, merely that consumers should be asked about all aspects of their daily lives.

We would also like assurance that the level of Welsh Language services within the sectors specified in the Matter is proportionate. Provision needs to be balanced against consumer needs and priorities. We would urge you to ensure that Welsh speakers are not disadvantaged due to the omission of a particular sector or sectors from the Matter.

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<sup>[1]</sup> 'Welsh as a Consumer Issue' Welsh Consumer Council (1996)

<sup>[2]</sup> 'Putting the Citizen Centre Stage' Welsh Consumer Council (2006)

<sup>[3]</sup> As referred to in paragraph 40 of the Explanatory Memorandum to the LCO.

The forthcoming LCO provides an opportunity for Wales to legislate on the Welsh Language in a way that is truly responsive to the needs of people in Wales. Legislation to date has taken a top down approach, looking at what is most convenient to providers rather than what is essential to users. The challenge now is to ensure the provisions made under the Matter are a true reflection of what consumers want.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vivienne Sugar', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Vivienne Sugar  
Chair Consumer Focus Wales