

Bwrdd Gwybodau Celtaidd  
Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru  
Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru  
Aberystwyth SY23 3HH

Board of Celtic Studies  
Dictionary of the Welsh Language  
National Library of Wales  
Aberystwyth SY23 3HH



PRIFYSGOL  
CYMRU  
UNIVERSITY  
OF WALES

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e-mailed to <plana@bord-na-gaidhlig.org.uk> on 10 November 2006.

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Prifysgol Cymru,  
Aberystwyth  
The University of Wales,  
Aberystwyth

Prifysgol Cymru,  
Bangor  
University of Wales,  
Bangor

10 November 2006

Dear Mr Morgan,

Prifysgol Cymru Abertawe  
University of Wales Swansea

### National Plan for Gaelic: Public Consultation

I write on behalf of the staff of *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (GPC), a team of scholars employed by the University of Wales and funded by the HEFCW and the University itself to produce and revise the only comprehensive historical dictionary of Welsh as both a printed and an electronic resource (see [www.cymru.ac.uk/geiriadur/](http://www.cymru.ac.uk/geiriadur/)). A small team was established in 1921 and immediately began collecting material for the Dictionary. Publication in the form of 64-page parts began in 1950 and continued until 2002 when the 61st (and final) part was published, and the 4-volume work containing nearly 4,000 pages and 7.5 million words of text, was launched at a ceremony at the Welsh Assembly by the First Minister, Rhodri Morgan.

Prifysgol Cymru,  
Llanbedr Pont Steffan  
University of Wales,  
Lampeter

Athrofa Prifysgol Cymru,  
Caerdydd  
University of Wales Institute,  
Cardiff

This 81-year project has been followed by a seven-year scheme to re-edit the earliest parts of the dictionary comprising the A–B section, which was published in a more concise format than the remainder. At the same time, a shorter online version of the Dictionary is being produced, which is proving to be extremely popular. The University has recently reaffirmed its commitment to the continued work of the Dictionary staff, and it is hoped that the Funding Council will continue to provide earmarked funding for the project.

Prifysgol Cymru,  
Casnewydd  
University of Wales,  
Newport

Athrofa Addysg Uwch  
Gogledd Ddwyrain Cymru  
North East Wales Institute  
of Higher Education

### **The importance of lexicography**

We were surprised that Gaelic lexicography receives but one mention in the Plan (under *vitality: Corpus Development*), and that at the end of a list of priorities, almost it would seem as an afterthought.

Coleg Brenhinol Cerdd a  
Drama Cymru  
Royal Welsh College of  
Music and Drama

Historical lexicography, the systematic description of the historical development of the lexicon of a language, is vital to a full understanding of that language and of the processes which inform the ‘genius of the language’, especially for example in terms of the way in which compounds and idiomatic expressions are formed. A historical dictionary of Gaelic should be based on as comprehensive a corpus as possible of the extant material from all periods, including contemporary material (e.g. from the Web, radio, press, etc.) as well as the more traditional literary texts and historical records.

Coleg y Drindod,  
Caerfyrddin  
Trinity College,  
Carmarthen

*Mae gan Brifysgol Cymru bolisi dwyieithrwydd. Mae croeso i chi ohebu â'r Brifysgol yn y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg, ac fe'ch gwahoddir i roi gwybod i'r Brifysgol ym mha iaith yr hoffech ohebu yn y dyfodol*

*The University of Wales has a bilingual policy. You are welcome to correspond with the University in either Welsh or English and you are invited to let the University know in which language you wish to correspond in future*

A historical dictionary of Gaelic will inevitably increase the prestige of the language, both in the eyes of Gaelic-speaking (and non-Gaelic-speaking) people in Scotland, and also internationally. It will also improve understanding of the language, culture, and heritage of Scotland.

### ***Contemporary lexicography***

Dependable lexicographical resources will be vital to the terminologists charged with expanding the vocabulary for use in new contexts (particularly, at least initially) in education. They will also be indispensable to the increasing number of translators who will be required. Scotland is fortunate in having produced two excellent historical dictionaries of Scots (the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* and the *Scottish National Dictionary* now merged into an excellent online resource which is both extremely useful and freely available to all). Gaelic deserves similar treatment, and the *Faclair na Gàidhlig* project is ideally placed to make a major contribution to this effort. It should be accorded Primary Player status in the Plan, but it must be adequately funded in order to fully support the Plan in the short to medium term.

### ***Funding***

Historical lexicography is a time-consuming labour-intensive activity and therefore requires considerable funding to produce results within a reasonable timescale. The current academic system in the UK of allocating research grants is geared to the needs of comparatively small projects, quite unsuited to major lexicographical undertakings. Some small European countries have even established institutions dedicated to lexicographical and terminological research employing up to one hundred staff, which produce excellent results (e.g. Iceland, the Basque Country, Finland, Latvia, and the Netherlands). Inadequate funding of lexicography could at best delay the comprehensive implementation of the Plan and at worst undermine the linguistic foundations of the whole undertaking.

Yours sincerely

Gareth A. Bevan  
*Editor*  
*Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*

We agree for our views to be made public.

We agree for our names and area to be made public.