



Ymgyrchu dros barth rhyngrwyd .cym
Campaigning for a .cym internet domain

Ar gyfer cymuned ieithyddol a diwylliannol y Gymraeg | For the Welsh linguistic and cultural community

www.dotcym.org - dotcym@dotcym.org

Should new generic top-level domain names be introduced?

From its beginnings, the Internet has been developed as a means of improving communication between communities across the world: initially by the military, then by communities of computer scientists and engineers, later for academics and researchers in general, and since the invention of the World Wide Web for all types of Special Interest Groups.

Because of this history, the Policy Development Process should place emphasis on the preferential allocation of new sponsored TLDs for cultural and other peaceful purposes to serve cultural communities across the world.

The allocation of .cat¹ (for the Catalan language) by ICANN is to be applauded as a significant step toward the allocation of sponsored TLDs for single language communities across the world, and is a precedent to which other minority or stateless language based groups can now aspire to emulate.

Working towards the usability of all language characters in International Domain Names is also to be applauded. This is an important step in promoting the use of minority languages on the World Wide Web, but of even greater importance is the allocation of TLDs to support these languages.

Most importantly of all, ISO 639-2² three-letter codes for languages (eg. 'cym' for 'Cymraeg' - Welsh) should be reserved now for potential use as future sTLDs for the respective languages.

The above factors would expand the use and usability of the Internet by providing dedicated representation to language and cultural groups, making such groups stakeholders in the development of the Internet. The ICANN model of sponsored TLDs provides the ideal avenue for such aims. Preferential selection criteria in favour of 'minority language' and cultural sponsored TLDs should be encouraged. Such selection criteria, evaluation and consultation should be broad enough in scope to encompass an appreciation of the needs of 'minority' and non-state language communities and cultural groups.

The model of registry contracts as evidenced by sponsored TLDs such as .cat provides a platform for ensuring the security and stability of the Internet.

dotCYM Campaign

The original dotCYM³ campaign was formed by a group of likeminded individuals drawn from the fields of commerce, computer programming and design, public relations, law and publishing who saw the need for a Top Level Domain for the Welsh⁴ language community.

¹ <http://www.puntcat.org/>

² <http://www.w3.org/WAI/ER/IG/ert/iso639.htm>

³ <http://cw.rhwyd.org/cym.htm>

A .cym TLD will play a strategic role in validating Welsh culture and language in an age of increasing globalisation. It will make it easier for individuals and groups who wish to associate with the community to identify with other users around the world.

The success of the dotCYM campaign will unite the Welsh-speaking communities across Wales, the UK, Patagonia and the rest of the world. There are historic Welsh communities in North America, and Australia⁵. The success of the dotCYM campaign will confirm that the World Wide Web really is multi-national and a multilingual medium.

It will also play a pivotal role in promoting further the use of the Welsh language on the World Wide Web as a modern medium of communication. The relative cost effectiveness of the web compared to traditional print publishing also makes the web especially attractive to smaller language communities such as Welsh and is a great emancipator.

The Welsh-speaking community has always seen itself as a literary community⁶ with the pen taking president over the sword. The development of the language has been a source of inspiration. The World Wide Web gives the Welsh language an opportunity to create its own niche that it already enjoys on the field of sport and to a growing degree in politics⁷.

Why do we want a .CYM?

Because the Welsh language and culture is a community that we believe should be identified and enhanced by having its own sponsored TLD on the Internet. Under a .CYM sponsored TLD those organisations, companies and people that express themselves in the Welsh language and/or wish to encourage Welsh culture will be able to be registered and will be clearly identifiable.

Amadeu Abril i Abril from the puntCat Campaign recalled the informal discussions he had held with ICANN staff and directors.⁸

“A TLD puts you in the top league. You are not then just a regional team. Prestige and glamour are important for sustaining a living language. You don’t like being in the second league.

A TLD is important for the self-esteem of people

...a TLD gives visibility to the language. Seen from Reston or Seattle you are on the map. They think: Oh, we should also publish a version of our software in Catalan. It enables the rest of the world to see that we exist. And all this without moving borders, without fighting anyone.

it gives us the opportunity to aggregate our cultural activities in the Internet.”

Large parts of open source software are already available in Welsh such as Open Office⁹. The Linux¹⁰ system is available in Welsh, and work is ongoing to create a Welsh language

⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cymraeg>

⁵ <http://www.wales-usa.org/society.html>

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_literature

⁷ <http://www.cymru.gov.uk>

⁸ http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_1/gerrand/index.html

⁹ <http://cy.openoffice.org/>

version of Mac OS X. Following negotiations with the Welsh Language Board Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office ¹¹ is also now available in Welsh. Google ¹² also offers a Welsh language interface for its search engine.

The next step is a Welsh language TLD. Large companies such as Microsoft and Google have already realised the opportunities gained by offering services in Welsh, and in other languages of choice, for millions of speakers of languages other than the more conventional larger languages. It is now extremely important that the organisations who run the World Wide Web also grasp the opportunity to support online language communities, such as Welsh. Wales is not an independent country, but the Welsh language has more speakers than languages of independent European countries such as Icelandic (240,000) and Faroese (70,000).

Google and Microsoft realise that as Latin was the original language for publishing in late medieval Europe it was soon superseded by the vernacular. Likewise, although originally and still predominantly an English language medium, the world wide web is now going through a dynamic period of linguistic democratisation, of which the increasing presence and use of Welsh is one reflection.

According to research made in 2002¹³, Welsh is the 42nd most widely written language on the web and the 56th most widely written language on the international Wikipedia¹⁴ above larger language communities, including state languages, such as Macedonian, Latvian, Tagalog and Tamil. There are many Welsh language blogs¹⁵, popular Discussion Forums¹⁶, and a Welsh language Web-mail service¹⁷.

The Welsh language – Background Information

Wales¹⁸ is one of the historic nations of Britain and NI (the others being England and Scotland with the Northern Irish state). Wales (Cymru in Welsh) is 20,000km sq and has a population of just over 2.9 million (according to 2002 statistics) 4.9 per cent of the population of the United Kingdom¹⁹. Wales has its own devolved National Assembly²⁰, and has its own soccer team²¹ recognised by the FIFA²² and UEFA²³ governing bodies. It competes as an individual country in European and World Cup games as well as in other sports, most notably, rugby²⁴.

Welsh is an Indo-European²⁵ Celtic language²⁶, related to Irish and Breton. According to the 2001 census²⁷ results 582,368 people in Wales speak Welsh – 20.8% of the

¹⁰ http://www.cymrux.org.uk/docs/item.php?lg=en&item_id=1

¹¹ <http://www.microsoft.com/uk/windows/cymruwales>

¹² <http://www.google.com/intl/cy/>

¹³ http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_1/gerrand/index.html

¹⁴ http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wikipedias

¹⁵ <http://blogiadur.com/>

¹⁶ <http://www.maes-e.com/>

¹⁷ <http://sgwarnog.com/>

¹⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wales>

¹⁹ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Isles_\(terminology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Isles_(terminology))

²⁰ <http://www.cymru.gov.uk>

²¹ <http://www.faw.org.uk/>

²² <http://www.fifa.com/en/organisation/confederations/associationdetails/0,1483,WAL,00.html?countrycode=WAL>

²³ <http://www.uefa.com/footballEurope/countries/country=WAL/Association=144/index.html>

²⁴ <http://www.wru.co.uk/>

²⁵ <http://www.ielanguages.com/eurolang.html>

²⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_language

population of Wales, but the number is rising. 37.7% of children between 3 and 15 years old in Wales can speak the language.

What can be termed as Ancient Welsh (Brythonic²⁸) was the indigenous language of Britain at the time of the Roman occupation and as such Welsh retains many Latin influences. Recorded Welsh literature can be traced back to the 6th century to poetry and mythology, the most famous being the legends of King Arthur (believed to be an ancient Welsh, king) and the Mabinogi cycle of legends.

Welsh was one of the most developed written languages in Europe with its law codified in the 10th century and elaborate strict-meter poetry keeping a continuity and standard for the language when the legal status and use of Welsh was curtailed following English conquest in 1282²⁹ and more profoundly by the Act of Union with England in 1536³⁰. The Bible was translated into Welsh in 1588³¹ making it among one of the earliest European languages to have the Old and New Testament in the vernacular.

Although banned from use in schools in 1870 and with no legal status in its own country until the Welsh language act of 1967³², repressive laws against the language have been progressively repealed and a revised. The Welsh Language Act in 1993³³ puts Welsh and English on an equal basis in public life in Wales for the first time in four hundred years.

The fact that Welsh exists as a spoken and vibrant language within the British state, and next to the global language par excellence, English, is a testimony to its ability to adapt. The will to develop the language led to the first Welsh-medium school in modern times being held in Patagonia in Argentina where Welsh-speakers had created a Welsh settlement in 1865³⁴ away from the English-only policy of the British state at the time where children were caned for speaking Welsh, their mother-tongue in school.

Welsh now enjoys a state sponsored television service, S4C³⁵ national radio service within the BBC, Radio Cymru³⁶ and a BBC Welsh web service³⁷.

Welsh is taught as either a first or second language to all school pupils in Wales³⁸ to the age of 16 and is also a medium of instruction within the University of Wales. Since the formation of the National Assembly for Wales, the first Welsh legislature since 1404, the status of Welsh has increased and the Welsh Government's *laith Pawb*³⁹ ('everyone's language') language strategy includes the web and electronic communication as a vital part of the strategy to increase the number of Welsh speakers by 5% by 2010.

We thank ICANN and the GNSO Council for the opportunity to comment on the Policy Development Process on new gTLDs.

²⁷ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/op22.asp>

²⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brythonic>

²⁹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/state/nations/wales_conquest_05.shtml

³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Union_1536-1543

³¹ http://www.llgc.org.uk/drych/drych_s076.htm

³² <http://www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk/en/cynnwys.php?cID=4&pID=104>

³³ <http://www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk/en/cynnwys.php?cID=4&pID=104>

³⁴ http://www.patagonia-argentina.com/i/content/la_gente_galesa.htm

³⁵ http://www.s4c.co.uk/e_index.html

³⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBC_Radio_Cymru

³⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/cymru>

³⁸ <http://www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk/en/cynnwys.php?cID=7&pID=143>

³⁹ http://www.wales.gov.uk/subculture/content/wellang_e.htm