

National Assembly for Wales
Assembly Commission

Official Languages Scheme: Annual Compliance Report

July 2014

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

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AGORWYD GAN EI MAWRHYDIAETH ENHINES
OPENED BY HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN ON 13-2006

Foreword



I am pleased to present the first Annual Compliance Report on the Assembly Commission's Official Languages Scheme. The Assembly has always operated in accordance with the principle that both languages are treated equally. However the passing of the National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Act 2012 placed this principle on a statutory footing.

Since September 2013, we have seen further improvements in the provision of innovative and tailored support for Assembly Members enabling them to work effectively in either or both of our official languages. We plan to do more and the period ahead will see further enhancements to the bilingual support we provide.

Our commitment to invest in technology to transform bilingual service provision has seen world-wide recognition for the Assembly through our partnership with Microsoft to launch the Welsh Microsoft Translator Facility.

We also recognise that achieving our ambition to be recognised as a truly bilingual organisation means more than just translating words. We are committed to using our resources wisely to provide the best bilingual services across all areas of the Assembly's work to ensure that all those who engage with us can do so in either of our official languages. Bilingualism is an integral part of all services. The provision of bilingual services is no longer allocated a specific budget line, but is in fact mainstreamed across all budgets.

Over the past year, much progress has been made as noted in this report. However we still have more to achieve. The Scheme has allowed us to think differently about the way we do things, and to be responsive to the needs of a bilingual nation. We must now build on this good work, and strive to meet our ambition to be an exemplary bilingual organisation.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas

**Commissioner with responsibility for the
Commission's Official Languages functions and policy**



Introduction

On publication of the Official Languages Scheme in July 2013, the Assembly Commission's ambition was "to deliver exemplary bilingual services and to be recognised as a truly bilingual institution". Over the past year, work has been undertaken to embed the Scheme across the organisation, encourage a renewed enthusiasm, and bring about a shift in culture and ethos. This, in turn, has enabled the Commission to deliver improvements and innovation in its bilingual services.

The Management Board has been clear in its commitment to the Scheme, to lead by example and to encourage staff in all areas of bilingual working. The requirements of the Scheme are an integral part of individual areas' Service Plans.

The Assembly's bilingual culture has continued to develop since it was established in 1999. Building on previous Schemes, we are now seeing a good level of compliance with the Official Language Scheme across the organisation.

Maintaining the momentum and enthusiasm for innovation and change will be a priority for the coming years. The growth, commitment and change in culture is already being demonstrated through:

- increased take up of the language tuition options;
- more use of bilingual messages allowing readers to choose their preferred language;
- a fully bilingual staff magazine;
- increased opportunities to use Welsh through enhanced interpretation provision; and
- improvements to our bilingual services to facilitate Assembly Members and staff to work in either Welsh or English.

We remain committed to achieving our stated long-term aims of:

- delivering more and exemplar bilingual services;
- valuing our staff for the commitment they bring to the Assembly and their professional and parliamentary expertise; and
- sharing our experience and knowledge of working bilingually with other organisations.

This report highlights some of the improvements already made and identifies priorities for future enhancement of our bilingual services.



Will Lewis (Microsoft), Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM (Assembly Commissioner), Dame Rosemary Butler AM (Presiding Officer) and Geraint Wyn Parry (Chief Executive, the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters).



The launch of the global Welsh model for Microsoft Translator took place in the Senedd on 21 February 2014, enabling Microsoft users throughout the world to translate into and from Welsh.

01. Services for Assembly Members and their support staff

Preparing for Plenary and Committee meetings

Since the implementation of the Scheme, significant steps have been taken to ensure that the standards set out in the Scheme are adhered to and, where possible, to provide an enhanced service to support Members with their work in Committee and Plenary. All formal documentation is provided simultaneously in both official languages including:

- agendas and supporting papers;
- Bills and Bill summaries;
- Quick Guides and EU Policy Updates; and
- papers for Plenary debates.

Glossaries

In response to feedback from Assembly Members, we have developed a series of glossaries of Welsh technical terms and phrases for Bills and Committee Inquiries that are also published on our website. This enables Assembly Members to discuss less familiar topics in the language of their choice.

“The glossaries are a great help to me when discussing unfamiliar technical topics. They are of particular assistance at the beginning of a committee inquiry, or when preparing for Plenary debates on Bills where I have not been part of the committee stage discussions.”

Elin Jones AM

Case Study - Machine Translation

We continue to make use of technology to enhance bilingual services and support the use of both official languages. The launch of the global Welsh model for Microsoft Translator took place in the Senedd on 21 February 2014, enabling Microsoft users throughout the world to translate into and from Welsh. The publicity surrounding the launch event had a global reach of up to 5 million people, promoting not only the Welsh language but also the National Assembly and its partnership with Microsoft.

We are continuing to engage key organisations to invite them to provide us with bilingual data to feed into the system to improve the quality. By using the Welsh model for Microsoft Translator, the Assembly is able to engage more efficiently with the public, as staff can process and reply to Welsh-medium communications more quickly and effectively, particularly in the context of social media and other instant, informal communications.



Wyższa Szkoła
Informatyki
i Zarządzania
w
Białymostku

11:19



Commission Review of Committee Support

Work on the wider review of Committee Services and developments in language technology have encouraged innovation in the provision and commissioning of materials to support Assembly Members in their Plenary and Committee work. We have not previously been able to provide fully bilingual briefing material for Committee members, but pilot schemes looking at commissioning, drafting and use of technology have achieved very positive results.

“The previous convention of providing bilingual questions, but not the whole brief, meant that most of my pre-committee preparation work would be undertaken in English. However, following the successful pilot scheme, I now receive my committee briefings in the language of my choice, which allows me to work more efficiently. I hope that this development will be mainstreamed across the work of all committees in time”.

Alun Ffred Jones AM

Case study – Bilingual Briefing

By working with Members to better understand individual preferences, a range of provision has been put in place to support bilingual working, for example, bilingual briefing documents are now provided for members of the following Committees:

- Public Accounts Committee
- Finance Committee
- Environment and Sustainability Committee
- Health and Social Care Committee

This allows Assembly Members to prepare for Committee meetings in the language of their choice, facilitating enhanced use of their preferred language in proceedings.

We have more work to do to mainstream the development of bilingual briefings to assist Members with their work and this has been identified as a priority area for the coming year.

Witnesses

Assembly Members, witnesses and those taking part in Assembly proceedings are encouraged to use the language of their choice at Plenary and Committee meetings. Simultaneous interpretation from Welsh to English is available for all Assembly proceedings and at all official Assembly events. Committee witnesses are now better informed about the bilingual nature of Committee proceedings and encouraged to use Welsh if they would prefer.

We need to ensure that Committee Chairs and the clerking teams brief all witnesses on the bilingual nature of the institution and that they are comfortable with the use of headsets.

Video Conferencing

We are delighted to have been able to implement technical enhancements to the video conference system in the Senedd, which has enabled the conduct of fully bilingual proceedings in all Committee Rooms for the first time. The new facilities allow Members to converse with witnesses in remote locations in both Welsh and English providing significant resource savings in relation to the provision of in-house interpretation at other locations. Similar technical enhancements have also been made to video conference facilities in other parts of the Assembly estate.

Record of Proceedings

At its meeting in March 2014, the Assembly Commission instigated a full review of the production of the Record of Proceedings. The Record is an aspect of the Assembly that is of great significance and its availability bilingually on the Assembly's website will continue to be important.

The review will examine new opportunities to increase interest, engagement and understanding of the Assembly's work in a world of rapid technological change. Our vision is to create an engagement tool that is practical and befitting of a modern digital democracy. To achieve this we will need to introduce strategic change in our approach to the production of the Record and deliver greater efficiency. Machine translation is used to produce a base draft to assist in the production of the fully bilingual Record of Proceedings that is published on the Assembly's website within five working days. Amongst the issues that the review will address, will be how we can make progress on the speed that we make the Record of Proceedings available in both languages. Work is now underway on the Assembly Commission's review, which is identified as a priority area for the coming year.

A routine review of production and publishing processes for committee transcripts has resulted in a significant change in publishing times. Draft transcripts are now published within 5 working days of the meeting.

Responding to Member feedback

Through feedback on our regular Member surveys, we have responded to requests to facilitate greater use of Welsh across the Assembly estate and beyond. This feedback informs our priority areas for enhanced bilingual services and is reflected in various parts of this report.

Welsh Speaking Assembly Members, their support staff and Assembly Commission staff have been provided with Working Welsh badges or lanyards. These resources allow others to easily identify Welsh Speakers and enable them to actively engage in their preferred language should they wish to do so.

"The laith Gwaith resources have enhanced the bilingual ethos across the Assembly estate. Since I started wearing my lanyard, I have noticed an increase in the number of people who now start a conversation with me in Welsh, which I value very much".

Aled Roberts



15:35

02. Services for the people of Wales

Written communication and engagement with the public is bilingual from the outset. Subsequent communication is in the preferred language of those we are engaging with. To promote the bilingual ethos of the organisation:

- any automatically generated e-mail content such as auto signatures and out of office messages are bilingual;
- auto signatures include a message encouraging use of either language;
- all publicity material is prepared bilingually; and
- all Assembly staff are encouraged to answer the telephone with a bilingual greeting in order to promote the bilingual culture of the organisation and facilitate engagement in either language.

Visitors

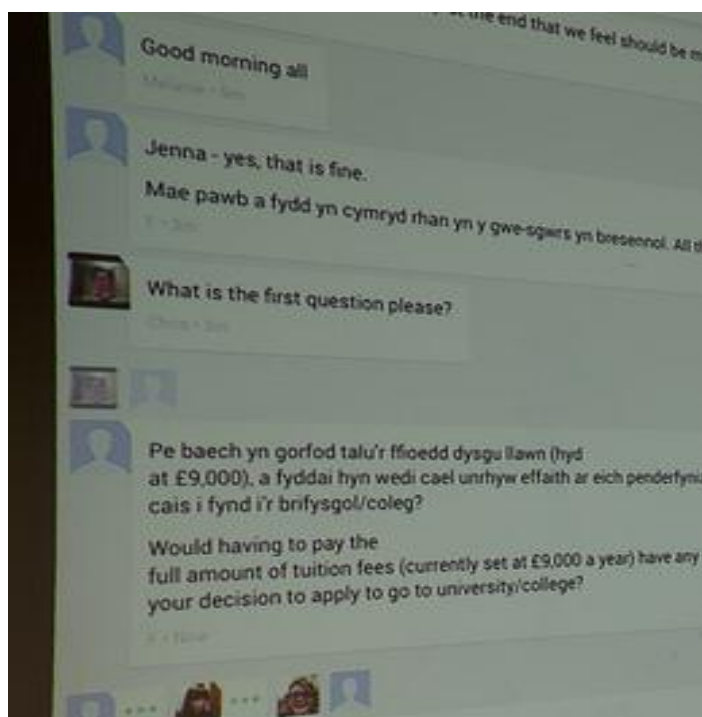
We have enhanced the capacity to meet and greet the public bilingually, such that:

- a fully bilingual service is provided by all reception desks and the main switchboard helplines;
- educational visits are available in both languages;
- Senedd tours, pre-arranged or impromptu, are available in both official languages and some other languages;
- through a combination of formal learning and peer support, increased numbers of the security team are confident and able to greet bilingually;
- bilingual meet and greet training with contracted staff in the Senedd café continues in order to improve opportunities for people to engage in either language; and
- all new services for the public are bilingual from the outset.

The Assembly on Social Media

One of the Assembly Commission's top priorities is engagement with the people of Wales, and social media is an important tool to facilitate this. Language choice also plays an important part in how we engage.

- All Assembly Committees and the Research Service have Welsh and English Twitter channels and tweet simultaneously on both accounts.
- The Research Service blog Inbrief/Pigion publishes topical articles in both languages.



- Bilingual Web Chats have been conducted to gather information for Committee Inquiries.
- The #Senedd Instagram account posts bilingually.

Monitoring information from across the Assembly’s social media presence suggests that some platforms are more popular with particular groups, including Welsh speakers. This information is used to target specific interest groups and raise awareness of relevant issues, as appropriate.

However, as we develop the use of social media at live events, such as conferences, visits and during our proceedings, we will need to improve our planning processes to ensure that they take account of the requirement to publish bilingually on all occasions.

Members and their Constituents

We have made changes that enable us to better support Assembly Members to engage with their constituents in the language of their choice.

- The Microsoft Translate facility assists with understanding and responding to bilingual correspondence.
- A machine translation checking service has been established to reassure users that translated text is accurate and appropriate.
- Assembly Members can organise simultaneous interpretation for constituency purposes.

“I have noticed a difference in the support my Support Staff and I receive to engage with my constituents in the language of their choice. The provision of interpretation at constituency events and for Cross Party Groups has greatly enhanced my ability to work bilingually”.

Keith Davies AM

03. Services for Assembly Staff

All corporate communication with Commission staff is bilingual. This includes the provision of interpretation at all-staff meetings and all-staff messages. Individual teams and services are encouraged to discuss their language choices for whole team or service communication; interpretation services are available for internal staff meetings upon request. Where information is not provided bilingually, staff feel confident to request the information and are encouraged to do so. Individual teams and service areas discuss and consider how they will conduct whole team meetings and distribute information making use of simultaneous interpretation, machine translation and other services provided by the Translation and Reporting Service. Individual staff members are able to complete their performance management documentation in the language of their choice with non Welsh-speaking line managers and countersigning officers able to use the machine translation facility to understand comments made in Welsh.

Bilingual Skills Strategy

A bilingual skills strategy is essential to enable us to achieve our ambitions to be recognised as an exemplary and truly bilingual institution. The strategy is currently under development and will be a priority in the coming year. The strategy will:

- confirm our aim to be an employer who supports and encourages all staff members to gain or develop skills in both official languages; and
- set out how we will develop a workforce with the necessary skills to facilitate an environment where Welsh is used and heard.

Language Tuition

A review of the current language tuition is being undertaken. Provision has been enhanced to include more informal opportunities to learn and use language skills, such as mentoring sessions, informal drop-in sessions and post-lesson contact to embed learning and encourage learners to practice their Welsh more frequently. Further enhancements are being explored.

Language Awareness sessions

All Management Board members attended and shaped the delivery of Official Languages awareness training sessions. In recognition of the bilingual nature of the institution and to complement the aspirations in the Scheme, a tailored programme of mandatory awareness training is being rolled out to all staff. The majority of Commission staff will have received Official Languages Awareness training by the end of July 2014.

"I was surprised about how much I enjoyed this training session. I knew that there was good level of bilingualism in the Assembly already, but to learn what being Welsh meant to my colleagues and how our Official Languages Scheme will help us focus on bilingual delivery for all our customers has really changed my perspective".

A member of the Estates and Facilities Management Team

Human Resource Services

HR policies are developed bilingually and all current policies have been translated to enable staff to work in their preferred language. The new HR-Payroll system has been implemented and the Welsh language version, developed in conjunction with the Translation and Reporting Service, is in the testing phase and will enable staff to use the system in either language.

National Assembly for Wales Apprenticeship Scheme

We launched our Pilot Apprenticeship Scheme in 2012 with four posts advertised, one of which was a designated bilingual post. That member of staff has since been appointed to a permanent post within the Policy and Legislation Committee Service. The subsequent Apprenticeship Scheme also has a designated bilingual post based in the North Wales office in a public facing role. This demonstrates our commitment to enhancing opportunities for young people, valuing their language skills and encouraging the use of those skills in their daily work.



National Assembly for Wales Apprentices receiving a certificate recognising their achievement. Presented by Dame Rosemary Butler AM (Presiding Officer), Sandy Mewies AM (Assembly Commissioner) and Claire Clancy (Chief Executive and Clerk of the Assembly).

04. Monitoring and Reporting

Each service area has appointed an Official Languages Scheme Co-ordinator to advise and support colleagues when required, and the Co-ordinators' Network has met at least once every quarter to discuss the Scheme and the role of the Co-ordinators. The Network has also played a key part in the roll-out of the machine translation facility, acting as Champions within their service areas. In order to support the work of the Network and to provide clarity of expectation, a role description has been formulated. It describes the requirements upon them in terms of implementing, monitoring and development of the commitments in the Scheme for their own service area.

"I've noticed a change in the way we approach bilingual services in the team since my OLS Co-ordinator has been in place. The Co-ordinator has provided welcome advice on our approach to requesting and dealing with witness evidence for committee inquiries and has helped build confidence that we are applying the Scheme robustly".

A member of the Policy and Legislation Committee Service Team

Compliance

Procedures for dealing with breaches and monitoring compliance have developed informally this year, with the onus being placed upon the individual Co-ordinators to collate and provide information. Some minor instances of failure to comply with the Scheme's requirements have been reported during the year. These were:

- incorrect out of office messages;
- incorrect e-mail auto signatures;
- monolingual all-Member or all-staff emails sent by Commission staff; and
- failure to provide bilingual temporary signage.

Co-ordinators raised the issue with the relevant staff members to ensure that the breach was rectified immediately.

As the role of Official Languages Co-ordinators and the Scheme's requirements become more embedded throughout the organisation, we hope to see fewer instances of non-compliance.

We will continue to work in partnership to clearly set out our expectations when services are provided through third parties. Progress made in delivering a bilingual service in the Senedd Café and shop have been hampered by a change in personnel and the new appointment failed to attract a bilingual member of staff. We will continue to work with third parties who provide services to the public on our behalf, including catering contractors, to ensure that they conform to the relevant parts of the Scheme. This will include one-to-one language support and shadowing opportunities.

Work on a more formal process for monitoring compliance is being developed as a priority. It will:

- report breaches;
- document actions taken to avoid re-occurrences of any breaches;
- assess patterns of issues that we can then address; and
- provide assurance to Managers, Assembly Commissioners and the Assembly.

05. Priorities for 2013-14

The progress made and achievements outlined in this report during the year has been significant. However, we have still to achieve some of the priorities set out for 2013-14 as noted below. We will assimilate these outstanding priorities with those set for the coming year and we aim to implement them with greater pace.

Services for Assembly Members and their support staff

We will provide Members and their support staff with "I'm learning Welsh" badges and plan initiatives that encourage Members to practice and use Welsh in the workplace.

Original Target: by September 2013.

Development work continues and Assembly Members and their support staff will be consulted on designs in order to ensure buy-in.

Services for the people of Wales

We will develop the appropriate level of support, guidance and training staff need to help them respond to and/or draft Welsh language responses to correspondence, making the most of the expertise of the Translation and Reporting Service.

Original Target: Plan of action to be implemented by September 2013.

A plan of action is yet to be implemented, however, developments in the use of machine translation has allowed the Translation and Reporting Service to provide further support to staff.

We will increase the capacity of the security team to greet members of the public to the Assembly estate bilingually.

Original Target: all security staff to have basic meet and greet skills by December 2013.

Training is progressing well. Work will be undertaken to further enhance the capacity to meet and greet bilingually.

We will enhance the capacity to provide services in the café and shop bilingually.

Original Target: all café staff to have basic bilingual meet and greet and serving skills by December 2013.

Good progress was being made, however, due to staff turnover and a new member of staff starting training, we continue to work towards this target.

Services for Assembly staff

We will provide staff with "I'm learning Welsh" badges and plan initiatives that encourage staff to practice and use Welsh in the workplace.

Original Target: by September 2013.

Development work continues and staff will be consulted on designs in order to ensure buy-in.

Implement the Bilingual Skills Strategy.

Original Target: consultation with staff from July 2013 for September launch.

Initial drafting and consultation has begun. Further work is required.

06. Priorities and targets for 2014-15

Services for Assembly Members and their support staff

- We will take more proactive steps to understand the language needs of Assembly Members and work towards implementing enhancements.

Target: July 2015

- We will integrate the use of the Machine Translation software and encourage its wider use in our work.

Target: September 2014

- We will remain abreast of developments in the field of language technology, including translation technology and voice recognition technology, and report on any changes or developments.

Target: July 2015

- We will maintain dialogue with Centres of Excellence in Wales to benefit from the latest developments in language and translation technology.

Target: July 2015

- We will consider and pilot alternative models of supporting Members with their bilingual Plenary work, in order to enhance their ability to work in the language of their choice.

Target: from September 2014

- We will use the lessons learned from the pilots of alternative models of supporting Members with bilingual committee work and the review of Committee support to provide briefings that take account of Assembly Members' preferences for language choice, format and timing.

Target: report on progress in July 2015

- We will review Members' Welsh language learning needs to inform the development of existing and new services that support them in their work.

Target: April 2015

- We will undertake a comprehensive review of the Record of Proceedings, including the production of the fully bilingual version.

Target: Report to the Assembly Commission by summer 2015

Services for the People of Wales

- We will develop guidance and training for staff to help them respond to and draft correspondence and documentation for Assembly Members and the Public.

Target: from September 2014

- We will consider alternative methods of supporting Welsh learners to enable them to develop confidence to use their skills in a working environment.

Target: from September 2014

Services for Assembly Staff

- We will develop and implement an effective Bilingual Skills Strategy to ensure that we have the appropriate skills within the organisation to further implement this Scheme.

Target: April 2015

- We will conduct a bilingual skills audit of all staff in order to inform service language plans.

Target: April 2015

Monitoring and reporting

- We will develop a series of monitoring and compliance tools to enable us to be more effective in monitoring progress and planning for non-compliance.

Target: January 2015

07. Combined Priorities for 2014-15

Services for Assembly Members and their support staff

- We will review Members' Welsh language learning needs to inform the development of existing and new services that support them in their work
Target: April 2015
- We will integrate the use of the Machine Translation software and encourage its wider use in our work.
Target: September 2014
- We will consider and pilot alternative models of supporting Members with their bilingual Plenary work in order to enhance their ability to work in the language of their choice.
Target: from September 2014
- We will undertake a comprehensive review of the Record of Proceedings, including the production of the fully bilingual version.
Target: Report to the Assembly Commission by summer 2015
- We will provide Members and their support staff with "I'm learning Welsh" badges and plan initiatives that encourage Members to practice and use Welsh in the workplace.
Original Target: by September 2013.
Target: July 2015
- We will take more proactive steps to understand the language needs of Assembly Members and work towards implementing enhancements.
Target: July 2015
- We will remain abreast of developments in the field of language technology, including translation technology and voice recognition technology and report on any changes or developments.
Target: July 2015
- We will maintain dialogue with Centres of Excellence in Wales to benefit from the latest developments in language and translation technology.
Target: July 2015
- We will use the lessons learned from the pilots of alternative models of supporting Members with bilingual committee work and the review of Committee support, to provide briefings that take account of Assembly Members' preferences for language choice, format and timing.
Target: report on progress in July 2015

Services for the people of Wales

- We will consider alternative methods of supporting Welsh learners to enable them to develop confidence to use their skills in a working environment.

Target: from September 2014

- We will develop the appropriate level of support, guidance and training staff need to help them respond to and/or draft Welsh language responses to correspondence, making the most of the expertise of the Translation and Reporting Service.

Original Target: Plan of action to be implemented by September 2013.

Target: April 2015

- We will increase the capacity of the security team to greet members of the public to the Assembly estate bilingually.

Original Target: all security staff to have basic meet and greet skills by December 2013.

Target July 2015

- We will enhance the capacity to provide services in the café and shop bilingually.

Original Target: all café staff to have basic bilingual meet and greet and serving skills by December 2013.

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Services for Assembly staff

- We will develop and implement an effective Bilingual Skills Strategy to ensure that we have the appropriate skills within the organisation to further implement this Scheme.

Target: April 2015

- We will conduct a bilingual skills audit of all staff in order to inform service language plans.

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- We will provide staff with "I'm learning Welsh" badges and plan initiatives that encourage staff to practice and use Welsh in the workplace.

Original Target: by September 2013.

Target: July 2015

Monitoring and reporting

- We will develop a series of monitoring and compliance tools to enable us to be more effective in monitoring progress and planning for non-compliance.

Target: January 2015

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