

Welsh Language Scheme – The Electoral Commission Monitoring Report 2010-11

1. Introduction

We are an independent body set up by the UK Parliament. Our aim is integrity and public confidence in the democratic process.

We work to:

- register political parties
- make sure people understand and follow the rules on party and election finance
- publish details of where parties and candidates get money from and how they spend it
- set the standards for running elections and report on how well this is done
- make sure people understand it is important to register to vote, and know how to vote

The Electoral Commission Board comprises of ten Commissioners, one of whom is the Chair, who lead on setting our strategy and priorities. They are independent of political parties - though our four recently appointed Commissioners bring direct experience in political parties - and are accountable directly to Parliament.

The Board is supported by a Chief Executive, an Executive team and a workforce of around 150 staff.

We have offices in London, Edinburgh and Belfast, and offices based in Exeter, London, Coventry and York that cover the regions of England.

The Head of the Wales Office is responsible for the implementation of the Scheme and she is supported by the Deputy Head in consultation with relevant directorates.

The Commission's statutory Welsh Language Scheme was approved by the Welsh Language Board under Section 14 of the Welsh Language Act 1993 on 12 April 2010.

The Scheme provides that the Commission shows its commitment to the principle that the Welsh and English languages should be treated on the basis of equality so far as it is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practical.

2. Compliance with our Welsh Language Scheme

Below we set out how the Commission has performed in relation to the targets and timescales set in our statutory Welsh Language Scheme, approved by the Board in April 2010.

Dealing with the Welsh speaking electorate

Website	2010-2011	
<p>Ensure it is clear for Welsh users where they can find Welsh content on the site</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean up the home page of the Cymru area to include a consistent feature where it explains to users how to use the website to find content in Welsh. 	<p>The Commission proposes create a new Welsh language page template with navigation options solely in Welsh. This will be applied to all current and new Welsh pages, with the Cymru page continuing to be the 'home' gateway to Welsh language content on the Commission website.</p> <p>We are planning to apply a Welsh/English language toggle on applicable pages to enable a user to switch between language versions of a page should they wish (timings tbc).</p>
<p>Develop the Welsh language content on the website to include corporate information</p>	<p>Add pages to secondary navigation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about us • corporate objectives and achievements • roles and responsibilities • corporate structure 	<p>The Commission have already provided an action plan relating to this area to the Welsh Language Board in June 2011. We will continue to work with the Board to ensure that they are aware of any updates and the relevant deadlines in place. The action plan is included with this monitoring report and we would be pleased to provide any further information on the detail.</p>

<p>Improve sign posting and cross-linking so users don't find Welsh content appearing in the middle of English pages</p>	<p>At the moment, links to Welsh content can be found outside of the Cymru pages, e.g. the UK Parliamentary elections pages under Guidance. This is where content to guidance and forms in Welsh appear with their English equivalent on the same page.</p>	
<p>Ensure the Cymru pages are all in Welsh</p>		

Effective understanding of the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme

	2010-2011	
<p>a) Staff Training</p>	<p>Develop and distribute an internal guide to Welsh Language Scheme to all staff by April 2011</p>	<p>The Commission now intends to develop this guide as part of a comprehensive briefing session to new staff to include e-learning modules by April 2012. This is to ensure that this training can include any new provisions / changes made to the scheme and that it can be formally developed through the Commission's e-learning processes.</p>
<p>b) Staff Audit</p>	<p>Carry out an internal audit of all staff to ascertain those able to speak, write and read the Welsh Language effectively within the organisation</p>	<p>Currently two members of staff working at the Commission can speak, write and read the Welsh Language effectively.</p>

<p>c) Elections</p>	<p>Ensure that staff are aware of the obligations under the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme in its preparation work for any election held in Wales</p>	<p>The Commission's Welsh Language Scheme has been published on the organisations' intranet service. Relevant Wales Office staff are involved in the planning process for any necessary bilingual material provided in Wales from an early stage. Other members of staff involved in the production of bilingual resources are fully briefed as to what is required under the statutory scheme.</p> <p>This year the Commission produced bilingual material for the elections to the National Assembly for Wales. Whilst we are working with the Board on an issue relating to our guidance material for candidates and agents, we also produced fully bilingual guidance material for local authority staff and ran a bilingual public information campaign on the elections.</p>
<p>d) Referendums</p>	<p>Ensure that staff are aware of the obligations under the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme in its preparation work for any referendum held in Wales</p>	<p>The Commission's Welsh Language Scheme has been published on the organisations' intranet service. The Commission's Wales Office were closely involved in the running of both referendums in 2011 and ensured that all obligations under the scheme were considered by all staff involved. This included the entire question assessment process, the provision of relevant guidance documents, information to the public on the referendum and the main results event.</p>
	<p>Ensure that the Commission complies with its Welsh Language Scheme in ensuring the intelligibility of any referendum question is judged and tested equally in Welsh and English</p>	<p>The Commission worked closely with the Welsh Language Board on the question assessment process. It was critical that both English and Welsh questions were dealt with equally and fairly. The subsequent report and recommendations on the Welsh and English versions of the preamble and question were accepted in full by the Secretary of State for Wales.</p>

e) Monitoring the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme	Report back to the Welsh Language Board on how the Commission is meeting the requirements of the scheme and action plan by June 2010	The Commission understand the importance of its Welsh Language Scheme and is pleased to be able to provide the monitoring report to the Welsh Language Board. We will also make this report available on our website.
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Working with Third Parties and Groups

When considering this area of work we have looked to include those third parties who's work impacts on those stakeholders who would fall under the remit of the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme. Those areas would be:

Campaigns and public information:

	2010-2011	
Advice to contractors	Ensure that all contractors working with the Commissions are provided with a copy of the updated Welsh Language Scheme	Agencies and suppliers working on the public awareness campaign were procured via the Central Office of Information (COI)'s frameworks. Part of COI's remit is to ensure that the agencies and suppliers are familiar with best practice advice on Welsh Language Act Compliance. This covers guidance on how to use the Welsh language to deliver services to the public in Wales.
	Face to face briefings with new contractors / suppliers who will be working with the Commission in Wales	Our core requirements brief for the public awareness campaign submitted to agencies and COI stated that: "The umbrella brand should be created so that it can be used in bilingual – English and Welsh". In addition, the "Informability and Inclusivity" section of the creative brief stipulated that: "The brand and all of the campaign materials must be English and Welsh bilingual."

Research and evaluation

	2010-2011	
Advice to contractors	Ensure that all contractors working with the Commissions are provided with a copy of the updated Welsh Language Scheme	A copy of the Welsh language scheme will be sent to all those research agencies on our qualitative and quantitative framework agreement for research.
	Face to face briefings with new contractors / suppliers who will be working with the Commission in Wales	All research contractors are fully informed during any initial briefing sessions ahead of any new piece of work of the Commission's commitments relating to our Welsh language scheme and what they would practically need to do to ensure that they meet with those requirements.

Party and Election Finance

	2010-2011	
Advice to contractors	Ensure that all contractors working with the Commissions are provided with a copy of the updated Welsh Language Scheme	<p>The original contract for PEF Online requires the contractor, Triad, to provide a complete translation of all text across the system. As this contracted translation is a one off event the Commission has not requested it be completed until the system and guidance has been finalised. We are now in a position to proceed with the translation which should be deployed to PEF Online by mid-August.</p> <p>It will be the responsibility of the Commission to translate all future changes to the system text.</p> <p>Once the translation has been deployed the entire site will be available in Welsh as a mirror of the English language site via a link at the top of every page. All supporting documents and forms will also be available in Welsh.</p>

	Face to face briefings with new contractors / suppliers who will be working with the Commission in Wales	The PEF Online project is nearing completion. At this stage there are no new development requirements.
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3. Mainstreaming the Welsh language

Party and Election Finance material

The Commission is currently undertaking a review of all non-election relevant Party and Election Finance material. This is to ensure that all those involved in current or future party and election finance activities are able to choose to do so in Welsh or English.

The Commission will work with the Board in the development of this work.

Staff Training

The Commission has identified that it is necessary to ensure that a comprehensive internal training and briefing programme is established for all staff. We recognise that the relevant staff are aware of the general requirements included within the scheme but it is vital that all staff understand the Commission's commitment to the provision of equality across both languages.

We propose to provide a briefing and a short assessment of staff knowledge of the Commission's statutory scheme through an e-learning programme which would be compulsory to all staff working at the Commission.

This initiative is currently in development and the Commission will work with the Board to ensure that the necessary information is provided to staff.

Quality checking

The Commission is in the process of establishing a more robust scheme to check the effective translation of all material including information contained within the corporate website.

Again, we would be happy to work with the Board in the continued development of this piece of work.

4. Performance Indicators

Frontline Services

PI1 – a) there are two members of bilingual staff working in an office of six people based at the Commission's Wales Office (33.3%). Both members of staff are available to deal with any calls from the Welsh speaking public at any time within office hours.

b) we do not have a public reception area

c) the member of staff responsible for the main telephone line in the Wales office provides callers with a bilingual greeting. If any caller wishes to speak to a member of staff in Welsh then he/she is transferred to a relevant colleague

Providing services through third parties

PI2 – The Commission does not currently assess compliance by any third party relating to the relevant measure contained within the language scheme due to the limited nature of the services provided and the fact that we seldom use third parties to carry out any front line services

Language training and awareness

PI3 – a) the Commission encourages staff to learn Welsh and has arranged courses in the past. In the past year however, no members of staff have shown any interest in attending such a course.

b) the Commission has yet to provide Welsh language awareness training to staff outside of the Wales Office to date. We address this issue in section 3 and see this as being the main priority for the coming year.

Information Technology

PI4 – IT needs relating to Welsh language users are considered by the Head of IT and bilingual programmes have been made available to install on systems should this be necessary. Currently no Welsh speaking user has requested that any bilingual software be installed and this may be something that may be required if the situation within the Wales Office changes.

Administering the Scheme

PI5 – The Commission has received two formal complaints as to lack of Welsh language service from stakeholders and the public over the course of the past year. One complaint related to the Commission's aboutmyvote.co.uk website and the other to the public information call centre set-up as part of our statutory campaign for the referendum on the law-making powers of the National Assembly for Wales.

Both complaints were addressed and settled. The Commission would be pleased to submit any relevant correspondence / information to the Board on either complaint if required.