



Comisiynydd y  
Gymraeg  
Welsh Language  
Commissioner

# Digitisation and the Welsh language

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Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) is in the process of digitising its services as it seeks to modernise the way in which it operates. The technological developments are leading to a better service and better provision for Welsh speakers which are more accessible.

## **BACKGROUND / CONTEXT**

A number of HMCTS services are being digitised as part of a national reform programme. The aim of the programme is to modernise the way in which HMCTS operates and reduce the number of cases which have to go to court by offering digital services on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website. As part of the modernisation scheme, the organisation is ensuring that the new digital services are also available in Welsh.

## **INITIAL PREPARATIONS**

In order to implement the programme, staff were consulted via roadshows to collect feedback and ideas about the services. Focus groups were held with Welsh language service users. The response received highlighted that service users require three specific things from digital services:

- 1) Being able to follow a Welsh language path from start to finish
- 2) That the service is available in standard Welsh but is also user-friendly
- 3) That the Welsh language service is as accessible as the English language service

## **ENSURING THAT THE DIGITISATION SCHEME COMPLIES WITH THE ORGANISATION'S LANGUAGE SCHEME**

Initial discussions were held with HMCTS' Head of Channel Shift and a document entitled 'The Welsh Language Provision within Reform' was produced which acknowledged the need for the new programme to deliver the services in Welsh. A document was also produced covering the necessary requirements for every digital

platform entitled '*Solutions Working Group – Architecture Options Paper – Welsh Language Provision*' which detailed the linguistic needs within these platforms. The document emphasized the need to start *designing* the Welsh content rather than simply translating content from English. Both documents were presented to HMCTS' main management board. In addition, the organisation's Language Scheme was amended to include a 'Digital Services' section to reflect the modern changes to the service.

## IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME

The Welsh language unit's policy officer conducted several face-to-face meetings with the technical officers who were responsible for developing the digital platform and developing services on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website. Establishing and maintaining a constructive relationship with the technical officers was extremely important to ensure that the Welsh language was considered at an early stage in designing and planning the new services. The technical officers were responsible for developing English language versions of the services. The Welsh language unit would receive the English versions and, by using the online translation platform Transifex (which enables the Welsh translation to be shown opposite the English text, so that a non-Welsh speaking person knows that the Welsh text appears in the correct place). The translators would then translate them into Welsh.

## BUDGET

By ensuring that the Welsh language was a consideration from the very beginning of the project, and as the work of translating the content was done internally by the organisation's translators, costs were kept to a minimum.

## SUCCESSSES

- Maximise digital technology developments to improve the organisation's Welsh language provision
- Facilitate the user's experience of receiving Welsh language services

## TRANSEFERABLE ELEMENTS

The programme's success was very dependent on ensuring the following elements:

- Securing the Senior Management Team's support and a statement from the organisation's leader that the Welsh language is crucial to the change to the service
- Ensuring consideration of the Welsh language from the beginning of the developmental process and including it in the planning architecture of the new services.
- Getting to know the project managers individually and establishing a constructive working relationship with them
- Seeking public feedback and views on the kind of service they would like e.g. register, formality etc.

## Contact details

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## THE COMMISSIONER'S VIEW

The Commissioner acknowledges that services provided to the public are developed and changed continuously with an increasing focus on providing services digitally and online. Through purposeful planning to include the Welsh language within digital services, a Welsh language service, which reaches the same standard as the English language service, can be provided easily at a low cost. The Commissioner also believes strongly that technology can facilitate compliance with the Welsh language standards in situations where full consideration has been given to the implications of the developments alongside the statutory linguistic duties which have been imposed on the organisation. When developing and modernising its services, Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service has succeeded in making the Welsh language a central consideration from the outset, ensuring that the service developed meets the needs of its bilingual service users.