

Strategic Plan

2022-25



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner



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Introduction

The Welsh Language Commissioner is an independent body established by the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. This document explains the Commissioner's corporate strategic plan for a period of three years from 2022 to 2025.

Work to develop this plan started in summer 2021. A series of workshops were held with the Commissioner and the management team to discuss the organisation's vision and strategic objectives for the next period. The strengths and weaknesses of the previous strategic plan (2018-22) were also reviewed, and the plans and strategies of several other organisations and stakeholders were considered.

An internal consultation was held with staff at the start of 2022 on a draft vision and draft strategic objectives, and the Advisory Panel to the Commissioner was also consulted.

This plan is the result of those discussions. It notes the Commissioner's ambitious long-term vision and includes the strategic objectives and priorities that will contribute towards achieving that vision. It also explains our corporate values and the way in which we will implement the strategy and report on outcomes.

We are committed to achieving the priorities in this plan and we will measure progress regularly and review achievements through our annual report. The delivery of the strategy will be reviewed during the final year as we begin to prepare for the next strategic plan. We will engage with members of the public and stakeholders in developing future priorities and objectives.

Remit

2.1 The Commissioner is an advocate for Welsh language users and a regulator with enforcement powers. Our functions are set out in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The principal aim of the Commissioner in exercising its functions is to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language. In doing so, the Commissioner must work towards increasing the provision of Welsh language services and other opportunities for people to use the language. The following must also be considered:

- the official status of the Welsh language in Wales
- the duties to use Welsh which have been set out by the Welsh language standards, and the rights which result from enforcing those duties
- the principle that the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language in Wales
- the principle that persons in Wales should be able to live their life through the medium of the Welsh language if they choose to do so.

2.2 The Commissioner may do anything he believes is appropriate to promote the use of Welsh and work towards ensuring that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language. This includes doing any one or more of the following:

- promoting opportunities to use the Welsh language
- encouraging best practice in relation to the use of Welsh
- keeping under review the law relating to the Welsh language
- producing and publishing reports
- carrying out, or commissioning others to carry out, research
- carrying out, or commissioning others to carry out, educational activities
- making representations to any person

- making recommendations to the Welsh Ministers
- giving advice to any person.

2.3 The Commissioner promotes and facilitates the use of the Welsh language by working with businesses and charities to improve and increase their use of the Welsh language. We also provide advice and make recommendations to influence the consideration given to the Welsh language in policy developments and legislation.

2.4 The Commissioner has specific powers to regulate the Welsh language standards. The Welsh language standards regulations are prepared by Welsh Ministers, and they must be approved by the Senedd before the Commissioner can impose standards on the organisations named in the regulations. The Commissioner has powers to enforce compliance with those standards.

2.5 The Commissioner has powers to investigate complaints about failures to comply with standards and to determine cases. The Welsh Language Tribunal deals with appeals against the Welsh Language Commissioner's decisions in relation to the Welsh language standards. Where there are no standards in force, the Commissioner continues to monitor the way in which the Welsh language schemes of some public bodies are implemented. The Commissioner may also investigate interference with the freedom to use the Welsh language.

2.6 The Measure requires the Commissioner to publish a 5-year report on the position of the Welsh language in Wales and the Commissioner may conduct inquiries into any matter relating to any one or more of their functions.

2.7 In undertaking its work, the Commissioner will work with several other organisations for the benefit of the Welsh language. The Measure enables the Commissioner to work with Ombudsmen and other Commissioners on standards investigations, or other investigations.

2.8 The Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050* strategy, which sets a target of ensuring a million Welsh speakers by 2050 and doubling the percentage of the population

that speak Welsh every day, refers to the Commissioner's work and role in the strategy, particularly regarding:

- increasing the use of the Welsh language in the workplace across all sectors
- increasing the range of services offered to Welsh speakers

2.9 A Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed between the Commissioner and the Welsh Government. This framework agreement outlines the working relationship between both organisations leading to clear boundaries and understanding in terms of funding, regulation, influencing policy and collaboration.

Vision and Values

3.1 The Commissioner has an ambitious long-term vision to ensure that people can use the Welsh language in all aspects of their lives and in all parts of Wales. Our vision is:

A Wales where people can live their life in Welsh

3.2 Welsh Ministers are responsible for setting Welsh language policy in Wales and they have committed to leading far-reaching change so that more people learn and use the Welsh language. The Welsh Government has a long-term strategy for the Welsh language as well as targets to ensure a million Welsh speakers and to increase the percentage of the population that use the Welsh language every day to 20% by 2050.

3.3 It is important that people can use the Welsh language in all aspects of their lives, whether socially, in the workplace or when using services. The Commissioner's work is to facilitate and increase opportunities to use the Welsh language and work towards ensuring that people can live their life in Welsh if they choose to do so.

3.4 The Commissioner has an expansive long-term vision. We will use our powers and functions during the lifetime of this plan to take positive steps towards achieving the vision. The objectives and priorities in the plan explain how we will achieve this.

3.5 The legal status of the Welsh language has been strengthened over the last decade. There are more expectations on organisations to consider, plan and create opportunities to use the Welsh language in the workplace and when providing Welsh language services. There is a general perception amongst Welsh speakers that the quality of Welsh language services is improving in some fields, but there is still much to do to achieve our vision. By implementing the Welsh language standards, we are increasingly seeing better treatment of the Welsh language by organisations. However, not all sectors named in the Welsh Language Measure are currently subject to the standards regime and it is important to continue to extend the influence of the Measure.

3.6 Currently, Welsh speakers cannot use the language in all aspects of their lives, and, on the whole, it is easier to receive written services than verbal, face to face services. The Commissioner's assurance report "Stepping Forward"¹, published in 2021, highlighted the gap that exists between public organisations that provide good Welsh language services, and those who do not have sufficient arrangements in place.

¹ Stepping Forward: The Welsh Language Commissioner's Assurance Report 2020-21

3.7 The picture is more inconsistent for people who try to use the Welsh language when dealing with businesses and charities. Despite increasing examples of good practice and innovation amongst some of these organisations without any statutory enforcement, Welsh language provision is patchy and incomplete overall. Promotional activities to increase the use of the Welsh language are important and organisations from all sectors need to ensure that the Welsh language services provided are promoted effectively and that resources are earmarked accordingly.

3.8 A detailed analysis of the position of the Welsh language that has contributed towards the vision and objectives in this plan is included in the 5-year report, “The Position of the Welsh Language 2016-20”, published in 2021².

3.9 The Commissioner will use its powers and functions, and work with other organisations to close the gap between the current situation and the vision. The objectives and priorities in the next section explain how we will achieve this during the next three years.

Values

Our core values explain the way in which the Commissioner's office conducts itself when dealing with staff, the public and other stakeholders. This will underpin the way in which the Commissioner and members of staff will undertake their day-to-day work.

Respecting everyone we work with is at the heart of everything we do.

Being **open** and **trusting** one another is fundamental to our workplace culture.

We deal with all aspects of our work **fairly**, **honestly**, and **consistently**.

Working with others in an appropriate and progressive way is important to us.

3.10 Further to our corporate values, the Commissioner also has a Code of Conduct which is based on the Nolan Committee's seven principles on standards in public life. These principles, namely selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership, are part of the organisation's culture and underpin all our policies and internal procedures.

² The Position of the Welsh Language 2016-20 – Welsh Language Commissioner's 5-year Report

3.11 The Commissioner has an Equality Plan, and our work will be based on our desire to understand the needs of the community and respond to them. We will take the opportunity to promote mutual understanding between the people of Wales, undertake and contribute to work on linguistic and cultural diversity in the world, and enable more people to appreciate the culture of Wales in its entirety.

Strategic Objectives

4.1 The Commissioner has identified four high level strategic objectives for the period of this plan that will contribute towards the vision statement:

Strategic Objective 1	Ensure fairness, justice and rights for Welsh speakers
Strategic Objective 2	Ensure that the Welsh language is a central consideration in policy and legislation
Strategic Objective 3	Maintain and increase organisations' compliance with their statutory duties
Strategic Objective 4	Increase the use of the Welsh language by organisations across all sectors

4.2 These objectives will be implemented through a series of specific priorities over the next three years. These priorities will underpin the activities and projects in our annual operational plan.

4.3 The Commissioner will measure the achievement of the priorities through a series of indicators to assess the success of the strategic plan. We will also report on the achievement of the priorities in our annual report to ensure that we are accountable and transparent.

OBJECTIVE 1 Ensure fairness, justice and rights for Welsh speakers	
Priorities 2022-25	Measures of success
1.1 Engage with the public, listen to their views, and consider them in a fair and balanced way. Act on behalf of people, whether they are workers or members of the public, if they are facing barriers to using the Welsh language. Take every opportunity to reach out to a wider audience.	Wide-ranging information about priorities, experiences and barriers facing Welsh language users that will underpin the Commissioner's next direction of work.
1.2 Raise awareness of the legal rights of Welsh language users and take every opportunity to reach out to a wider audience.	Users are increasingly aware of their rights and turn to the Commissioner for support, without any difficulty
1.3 Implement an effective complaints procedure that prevents the continuation or repetition of failures.	Ensure compliance and no continuation or repetition of failures
1.4 Teach and share information on the significant outcomes of case work with all kinds of target audiences.	People and organisations are aware of significant decisions resulting from the Commissioner's work and their implications for them in the future, and can change their practices in response
1.5 Undertake responsive pieces of work that endeavour to discover whether some groups of Welsh language users find it more difficult to exercise their rights because of their circumstances and make recommendations to support them.	Organisations implement recommendations and make meaningful changes to ensure that users do not face any barriers and are not at a disadvantage in exercising their rights to use the Welsh language
1.6 Impose standards on bodies in a timely manner once standards have been introduced by the Senedd. Within the lifetime of this plan and in accordance with the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru, it is expected that this will be done with regard to the following organisations: public transport, health sector regulators, public bodies that are not currently subject to the standards regime and water companies.	More rights to use the Welsh language by imposing standards on all relevant organisations.

OBJECTIVE 2 Ensure that the Welsh language is a central consideration in policy and legislation	
Priorities 2022-25	Measures of success
2.1 Plan the 5-year report on the position of the Welsh language (2021-25), including an analysis of the results of the 2021 Census and an assessment of their implications, to be published in 2026.	An analysis of the Census and a structure for the next report.
2.2 Develop an understanding of the work of language commissioners and other agencies across the world and provide a platform for successful practices in Wales	Comprehensive and current information about international work and the application of successful practices in the Commissioner's work.
2.3 Scrutinise legislation that affects the Welsh language, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agricultural Bill - Tertiary Education Bill - Welsh-medium Education Bill 	Improvements to legislation resulting from the Commissioner's intervention.
2.4 Influence policies that affect the Welsh language, giving particular attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education - Health and care - Housing and planning 	Improvements to policies resulting from the Commissioner's intervention.
2.5 Collaborate and share information with relevant partners in order to influence policy and legislation and contribute constructively to discussions on areas that affect the Welsh language	Improvements resulting from specific examples of collaboration.
2.6 Investigate and report on the position of the Welsh language and Welsh speakers in policy areas in order to build an evidence base for the Commissioner's views	Policy makers act on the Commissioner's recommendations.

OBJECTIVE 3 Maintain and increase organisations' compliance with their statutory duties

Priorities 2022-25	Measure of Success
<p>3.1 Implementation of a genuinely proactive regulatory strategy</p>	<p>Comprehensive information about organisations' performance and the use of a wide range of interventions to respond to different situations to ensure better performance where needed.</p>
<p>3.2 Take appropriate regulatory steps to transform organisations' performance in those key areas that continue to be problematic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and recruitment • Policy making standards 	<p>More meaningful consideration is given to the requirement for Welsh language skills when advertising vacancies/new jobs, leading to successful recruitment to those roles.</p> <p>Organisations have a better understanding of the requirements of the policy making standards, and more appropriate consideration is given to the impact of policy decisions on the Welsh language.</p>
<p>3.3 Organisations to do more to promote the opportunities offered to use the Welsh language in two specific areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies on internal use • Use of services 	<p>Bodies subject to the Welsh language standards implement policies on the internal use of the Welsh language, and more opportunities for employees to use the Welsh language at work by sharing successful practices.</p> <p>Organisations can attest to the progress made in terms of the use of their Welsh language services</p>
<p>3.4 Ensure that organisations collaborate and innovate in order to respond positively to the requirements imposed on them by the Commissioner's advice, and effective</p>	<p>Evidence that progress has been made by organisations who have succeeded in transferring</p>

practices that have been collated and promoted.	effective practices to their own specific situations.
3.5 Transform the performance and ability of the National Health Service's Health Boards and Trusts to offer clinical consultations in Welsh, by improving compliance with requirements imposed on bodies by standards 110 and 110A.	All bodies subject to the standard will have prepared a plan by the end of 2023.

OBJECTIVE 4 Increase the use of the Welsh language by organisations across all sectors	
Priorities 2022-25	Measure of Success
4.1 Facilitate the use of the Welsh language with businesses and charities by providing training and guidance and sharing good practice.	The Commissioner's support is used and leads to change.
4.2 Greater commitment by businesses and charities to use the Welsh language. Specifically target the following sectors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supermarkets • Health and care providers • National charities • Banks 	40 development plans are approved each year.
4.3 Collaborate with funding bodies and networks to encourage more businesses and charities to use the Welsh language.	Contacts and collaboration lead to a greater commitment by businesses and charities to use the Welsh language.
4.4 Provide advice on the standardised forms of Welsh Place-names and publicise them by launching a new version of the List of Standardised Welsh Place-names in 2024. Develop our ability to provide advice on topographical names and publish standardisation guidelines to support the work.	Relaunch of the list of standardised Place-names with complete background records. Clear recommendations on how to protect and promote Welsh Place-names.

Implementing and enabling

5.1 The achievement of the Commissioner's strategic objectives is dependent on effective implementation and administration. This requires high standards of financial control, an appropriate governance framework and a corporate culture that supports the well-being and development of the workforce. Communicating information and promoting all aspects of the Commissioner's work are also important in achieving our objectives. To support the Commissioner's work and our plans, we will be focusing on the following themes:

Human resources

5.2 Our people are our most important resource, and the contribution of a knowledgeable, motivated workforce is essential in order to achieve our objectives. The Commissioner is committed to creating an organisational culture that promotes development and nurtures talent and potential in an environment where respect, trust, support, and a sense of close community is central to what we do.

5.3 To do this, we will prioritise the following:

- Strong governance by ensuring that our policies, procedures, and systems incorporate good practice, fairness and compliance with our statutory requirements.
- The creation of a supportive culture based on trust and respect, by offering a range of interventions to create a working environment that supports good health and well-being amongst our officers.
- Driving improvement by developing performance based on two-way, open discussions throughout the year, and ensuring that everyone is given the opportunity to develop and thrive in their roles.

Communication

5.4 Effective communication will be required to achieve our strategic objectives. We need to ensure that we share relevant messages to reach and engage with different audiences and stakeholders across Wales and beyond.

5.5 We will focus on the following priorities:

- Developing a new Communication Strategy – to identify the organisation's main messages and explain how we will tailor and share them extensively across different platforms to reach a wide range of audiences. We will review our current communication methods and consider how we can increase their impact and reach new audiences.
- Developing a strong, visual brand – We will continue to develop our brand to ensure that it reflects our values and vision as an organisation.

- We will continue to develop the website so that it includes clear, accurate and current information. We will develop new ways of ensuring that relevant information is provided to those visiting the website in a quick and effective manner.
- Running national campaigns to promote the use of the Welsh language – We will run various campaigns as a way of sharing key messages and engaging with our partners, stakeholders, and audiences.

Governance

5.6 We will implement appropriate governance arrangements to ensure that we comply with legal requirements and duties such as equality and diversity, data protection, environmental requirements, and freedom of information.

5.7 As well as an Advisory Panel appointed by Welsh Ministers, we have an Audit and Risk Committee and we have appointed internal auditors to provide an independent overview of the way in which the organisation is run. As a public appointment, the Commissioner is committed to the highest standard of internal administration. An officer has been appointed Risk Manager and the Commissioner promotes a culture of appropriate responsibility and accountability throughout the organisation.

5.8 We will:

- Measure our compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) through internal monitoring and reviews, and through any complaints that are upheld by the Information Commissioner.
- Maintain and review our risk register regularly.
- Conduct quarterly meetings of the Advisory Panel and the Audit and Risk Committee to offer constructive challenge and to advise the Commissioner.
- Report on our performance to the Senedd's Culture and Welsh Language Committee on an annual basis.

5.9 The Commissioner has a Strategic Equality Plan, and we will continue to implement the plan as part of our internal arrangements. Although the Commissioner is not subject to the full duties of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the aim is to incorporate the principle of sustainable development in the way in which we run the organisation, and to contribute to the seven Well-being Aims.

Finance and technology

5.10 We will ensure that we make the best use of our resources through strong financial control and regular reporting and monitoring processes. We will ensure that our annual accounts comply with the Treasury's requirements, accounting standards and any instruction from the Welsh Government. We will ensure appropriate financial planning and accountability by preparing a detailed annual

budget and we will ensure that our financial requirements are clear to the Welsh Government by preparing an estimate of the Commissioner's income and expenditure for the next financial year.

5.11 We will ensure that our information technology and estates infrastructure is current and fit for purpose. We will have robust arrangements in place for protecting the organisation from cyber threats and we will work towards achieving cyber protection accreditation during the first year of the strategic plan. We will continue to test our systems, work with stakeholders, and share good practice.

Reporting and accountability

6.1 This strategic plan will be implemented through annual operational plans, including specific projects and activities that will contribute towards our strategic objectives and three-year priorities.

6.2 We have a series of indicators that will enable us to measure and report on the achievement of this plan and review our success at the end of the three years. The management team will lead on scrutinising the implementation of the plan and undertake regular reviews. We will ensure that there is a clear and obvious link between our strategic plan and our operational plan, and our strategic objectives will be considered when setting annual budgets. We will report on the success of this plan through our priorities and measures.

6.3 We will report on our activities and expenditure through a statutory annual report and annual accounts that will be audited by Audit Wales. The report and accounts will be published on the Commissioner's website and laid before Senedd Cymru.



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