



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

Strategic Plan

2018 - 2021

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1. Summary

Vision

A Wales where people can use the Welsh language in their everyday lives.

Strategic objectives

1. Influencing policy
2. Extending people's rights to use the Welsh language
3. Ensuring compliance with duties
4. Facilitating wider use of the Welsh language



2. Functions

2.1 The functions of the Welsh Language Commissioner are outlined in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The principal aim of the Commissioner is to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language. In doing so, the Commissioner must work towards increasing the provision and use of Welsh language services and increasing other opportunities for people to use the language. We are also required to have regard to:

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

2.2 The Measure confers a number of specific functions and powers on the Commissioner. For instance, we must publish a 5-year report on the position of the Welsh language and we may conduct inquiries into any matter relating to our functions. We may instigate or intervene in legal proceedings and the Commissioner has quasi-judicial powers to determine on cases. We also have wider functions, including:

- encouraging organisations to provide opportunities to use the Welsh language
- keeping under review the law relating to the Welsh language
- producing and publishing reports
- carrying out, or commissioning others to carry out, research
- making recommendations to the Welsh Ministers

- giving advice to any person.

2.3 The Welsh Government's strategy *Cymraeg 2050*, outlines a target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050, in addition to increasing the percentage of the population who speak Welsh every day. There is reference to the role of the Commissioner in the strategy, specifically in relation to:

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

2.4 This is done mainly through the Welsh language standards framework which means that specific organisations must improve the way in which they plan the workforce and increase and improve the services provided by them in Welsh.

2.5 The strategic aims and priorities in this plan explain how we will undertake these functions and expectations.

3. Vision and values

The Commissioner's vision is:

A Wales where people can use the Welsh language in their everyday lives.

- 3.1 It is important that Welsh speakers feel confident to use Welsh as an ordinary part of everyday life. They should be able to do so in all manner of formal and informal situations, and Welsh language services should be accessible and of a high standard so people are able to use them as easily as possible.

- 3.2 Our responsibility is to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh in order to ensure that this happens. Extending the rights of people to use Welsh via the standards regime is an essential part of this. Regulating the implementation of the standards will also ensure that organisations consider the Welsh language in policy decisions, in using the Welsh language as part of their internal activities and in promoting the wider use of Welsh in the community. We will influence policy in order to ensure that policies, strategies and legislation support efforts to enable people to use Welsh. We also facilitate and support the efforts of businesses, charities and other organisations that are not under specific requirements to provide more resources and services in the language. We will also provide expert advice on a number of different matters in order to support efforts to use the Welsh language.

3.3 To achieve our vision, we will focus on the following four strategic objectives for 2018-21:

1. Influencing policy
2. Extending the rights of people to use the Welsh language
3. Ensuring compliance with duties
4. Facilitating wider use of the Welsh language

Values

3.4 The Welsh Language Commissioner is an independent body with a wide range of functions. We have regulatory and enforcement powers where we are required to act impartially and objectively and we also have functions to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language where we are required to provide expert advice and support. It is crucial therefore that we act in accordance with core values that are consistent across the organisation.

3.5 We have a Code of Conduct based on the seven core principles of conduct in public life. We will adhere to these principles in all that we do:

Selflessness We will make decisions solely in terms of the public interest. We will not do so in order to gain financial or other benefit for ourselves, our family or our friends.

Integrity We will not place ourselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence us in the performance of our official duties.

Objectivity In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, we will make choices on merit.

Accountability We are accountable for our decisions and actions to the public and must submit ourselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to the office.

Openness We will be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that we take. We will give reasons for our decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty We have a duty to declare any private interests relating to public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership We will promote these principles by leadership and example.

3.6 In exercising our regulatory functions, we will have regard to the Regulators' Compliance Code framework by ensuring that our work is:

- proportionate
- accountable
- consistent
- transparent
- targeted

More information about our regulatory principles is available in our Enforcement Policy published on our website.

4 Strategic Objectives

Strategic objective 1 - Influencing policy

- 4.1 Legislation and policy developments can have a significant impact on the aim of increasing the number of Welsh speakers and on the ability of people to use the Welsh language in their everyday lives. Areas such as education, economic development, housing and planning, and health and care, are central to the future of the Welsh language and its speakers. Without appropriate consideration to the Welsh language early on in the development of policies and legislation in these areas, there is a risk that developments may have an adverse impact on the language or that opportunities are missed to impact positively on its future. As a result, influencing policy is a crucial part of our work.
- 4.2 The Welsh Government is the lead body for policy and legislation in Wales, and the UK Government leads on policy in areas which have not been devolved. The Welsh language needs to be considered consistently, and we will prioritise our efforts on national issues which will have the most impact on the Welsh language and its speakers.
- 4.3 In order to influence policy effectively, we will take proactive steps in those policy areas that are strategically important to the Welsh language. We will continue to work with stakeholders and policy experts; develop briefing notes; and share opinion and evidence with policy makers. If policy developments do not support the Welsh language as they should, or have a negative impact on the Welsh language, we will say so and take appropriate steps in an attempt to rectify the situation.
- 4.4 The Commissioner is required to prepare a 5-year report on the position of the Welsh language. The first report was published in 2016, and we are required to publish the next report in 2021. We will need to consider sources of data and

information by mapping out any gaps in evidence so that the next report gives as complete a picture as possible on the position of the language.

- 4.5 Influencing policy depends to a large extent on evidence and data to support and underpin viewpoints. We will continue to increase our understanding of the position of the Welsh language by conducting research or commissioning others to do so. We will also continue to seek opportunities for collaboration with other organisations in Wales and beyond to conduct research and to build on our work and those links that have been developed over the last few years.

Priorities

1. Ensure appropriate consideration is given to the Welsh language in policy and legislative developments.
2. Work proactively in policy areas that are vital to the well-being of the Welsh language.
3. Plan and prepare a 5-year report on the position of the Welsh language.
4. Increase and improve the understanding of the Welsh language through research and working with others in Wales and beyond.

Strategic objective 2 - Extending people's rights to use the Welsh language

- 4.6 The Welsh Language Measure creates a system for setting legal duties on organisations through Welsh language standards. The Measure enables Welsh Ministers to create standards for specific organisations and sectors through regulations. The regulations are secondary legislation approved by the National Assembly for Wales. This process then authorises the Commissioner to set specific duties on organisations through consultation and, subsequently, through compliance notices. Setting these statutory duties on organisations creates rights for people to be able to use the Welsh language with those bodies, and places an expectation on organisations to promote the Welsh language.
- 4.7 By April 2018, there were 103 organisations implementing standards, including local authorities; national parks; the Welsh Government; police forces; universities and further education colleges. Work has also begun on setting standards on health and care organisations. The Commissioner's aim is to continue to extend the reach of the standards so that rights to use the Welsh language exist in more sectors. This is subject to the Welsh Government's legislative programme.
- 4.8 Some organisations continue to implement Welsh language schemes under the Welsh Language Act 1993. It is not possible to set standards on Ministers of the Crown in Westminster at present for example, despite the fact that a number of them provide services in Wales. Work will continue with these bodies to ensure that they have up-to-date Welsh language schemes and commitments to improve and increase their Welsh language provision.
- 4.9 In order to successfully extend the rights of people to use the Welsh language, it is important that organisations implementing standards understand the requirements involved. We will continue provide guidance and to respond to enquiries as appropriate. We will also continue to produce and publish codes of practice that give practical advice to organisations on how to implement standards.

4.10 Another element of the work is to ensure that the public are aware of their rights to use the Welsh language. We have already undertaken activities to raise awareness, and this work will continue as more sectors begin to implement standards.

Priorities

1. Set statutory duties on organisations.
2. Inform organisations so that they understand the requirements placed upon them.
3. Communicate effectively to ensure that the public are aware of their rights to use the Welsh language.

Strategic objective 3 - Ensuring compliance with duties

4.11 The Commissioner undertakes regulation through encouraging organisations to comply as well as through enforcement. This is comprehensive and detailed work for a number of reasons:

- the need to regulate two statutory regimes, as some organisations are implementing Welsh language standards and others are implementing Welsh language schemes.
- the complexity and diversity of public organisations in terms of their size, the nature of their services, and the linguistic profile of those who use their services.
- the Welsh language standards create wide-ranging promotional duties: to deliver the services, considering the Welsh language in policy making, internal operations, and in some instances, to promote the Welsh language on a strategic level.
- the Commissioner acts independently of the Government in the exercise of regulatory powers, but does so in a way that seeks to ensure that organisations contribute to the objectives of the Welsh Government.

4.12 An additional context is the need to change practices through regulation. As the availability and quality of Welsh-medium services improves, Welsh speakers must be encouraged to capitalise on the increase in the opportunities to use the language, as well as encouraging organisations to promote Welsh.

4.13 An important aspect of the work will be to gather reliable, independent evidence about how organisations perform, and share their findings publicly. This will enable organisations to target improvements and allow policy makers to assess the success of the systems they have in place; it will also provide assurance for Welsh speakers that organisations are operating as they should, leading to an increase in the use of Welsh.

4.14 Welsh language service users will be at the heart of the work of seeking to ensure an accurate picture of their experiences and listening to their views.

With investigative work, prioritising and targeting resources to best effect will be important.

4.15 Organisations are responsible for compliance with language duties. It is important that they self-regulate through robust oversight, and in order to ensure that they promote the use of Welsh in accordance with the requirements set out in the standards. It is also important that organisations learn from one another by adopting shared successful practice where possible. Over time, if organisations undertake these steps, the need for monitoring and intervention on the part of the Commissioner will diminish.

4.16 Individuals have the right to complain to the Commissioner about the failure of organisations to comply with standards. Making a complaint can be an unpleasant and onerous experience for members of the public, and therefore we will make the process as straightforward as possible, and ensure that people know how to complain. In considering whether to investigate complaints, the Commissioner will treat each complaint equally, and will consider the aims of the Welsh Language Measure, acting objectively and fairly when dealing with organisations and individuals.

4.17 The Commissioner has a duty to exercise investigative and enforcement powers. The strategic priority when doing so will be to re-establish compliance, to prevent the occurrence or repetition of failures, and to encourage a culture of innovation in order to drive permanent changes in the way in which organisations use the Welsh language, not to punish organisations. The enforcement actions imposed will be appropriate to achieve these aims, and officers will check whether organisations are carrying out the enforcement actions. The Commissioner will consider instigating investigations if it is considered to be important strategically.

Priorities

1. Gather evidence on the quality of experience and levels of compliance, providing an independent opinion on findings and acting upon them.
2. Promote efforts of organisations to self-regulate effectively and facilitate the work of sharing success and innovation.
3. Operate an accessible and effective system for the submission of complaints.
4. Ensure that the work of investigating suspected failures and the enforcement of Welsh language standards impacts positively on the rights

Strategic objective 4 - Facilitating wider use of the Welsh language

- 4.18 Not all sectors have a statutory duty to use Welsh. In working with those organisations, we will give advice and support to facilitate the use of Welsh and so that they understand the benefits of doing so.
- 4.19 We will develop relationships with strategic partners to encourage the use of Welsh by businesses and charities. We will work with representative bodies to disseminate messages to a range of companies and organisations. We will also establish our own forums within some sectors in order to share information and good practice.
- 4.20 We will share information and prepare guidance for businesses and third sector organisations. We will also collate and disseminate good practice regarding the Welsh language, and we will educate organisations and draw attention to evidence and research that shows the advantages of using the language. In doing so, we will aim to ensure that they make best use of available guidance and good practice.
- 4.21 In order to facilitate the use of Welsh, we will provide practical support to businesses and charities. We will continue to provide training sessions in partnership with others and offer support through the Commissioner's promotion plan resources. A further element of this support will be to offer a proofreading service and intensive support for organisations that have committed to a promotion plan.
- 4.22 In order that individuals and organisations of any kind can offer provision through the medium of Welsh, the infrastructure, i.e. the appropriate resources, should be available to them. This includes information technology; language resources such as terminology and standardised place names; and a body of first class professional translators.
- 4.23 We will provide expert advice and influence policy in these areas in order to ensure that the Welsh language continues to be a modern and standardised language. We have responsibility for the standardisation of place names in

Wales, and we will work together with local authorities and others in doing so. We will maintain a record of our recommendations and publish names in an online register of standardised place names.

Priorities

1. Nurture relationships with strategic partners to encourage the use of Welsh by businesses and charities.
2. Promote the benefits of using Welsh through research and preparing guidance for businesses and charities.
3. Provide practical support for businesses and charities on the use of Welsh.
4. Provide advice to organisations and others on matters relating to the infrastructure of the Welsh language including translation, technology, lexicography and terminology.
5. Provide expert and independent advice on the standardised forms of place names in Wales.

5. Implementing and enabling

- 5.1 In order to support all our activities and to ensure that we achieve our strategic objectives, we place a great emphasis on working effectively and efficiently. This includes communication; the management of finance and resources; workforce development and governance.
- 5.2 We will communicate with the public and other audiences to raise awareness of our work. In order that people are able to use the Welsh language in their everyday lives, it is important that they understand their rights and the opportunities available to use the language. A variety of methods will be used to communicate with our stakeholders, including publicity campaigns, advertisements and events. We will also seek opportunities for innovation and continue to work with other organisations. The Working Welsh scheme that we are responsible for, which enables service users to recognise where they are able to receive a service in Welsh, is a central part of our efforts in raising public awareness of the opportunities to use Welsh.
- 5.3 The Commissioner's office is funded by Welsh Government on an annual basis. With financial pressures, effective use of finances and resources are vitally important, and we are committed to the principles of public finance management in Wales. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to plan, control and monitor spending and resources within the organisation. We are also aware of the need to provide officers with the appropriate resources to achieve the vision in the Strategic Plan and to counterbalance this with the need for cost-effectiveness.
- 5.4 Our staff are key to the implementation of functions and in realising our vision. We must ensure that they have the appropriate skills and are inspired to excel in their work. We will use various methods of ensuring that each member of staff understands what is required of them and is aware of the Commissioner's work as a whole. This will include an annual training programme; a performance management process and appropriate policies and procedures.

5.5 We will implement appropriate governance arrangements in order to ensure that we comply with legal requirements and duties such as freedom of information and data protection. The Commissioner has a Strategic Equalities Plan and we shall continue to implement the plan in our internal arrangements. In addition to the Advisory Panel appointed by Welsh Ministers, we have an Audit and Risk Committee and have appointed Internal Auditors to give an independent overview of all the organisation's operations. As a public appointment, the Commissioner is committed to the highest standard of internal administration. An officer has been appointed as Risk Manager, and the Commissioner promotes a culture of appropriate responsibility and accountability throughout the organisation.

Priorities

1. Communicating effectively so that different stakeholders are aware of the Commissioner's work.
2. Managing finances and resources effectively thus ensuring value for money.
3. Developing and maintaining an efficient workforce during a period of change.

6 Reporting and accountability

6.1 This Strategic Plan will be implemented through annual operational plans which will include specific projects, timescales and targets in order to measure achievement. These plans will consider the needs in terms of resources and finance for each project and we will ensure that they are in accordance with equality and data protection commitments.

6.2 We will report on our activities through a statutory annual report which is required to include the following:

- a summary of the action taken in the exercise of the Commissioner's functions
- a review of issues relevant to the Welsh language
- a summary of the Commissioner's work programme
- the Commissioner's proposals for a work programme for the following financial year
- a summary of the complaints made in accordance with the procedure established

6.3 Annual accounts will also be produced under arrangements agreed with the Treasury; these are subject to audit by the Wales Audit Office.

6.4 The annual report and accounts will be published on the Commissioner's website. A copy of the annual report will be submitted to the Welsh Ministers and laid before the National Assembly for Wales.