



Comisiynydd y  
Gymraeg  
Welsh Language  
Commissioner

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# Sustainability Policy 2024-27



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# Background

The principal aim of the Welsh Language Commissioner, an independent body established by the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, is to promote and facilitate use of the Welsh language. This entails raising awareness of the official status of the Welsh language in Wales and imposing standards on organisations. This, in turn, will lead to the establishment of rights for Welsh speakers.

Two principles will underpin the work:

- In Wales, the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language
- Persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of the Welsh language if they choose to do so

Contact Details:

- Phone: 0345 6033 221
- Email: [post@welshlanguagecommissioner.wales](mailto:post@welshlanguagecommissioner.wales)
- Website: [welshlanguagecommissioner.wales](http://welshlanguagecommissioner.wales)

Welsh Language Commissioner  
Unit 2, Block C  
Doc Fictoria  
Caernarfon  
LL55 1TH

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# 1 Sustainability Policy

- 1.1 The Welsh Language Commissioner is committed to protecting the environment, continuously improving its environmental management and performance, meeting environmental obligation compliance and preventing pollution.
- 1.2 The Commissioner's Sustainability Policy was updated in April 2024 through staff engagement and is based on the following principles:
  - Complying with all relevant legislation, regulations and codes of practice, and doing more than is necessary where practicable.
  - Integrating sustainability considerations into our business decisions where possible.
  - Ensuring that all its officers are fully aware of the Sustainability Policy and are committed to implementing and improving it.
  - Minimising the impact of all office and travel activities on sustainability.
  - Ensuring suppliers are aware of its Sustainability Policy, and encouraging them to adopt sound sustainable management practices.
  - Reviewing, reporting annually, and continually striving to improve our sustainability performance.

## 2 The Commissioner's environmental performance

- 2.1 On 1 April 2024, the Commissioner employed 44 staff members. The Commissioner has two offices; one is located within the Welsh Government's CP2 building in Cathays Park, Cardiff and the main office is located within a privately owned building in Victoria Dock, Caernarfon.
- 2.2 As a tenant, the Commissioner has little influence over the maintenance of the buildings and no influence over the supply and provision of water. Electricity is the only energy supply used and this provides light and heat, as well as powering normal office equipment.
- 2.3 Like many organisations, in March 2020, all offices were closed and all staff worked from home holding meetings via virtual methods. This meant that staff did not commute to the office or use different modes of transport for meetings, which has resulted in a significant reduction in the carbon footprint.
- 2.4 As a result, there has been a significant reduction in disposed waste from the office, that is because staff tend to use the office for a limited number of days, and because less paper has been sent for recycling as a result of working in a more paperless way.
- 2.5 There have been clear positive environmental benefits from working in a different way since 2020, and have led to the introduction of a Hybrid Working Guide. The

Commissioner encourages staff to work part of the week in the office while allowing them to continue to choose their work environment for the rest of the working week.

- 2.6 The Commissioner has also reduced the number of offices compared to the pre-pandemic period and the staff stationed in those offices have now been converted to 'home worker' status which has further reduced the pressure on their use.

### What the Commissioner is committed to

- 2.7 The Commissioner recognises that its main effects on the environment stem from the use of energy, transport, waste generation and the use of office materials. It is therefore committed to seeking to reduce its impacts on the environment by focusing on these areas, as set out below:

- **Energy consumption** - as one of several tenants in a block of old offices, it is not possible to have full control of water, heat and light facilities. However, where possible, officials are encouraged to be frugal with their energy use by turning off computers and screens when not in use, turning off light when not needed and only printing material that is really needed.
- **Use of vehicles** - the office does not own any vehicles, but encourages the hiring of vehicles for long journeys to ensure better efficiency; this includes electric vehicles where they will be available. Officers are encouraged to share vehicles for official journeys when practicable. Where appropriate, the use of public transport is encouraged as the first option for all necessary travel.
- **Meetings** - Avoid physically traveling to meetings when alternatives are available and practical, such as using Teams or video conferencing tools, and schedule meetings efficiently to avoid multiple trips.
- **Paper management** - all officers have access to email and the internet, and paperless meetings and work are encouraged. Papers for meetings are no longer routinely printed.
- **Procurement** - the Commissioner's procedures include requirements to be mindful of sustainability issues when procuring services and goods from external providers.
- **Waste Disposal** - procedures are used for recycling all types of waste including paper, cardboard, plastic, metal, glass and food. Paper containing sensitive information is disposed of using confidential waste recycling facilities. Water machines have been provided in the offices to eliminate the need for water in plastic bottles.
- **Teaching** - the Commissioner is committed to raising their officials' awareness of sustainability and biodiversity issues. This includes how officers can contribute within and outside the workplace.
- **Work practices** - through the Hybrid Working Guide, staff are enabled to make decisions about their place of work, where possible and appropriate.

This guidance allows staff to work remotely, which reduces the organisation's overall carbon footprint.

### **3 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

- 3.1 Although the Welsh Language Commissioner is not a public body bound by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Commissioner is committed to the Sustainable Development Principle set out in Section 5 of the Act.
- 3.2 By operating in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle, we will act in a way that seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### **4 Environment (Wales) Act 2016**

- 4.1 As a public authority under section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the Welsh Language Commissioner has a duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity, and to promote resilient ecosystems in Wales.
- 4.2 Under the Act, the Commissioner must issue a plan setting out the steps that are to be taken to comply with this duty. This scheme is incorporated into the Commissioner's Sustainability Policy (see Appendix 1) and will be reviewed every three years.
- 4.3 These three years will provide a baseline of activity and evidence to be able to deliver an updated action plan with clear targets to reduce the organisation's carbon footprint by 2030.
- 4.4 The Commissioner's reporting duty has been developed to be proportionate to the size and function of the organisation, paying due attention to the actions for sustainability and biodiversity that can be taken. The mechanism for doing so will be within the Commissioner's Annual Report setting out progress against the Policy and action plan.

### **5 Net Zero Carbon Status by 2030**

- 5.1 The Commissioner will use the actions set out in the Sustainability Policy and action plan to work towards the public sector goal of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. More information about this trail map is available [here](#).

# Appendix 1 - Action Plan 2024-27

|    | Necessary Action   | Leader  | Timetable                         | Measure  |
|----|--|---|-----------------------------------|--|
|    | <b>Establishing arrangements to comply with the Policy</b>   |   |                                   |  |
| 1. | Reporting on compliance with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016  | Director of Governance and Corporate Services | Annually within the annual report | The Welsh Language Commissioner's Annual Report  |
| 2. | Establishing an 'Environment Group' to inform the internal operation of the Policy and implement the action plan   | Director of Governance and Corporate Services | Quarterly                         | Meeting minutes  |
|    | <b>Educating officials about the importance of environmental awareness and biodiversity</b>  |   |                                   |  |
| 3. | Including an ongoing item within the monthly staff newsletter on the importance of environmental awareness and biodiversity  | Environment Group                             | Quarterly                         | Monthly staff newsletter   |
| 4. | There will be an opportunity to promote various elements of the Commissioner's Sustainability Policy at staff meetings   | Environment Group                             | At least once a year              | Meeting minutes  |
| 5. | Participating in occasional national events to promote different elements of the Commissioner's Sustainability Policy  | Environment Group                             | Annually                          | Monthly staff newsletter   |
|    | <b>Working towards reducing electricity consumption each year (as a tenant in a shared building, the Commissioner does not have full control over the use of water, heat and light)</b>        |   |                                   |  |
| 6. | Educating officials about reducing energy use e.g. disabling computers, turning off lights in meeting rooms when not in use, only printing material that is really needed                      | Environment Group                             | Continuous                        | Monthly Staff Newsletter. Staff Meetings.<br><br>Consumption is reduced - compared annually. |
|    | <b>Working towards an annual increase in the number of officials using low-carbon modes of travel (such as walking, cycling, car-sharing and public transport) by developing and promoting</b> |   |                                   |  |

|  |   |   |                                  |  |
|--|---|---|----------------------------------|--|
| 7.   | The Commissioner's Travel and Subsistence Policy and Procedures among officials highlighting the benefits of using low carbon travel  | Senior Finance and Resources Officer                      | When it is amended every 2 years | Annual increase in the percentage of officers using low carbon modes of travel   |
| 8.   | Implementing a 'virtual' first policy for meetings in order to reduce the overall need for travel. The need to travel will need to be offset by the benefit of face-to-face meetings                            | Director of Governance and Corporate Services             | Continuous                       | Maintaining the reasonable level of business travel that has been in place since the pandemic and not return to past practices |
| 9.   | Promoting the Cycle to Work Scheme and considering other schemes the Commissioner could adopt to encourage more staff to use low carbon modes of travel (e.g. Green Cars or annual train ticket payment scheme) | Senior Human Resources Officer                            | Every 6 months                   | Messages highlighting available schemes are sent via staff notices   |
| <b>Integrating environmental considerations into the selection of suppliers and services to provide products and/or services</b> |   |   |                                  |  |
| 10.  | Including a commitment to implement the Commissioner's Sustainability Policy with contractors where appropriate   | Senior Finance and Resources Officer                      | Continuous                       | Contracts for products/services including a commitment to sustainability   |
| <b>Complying with new recycling requirements in the workplace</b>  |   |   |                                  |  |
| 11.  | Separate dedicated bins in place for recycling all types of waste. These will be promoted throughout the office including the installation of signs for the purpose of reducing waste                           | Senior Finance and Resources Officer<br>Environment Group | Continuous                       | Signs promoting recycling to be fully visual at all waste points<br><br>Officers aware of opportunities for recycling at work  |