

National Assembly for Wales Official Languages Scheme Annual Compliance Report

Foreword

I am pleased to present the final Annual Compliance Report on the Assembly Commission's Official Languages Scheme. This report demonstrates the improvements and progress made during the final months of the Fourth Assembly and the first year of the Fifth Assembly. A lot of the work has concentrated on the transition between the two Assemblies and ensuring that we continue to work towards our ambition to be recognised as a truly bilingual organisation.

This is my first opportunity as Assembly Commissioner to present the Annual Compliance Report. I wish to use this opportunity to express our thanks to Rhodri Glyn Thomas, my predecessor for his commitment to embedding a strong bilingual ethos across the organisation. May I also thank my colleague Dai Lloyd AM who undertook the role of Assembly Commissioner with responsibility for official languages for a brief time at the beginning of the Fifth Assembly.

As a new Assembly Member and Commissioner, I was struck by the Assembly's continued commitment to delivering exemplary bilingual services where bilingualism is clearly a natural part of its culture and working practices. The Assembly Commission is proud of its emerging reputation for innovation in the delivery of bilingual services.

We have continued to build upon the good work undertaken during the Fourth Assembly, to learn from others and share expertise where possible. As we bring the existing Scheme to a close and implement a new Official Languages Scheme for the Fifth Assembly which builds on the improvements introduced so far, we are confident that we will be able to cement our reputation as a truly bilingual organisation which leads the way in bilingual service provision in Wales.

Adam Price

Commissioner with responsibility for official languages, and delivery and transformation of services to Members.

Introduction

This will be the final Annual Compliance Report for the current Official Languages Scheme published in July 2013. For the duration of the Scheme, the Assembly Commission's ambition has been to deliver exemplary bilingual services and to be recognised as a truly bilingual institution. Significant steps have been taken since 2013 to embed and promote a bilingual culture and ethos.

The Management Board remains committed to maintaining and increasing the drive to deliver the Scheme's provisions and has encouraged staff to proactively facilitate bilingual working in the provision of all services. As outlined in the priorities for the final parliamentary year of the Fourth Assembly, maintaining the momentum and enthusiasm for innovation and change has been a priority, particularly in the context of the Assembly General Election in 2016 and the first months of the Fifth Assembly.

Our commitment to achieving our stated long-term aims remains as strong as ever, namely:

- delivering more and exemplar bilingual services;
- valuing our staff for the commitment they bring to the Assembly and their professional and parliamentary expertise; and
- sharing our experience and knowledge of working bilingually with other organisations.

The National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Act 2012, requires the Assembly Commission to review its Official Languages Scheme "as soon as is reasonably practicable after each ordinary general election". Consequently preparations for the Fifth Assembly included work on this review and the development of a Scheme for the new Assembly.

This report details the improvements and progress made during the final parliamentary year of the Fourth Assembly, the beginning of the first parliamentary year of the Fifth Assembly and the transitional period between the two Assemblies. The new Official Languages Scheme for the Fifth Assembly outlines priority themes for the whole Assembly term. We will report annually on our achievements within those priority areas, provide details of complaints and lessons learnt as well as outlining any areas of concern or additional priorities as we continue to work towards achieving the Commission's ambitions.

Services for Assembly Members and their support staff

Preparing for Plenary and Committee meetings

The final parliamentary year of the Fourth Assembly enabled us to fully embed proactive provision of bilingual support for Assembly Members and their support staff. The outcomes and lessons learned from several pilots, including bilingual briefings and quick turnaround text translation for Assembly Members wishing to deliver speeches in Welsh over the past two years, have enabled us to implement a more tailored and bespoke way of responding to Assembly Members' bilingual working preferences.

Preparations for the Fifth Assembly took full account of the need to enable Assembly Members and their support staff to work in the language of their choice as a default.

As part of the Fifth Assembly welcome and induction process, provision was made to understand the language preferences and needs of all new and returning Assembly Members and their support staff. A full induction programme was provided for all new Assembly Members and bilingual working was an important part of that programme. Where a Welsh language preference was known, Assembly Members were paired with bilingual 'buddies' to provide an initial introduction to the Assembly estate and to support them as they arrived to take up office. We also discussed language preferences with Assembly Members during this period and facilitated their language preferences wherever known. The new Official Languages Scheme for the Fifth Assembly will build upon the knowledge gained during this period and further embed a culture of proactively offering bilingual working.

Quote

Following my election as a Member, I was amazed at how convenient it is to work bilingually at the Assembly and how refreshing it is to work in an organisation that has a truly bilingual ethos. It means that it is easy for me to be able to work through the medium of either Welsh or English as the need arises. Although I've worked at the European Parliament, which is a multilingual parliament, being able to use my mother tongue in formal settings has come as a breath of fresh air.

Further work has also been undertaken to investigate the provision of tailored and bespoke support for individual Assembly Members. Through the work of the integrated committee teams, Assembly Members have indicated their preferences for the timing, language and content of support documentation. This team approach allows Assembly Members to prepare for and contribute to all debates and discussions in the language of their choice. Tailored support continues to be provided for Committee Chairs in order to enable them to prepare for debates and deliver speeches in the language of their choice. The Translation and Reporting Service also offers a terminology check service to assist with drafting speaking notes. We will continue to work with Assembly Members and their support staff to find alternative and innovative ways to provide the necessary support to enable them to work in the language of their choice as a default.

Language learning

Towards the end of 2015, the Assembly Commission undertook an in-depth review of its language learning provision for Assembly Members, their support staff and Commission Staff. The purpose of the review was to consolidate the previously fragmented approach to language learning and ensure that provision remained as flexible and tailored as possible. As a result of the review and a pilot scheme that saw the temporary appointment of an in-house Welsh Tutor for Commission staff, the Language Skills team was established. The team consisting of a Managing Tutor and two Tutors has been appointed. The work of the team is also supported by a fourth member who provides occasional support when required. The establishment of the Language Skills Team has allowed the Assembly Commission to respond creatively to the language learning needs of Assembly Members, their support staff and Commission staff. The Team has designed an innovative programme of learning in order to enable learners of all levels to participate and make progress. The Team has also further developed the 'Dysgwr' brand, which is now a recognisable logo across the Assembly estate. The team now supports over 100 learners on a regular basis as well as providing one-off on the job training, such as sessions on answering the telephone or chairing meetings bilingually, for others.

Quote

Since the 'Dysgwr' lanyards were introduced at the Assembly, I start many more conversations in Welsh. It's a good way to increase learners' confidence, particularly for those who don't feel confident enough to wear the 'Iaith Gwaith' lanyards.

Elin Jones AM, Llywydd

Quote

I started working for a North Wales based Assembly Member following the election in May. I felt that it was important for me to improve my Welsh language skills so that I could at least attempt basic Welsh with some constituents. I attended an intensive course for three days during the summer recess, downloaded the "Say something in Welsh" app and I now intend to further my learning by attending weekly lessons with the Language Skills Team. I now feel more confident to at least have a go and look forward to putting it all into practice.

Julie Price, Senior Advisor to Nathan Gill AM

Assembly Members and their constituents

We have continued to work with Assembly Members and their support staff to ensure that they are able to communicate with their constituents in the language of their choice and produce bilingual constituency related documentation. Following a successful pilot last year, the Assembly Members' Constituency Business translation fund has been enhanced to cover the provision of interpretation at constituency events. All new and returning Assembly Members have received information on the use of the fund and take up remains consistent. We will continue to work with Assembly Members and their support staff to develop templates and standard text in order to facilitate bilingual working in their communities.

Quote

The new arrangement for simultaneous interpretation for constituency public meetings means that we are able to offer a fully bilingual service to members of the public. We have made much use of the service and the meetings themselves are held seamlessly in either or both languages.

Heledd Roberts, Office Manager for Rhun ap Iorwerth AM

Quote

In the Fourth Assembly I worked for an Assembly Member who used Welsh on a daily basis in his Assembly work. I made regular use of the Members' translation service to have questions and short speeches translated from one language to the other. The fact that I was able to use Microsoft Translator and send the translation to be proofread at very short notice was always a massive help. As a Welsh learner, it helped me to provide a bilingual service to both the Member and constituents alike as well as helping me to improve my Welsh.

Office Manager for an Assembly Member

Case Study – Technology and engagement

The Assembly's Front of House service has been trialling the use of bilingual iBeacons tours in the Senedd and at the Pierhead. I-Beacons are small Bluetooth devices which transmit a unique ID and which can be picked up by smartphones and tablets. They then transmit pre-recorded content relevant to the part of the building where the visitor is. The Beacons can bring to life the architectural and historical features of our iconic buildings. Visitors will be able to interact with us directly through their mobile devices and can choose which part of the building they wish to concentrate on. All content has been produced bilingually and tested on the Assembly estate. The tours will be rolled out fully in 2017 and in time can also be produced in other languages.

02. Services for the people of Wales

Visitors to the Assembly Estate

Since the appointment of additional bilingual staff by our catering contractors, we have seen proactive use of the Welsh language in and around the Senedd cafe.

All catering staff have received basic meet and greet training and we have worked with our contractors to recruit more bilingual staff members to enhance the bilingual capacity for events and hospitality.

The Language Skills Team is working with the Security team to develop a programme of training for all members of the team. This will build on previous work to ensure that all members of front line Security staff develop basic meet and greet skills and will also encourage more proficient learners to use their skills in the workplace. During the dissolution period we worked with the team to pilot some new approaches, including one to one mentoring, on the job training and provision of *aide memoires* and audio resources for new members of staff.

Supporting colleagues

In addition to the provision of language learning support, the Language Skills Team is working on a comprehensive programme aimed at staff who already have some degree of Welsh language skills, but possibly lack confidence. The 'gloywi iaith' (refresher training), including formal grammar 'brush up' sessions and more informal mentoring for individuals or small groups, are all important elements of the work of the Language Skills Team. They will make a significant contribution to further developing our bilingual ethos where each staff member feels comfortable to use and grow their skills and feels valued for the skills they possess.

Sharing expertise

The Assembly Commission has again this year engaged proactively to provide advice and share expertise with a range of external bodies. We have

worked with a number of academic bodies, including Cardiff University, Trinity St David and the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol*, contributing to a number of academic modules on translation and interpreting. The Translation and Reporting Service has maintained its collaborative relationship with the Institute of Translation and Interpreting [ITI] and the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters.

We have also developed our relationship with several external organisations, including local government and other public bodies, to provide practical advice and guidance on issues relating to establishing and running a translation service and the effective use of language technology. Our reputation as leaders in bilingual working in Wales allows us to share our experience of using language technology, the provision of bespoke services, in-house language tuition etc. with a wider cohort of organisations and institutions.

The Assembly Commission continues to enjoy a constructive relationship with the Welsh Language Commissioner and we consult with the Commissioner's office on a range of issues, including the process of drafting the new Official Languages Scheme for the Fifth Assembly.

Case Study – Sharing expertise

“We met with Assembly officials to discuss their experience of introducing machine translation for all staff. Their expert and practical advice was very valuable and, as a result of the discussions, the Welsh Government decided to introduce the technology for its staff, along with guidance on appropriate use of machine translation in the workplace. The technology is useful to give non-Welsh speakers a *gist* translation, and will facilitate bilingual communication across the organisation.”

Bethan Griffiths, Chief Officer, Compliance with the Welsh Language Standards, Welsh Government

03. Services for Assembly Staff

Planning for bilingual service provision

Each individual Assembly service area has its own language plan. The plan outlines bilingual capacity within teams and details processes and procedures for the provision of bilingual services. When new posts are created or posts become vacant, Heads of Service use the service area language plan to determine the level of language skills required for the post to be advertised. The Assembly Commission's Investment and Resourcing Board is responsible for agreeing the establishment of new posts and the filling of vacant posts and, in so doing, actively considers the language skills requirement of each post.

The Assembly's Management Board recently undertook its annual capacity review to ensure that adequate staff levels were available for the Fifth Assembly. As part of their considerations, bilingual capacity within teams was a required theme in order to ensure that all services are able to proactively provide bilingual services as a normal part of their services. We will continue to work with individual service areas to develop and update language plans in order to ensure that planning for the provision of bilingual services is an integral part of each area.

The Official Languages Co-ordinators Forum, made up of one representative from each service area, continues to provide advice and guidance for colleagues and monitors compliance within service areas. The Co-ordinators are also responsible for ensuring that new starters within service areas receive language awareness training and also for ensuring that they gain an understanding of the requirements for their particular post.

Case Study – Language Awareness Video

In order to ensure that all new members of staff are aware of the bilingual ethos and culture of the organisation from the outset, we needed a way to ensure that training was delivered soon after they join the Assembly. We used in-house expertise to script, record, edit and produce our own language awareness video so that staff could receive training during their

first week. This means that we are able to update the content in order to ensure that it is relevant and current. The video can also be used as a refresher for staff who received training some time ago. It has been well received and has provoked discussion across the organisation.

Quote

'Watching the video encouraged me to take up Welsh lessons that the Assembly provides. Coming from England, I am new to Welsh, and feel that learning the language will enrich my time at the Assembly and also my everyday life in Wales.'

Katy Orford, The Research Service

04. Monitoring and Reporting

Compliance

Official Languages Co-ordinators continue to monitor compliance on a day to day basis and have again, this year, reported minor instances of failure to comply with the Scheme's requirements. Members of the public have also raised instances of failure to comply through formal and informal channels. When such instances are reported, Co-ordinators discuss the issues with the relevant staff members in order to ensure that breaches are rectified as soon as possible. We also provide support and guidance to all staff to ensure fewer instances of non-compliance. Heads of Service, the Co-ordinators and line managers routinely reinforce the expectations of the Scheme and the Official Languages Team provide advice and support as required.

Complaints

On occasion during the year we have failed to achieve the high standards we set for ourselves and have fallen short of the expectations of Assembly Members, their support staff or the public. A number of informal and formal complaints have been received and can be categorised as follows:

Technology

There have been times when we have been unable to publish documents in accordance with our Scheme requirements due to technological issues. We have also been notified of several instances of links to Welsh language documents leading to the English language versions or broken links. Feedback on issues of this nature is extremely valuable to us as it enables us to rectify mistakes or problems quickly.

Language of choice

Feedback from the public has indicated that there have been occasions where they have been unable to use the language of choice when engaging with us. We have identified an issue with the call centre equipment at our

North Wales office, with calls occasionally being automatically redirected to the incorrect lines resulting in Welsh speakers being directed to English language lines. Procedures have been put in place to identify such instances as soon as possible and to enable the caller to use their language of choice even when directed to the incorrect line.

Customer service

Visitor experience in the Senedd from a bilingual perspective has generally been good with visitors commenting on the bilingual ethos of the organisation. However, we are aware of an incident involving a group of visitors who requested a Welsh language service that we failed to deliver. An investigation into the incident is being conducted and we have taken the opportunity to ensure that our Front of House team and other partners are aware of the requirements of the Scheme and how to provide exemplary bilingual services. We will work with the appropriate teams to reinforce the need to proactively offer bilingual services.

Committee Consultations

We have become aware that when we commission evidence for Committee Consultations or Inquiries we have not been sufficiently clear in ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Official Languages Scheme, resulting in a complaint being made. The wording for requesting and publishing evidence and documentation from third parties in the new Official Languages Scheme for the Fifth Assembly will be amended to ensure clarity and consistency. We will work with Committee teams to ensure that the wording of any requests for evidence or other documentation is clear and in line with the requirements of the Scheme.

Lessons Learnt

We encourage Assembly Members and their support staff, the public and our staff to provide feedback on our bilingual services and are committed to learning from any feedback we receive. The main themes arising from compliments, complaints and feedback provide a clear indication of good

practice and areas in need of improvement or strengthening. The Official Languages Scheme for the Fifth Assembly will build upon the good practice established during the Fourth Assembly and address any areas of weakness. The Scheme will outline priority themes for the Fifth Assembly that will further strengthen our bilingual ethos and culture and allow us to achieve the Commission's ambition to be recognised as a truly bilingual organisation.