



Companies House

**COMPANIES HOUSE
WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME**

**PREPARED UNDER THE
WELSH LANGUAGE ACT 1993**

**THIS SCHEME HAS BEEN PREPARED IN
ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 21(3) OF THE
WELSH LANGUAGE ACT AND RECEIVED THE
FULL ENDORSEMENT OF THE WELSH
LANGUAGE BOARD ON 20 APRIL 2010.**

REVISED AUGUST 2012

COMPANIES HOUSE HAS ADOPTED THE PRINCIPLE THAT IN THE CONDUCT OF PUBLIC BUSINESS IT WILL TREAT THE ENGLISH AND WELSH LANGUAGES ON A BASIS OF EQUALITY WHERE THIS IS REASONABLE AND NOT DISPROPORTIONATE.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Companies House is an Executive Agency of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) with Trading Fund status.

1.2 Its core activities are:

- Incorporating and dissolving companies;
- Receiving and registering statutory information which companies are required to deliver to the Registrar;
- Making sure that statutory information is available for public inspection.

1.3 The Headquarters office is in Cardiff, with regionally based offices in London, Edinburgh and Belfast. Overall, Companies House employs 983 staff (August 2012).

2. SERVICE PLANNING

2.1 New policies and initiatives will, where reasonable and not disproportionate, facilitate the use of Welsh by those who wish to conduct their business in Welsh and will progress the organisation towards implementing the principle of equality of the treatment of the language.

2.2 Companies House will consult with the Welsh Language Commissioner about any proposals which will affect or change the Scheme and we will not change the Scheme without their agreement.

2.3 Any prescription of new forms, changes to computer systems or other operational changes will take account of the terms of this Scheme. In implementing any such changes, we will give full consideration as to how the level of service to Welsh speaking customers might be further improved.

2.4 Companies House will ensure that all staff involved in the formulation of policy will be fully aware of this Scheme and our responsibilities under the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure of 2011.

2.5 The Welsh Policy Manager is responsible for overseeing the operation of the Scheme and will ensure, by issuing appropriate guidance and carrying out suitable monitoring, that we meet these commitments.

3. SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1 Companies House will ensure, as far as is reasonable and not disproportionate, that customers who choose to conduct their business with us through the medium of the Welsh Language will be able to do so. We will achieve this by:

- Dealing with all correspondence received in Welsh and sending a reply in Welsh where a reply is called for;
- Maintaining a network of Welsh speaking members of staff and a rota system to ensure that we are able to deal with telephone callers and visitors who wish to deal with us in Welsh;

- Providing key guidance notes, forms, online systems and other publications in bilingual format.
- Identifying those Welsh companies (i.e. those companies whose registered office is to be situated in Wales as defined by Section 88 of the Companies Act 2006) who wish to conduct their business with us in Welsh, by placing a marker against them on our systems.

3.2 Companies House will continue to draw customers' attention to the fact that it offers a service for Welsh speaking customers. This will include:

- Publicising the fact in our guidance, and on our website;
- Informing the members of our Focus Groups and other customer groups;
- Providing a link to the Welsh Service page on the home page of our Welsh website.

4. QUALITY STANDARDS

4.1 Companies House Welsh Language Committee will continue to support the Welsh Policy Manager in overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the Scheme. The quality of services provided to Welsh speaking customers will comply with existing commitments under the Chartermark Scheme as well as all other Companies House targets.

4.2 Staff will be made aware of the Scheme and we will place information about our Welsh services and in-house team on our internal communication system for all staff to have access.

5. DEALING WITH CORRESPONDENCE

5.1 Companies House offers a service to deal with correspondence in Welsh and will:

- In the case of individual correspondence, reply in Welsh if a reply is called for in accordance with our normal correspondence targets;
- Meet all its normal correspondence targets for dealing with customers' letters;
- Correspond in Welsh with customers following any face to face or telephone communication in Welsh;
- Send a holding reply in Welsh if there is likely to be any delay in replying;
- Produce bilingual versions of its key notes for guidance and other communications for those customers who have expressed a preference to deal with us bilingually;
- Send automated computer generated standard bilingual letters to Welsh companies which have a Welsh name ending. These include:
 - letters notifying such companies that Companies House offers a Welsh language service;
 - reminder letters and e-reminders of impending dates for filing of information;
 - letters notifying a company of a default in filing;
 - letters notifying a company of the registrar's intention to strike them off the register and dissolve them;
 - letters and invoices notifying companies of the imposition of a late filing penalty;
 - letters and invoices notifying an overpayment or underpayment of statutory filing fees.

5.2 In order to achieve this commitment Companies House will:

- Continue to provide guidance to staff on the handling of correspondence received in Welsh;
- Continue to provide training and guidance to staff dealing with Welsh correspondence;
- Continue the service level agreements with translation services to provide a satisfactory turnaround time for translation work;

- Continue to consider whether changes are required to our computer and output handling systems to automate the existing system of producing bilingual versions of standard letters;

6. TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION

6.1 Companies House offers a service to telephone callers who wish to discuss their business in Welsh. Our Contact Centre and Companies House staff have internal directories which list Welsh speaking members of staff and their areas of expertise so that customers can be transferred to them promptly. We will maintain and support an in-house team of Welsh speakers who will work together to ensure that there is always someone available to discuss a Welsh speaking customer's business in Welsh.

6.2 We do not propose to answer every telephone call bilingually. As we are an organisation based in Wales that provides services throughout the UK, it is not appropriate to offer a bilingual greeting to all customers. However in order to facilitate the service for Welsh speaking customers we will:

- Continue to have a dedicated number for Welsh speaking customers to gain access to a Welsh speaking member of staff;
- Have Welsh speaking staff in our Contact Centre who can deal with, or if necessary transfer calls as appropriate;
- Continue to publicise any such dedicated number on our website.

6.3. Once we have established that a caller has chosen to discuss their business with us in Welsh we will:

- Transfer the caller to a member of our team of Welsh speakers;
- If no Welsh speaking member of staff is available, we will offer the caller the choice of completing the call in English, or being called back by a Welsh speaking member of staff as soon as one is available;
- If the enquiry is of a complex or technical nature, on which we would normally have to seek professional advice, we will invite the caller to put their enquiry in writing. They will then receive a written reply in Welsh in accordance with our normal correspondence handling procedures. This accords with our normal practice in respect of all complex or technical queries, irrespective of the language in which they are made.

7. VISITORS TO THE OFFICE

7.1 Companies House public search facilities in Cardiff are open during normal business hours from 9am to 5pm. Companies House offers a service to Welsh speaking customers, both those wishing to use the search facility and company directors or their representatives who wish to discuss their business personally in Welsh, Companies House will continue to:

- Provide a Welsh speaking member of staff, preferably by pre-arranging visits if possible with customers who wish to discuss their business in Welsh;
- Provide bilingual signposts in the grounds of the office, in the car park and in the public areas of the office itself;
- Provide bilingual evacuation procedures in the public areas of the office;
- Provide bilingual policy statements such as CH Health and Safety policy, CH Environmental policy and CH Equal Opportunities policy in the public areas of the office;

8. OTHER CONTACTS WITH COMPANIES HOUSE

8.1 As Companies House develops its technological links with customers, for example, through electronic filing of information, we will continue to examine what provision can be made for customers who wish to conduct their business with us in Welsh.

8.2 We will achieve this by having due regard for the terms of this Scheme in the development of new and existing systems and communication methods with our customers.

8.3 The Companies House Website is accessible in a Welsh language version that mirrors the information available on the English version of the site. This includes guidance booklets, copies of bilingual statutory forms and a Welsh web filing service for the annual return and other key documents. More information on this is available from our website.

9. PUBLICATIONS AND EVENTS

9.1 Companies House provides a wide range of guidance designed to help companies and their officers comply with their statutory obligations, and to publicise the services Companies House provides. In particular, we publish guidance for Welsh companies which details the basic Companies Acts requirements that companies must comply with, and gives details of the Welsh Language services available from Companies House.

9.2 Apart from guidance, Companies House also produces other general information material for companies and the public. Companies House will continue to produce material relating to standards of service, access to service and complaint procedures in bilingual format on our website at the same time as the English version. Other publications will be considered as they are developed or reviewed, such as marketing material and electronic communications with customers.

9.3 We will continue to produce bilingual publications where it is appropriate and not disproportionate.

9.4 To ensure simultaneous publication and equal accessibility to all publications, Companies House will continue to adopt a planning system with translators and other service providers involved in the production and distribution.

9.5 The cost of bilingual versions of publications will not, where there is a charge for them, exceed the cost of the English version of them.

9.6 Companies House does not hold or convene public meetings. However, it runs a series of information road shows designed to increase awareness of the statutory requirements on companies and to promote the information services we offer. Where we hold such road shows or exhibitions in Wales we will continue to ensure that:

- A Welsh speaking member of staff is available at such events to deal with Welsh speaking customers;
- Any public signs produced by Companies House for the event will be bilingual, where appropriate and not disproportionate.

9.8 Items such as our Companies House Annual Report, Business or Strategic Plan will not be made available bilingually as the likely demand for such a version is low and the cost of producing one would be disproportionate and unreasonable.

10. DELIVERY OF STATUTORY INFORMATION TO THE REGISTRAR

10.1 In accordance with section 1104 of the Companies Act 2006, Welsh companies may incorporate through the medium of Welsh and Companies House has prescribed a bilingual form for this purpose. In addition, non-traded Welsh companies may choose to deliver the following documents in Welsh only. The Registrar will continue to commission a translation into English for placing on the public record alongside the original:

- Memorandum and Articles of Association;
- Annual accounts;
- Special resolutions;
- Notification of resignation of auditors.

10.2 In the case of the incorporation of a Welsh company filing through the medium of Welsh, a translated Welsh language certificate of incorporation will be issued automatically along with an English certificate. The public record for the company will also show both the Welsh language certificate and an English version. Where information is delivered in English it will appear in that language on the register.

10.3 In addition, a number of key forms required under the Companies Acts to notify the Registrar of certain events, or which form part of the annual reporting cycle, are available in bilingual format and Welsh companies may deliver them in Welsh. These currently include:

- Notifications of appointment, resignation or changes in particulars of directors and secretaries;
- Notification of a change in the company's registered office address;
- Notification of the allotment of shares;
- The annual return - a snapshot of the company's capital and management structure on a specific date each year.

These forms represent some 60% of the total volume of documents delivered annually to Companies House. When forms are reviewed we will always consider whether they should be prescribed in bilingual format. This will depend on whether a Welsh company is likely to need to file the form.

11. ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES

11.1 All companies must deliver certain statutory information to the Registrar each year. The key documents are the company's annual return and the annual accounts which Welsh companies can deliver in Welsh. There are provisions in the Companies Act for the officers of companies who fail to comply with their statutory obligations to be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court. In the case of the officers of a Welsh company, who wish any such prosecution proceedings to be conducted in Welsh, Companies House will continue to ensure that:

- Standard reminder, default notification and prosecution warning letters have been sent bilingually to the officers of the company concerned;
- The summons to appear in court will be issued bilingually;

12. CORPORATE IDENTITY

12.1 Companies House will continue to provide Welsh letterheads, fax headers, compliments slips. These will include Welsh versions of the organisation's name, corporate slogan, address and other standard information.

13. SIGNS AND OTHER ONSITE INFORMATION

13.1 Companies House will continue to ensure:

- The provision of bilingual signs and notices within the grounds of the office, car park and in the public areas of the office itself in Wales;
- That all such bilingual signs and notices will be equal in terms of size, quality, legibility and prominence to English and Welsh;
- Where separate English and Welsh signs are provided they will be equal in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence.

14. PRESS NOTICES

14.1 Where press notices are to be placed in newspapers based in Wales, Companies House will continue to publish such notices in bilingual form.

15. ADVERTISING AND PUBLICITY, OFFICIAL NOTICES

15.1 Where Companies House places any advertisements, publicity or official notices in newspapers based in Wales, it will continue to publish such notices in bilingual form.

16. IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE SCHEME

16.1 Companies House will continue to ensure that operational areas have access to Welsh speaking members of staff to enable us to deliver a full service through the medium of Welsh.

16.2 Companies House will continue to identify and specify posts where the ability to speak Welsh is desirable or essential when recruiting for that post. Depending on the level of proficiency required for the post, suitable training measures will be implemented and job descriptions drawn up accordingly.

16.3 Management, training and personnel services will continue to ensure that the programme will be implemented and monitored. Where the numbers of Welsh speaking members of staff fall below that required to meet the obligations in this Scheme, Companies House will seek to increase those numbers either by:

- Considering the recruitment of additional Welsh speaking staff;
- Encouraging existing members of staff either to learn Welsh, or improve their skills to be able to provide a level of service commensurate with the requirements of this Scheme;
- Monitoring Welsh class attendance figures to ensure the commitment of attendees.

16.4 Companies House will continue to include as part of the job description of a Welsh speaking member of staff general responsibility for dealing with day to day matters and general policy affecting Welsh speaking customers. In dealing with such matters, the person responsible will be supported by the existing network of Welsh speaking members of staff.

17. LEARNING WELSH

17.1 Companies House will continue to support staff who want to learn Welsh and will address the language needs of the business by providing regular training. Companies House has a Welsh

Language Training Plan in place which sets out the various classes available to staff who wish to study for a recognised qualification:

17.2 We will continue to encourage all non-Welsh speaking members of staff who express a desire to learn Welsh. We will draw the facilities available to their attention in the same way as other learning opportunities offered by Companies House. We will make appropriate arrangements to enable them to follow appropriate training/educational courses to lead to a recognised Welsh qualification. In assessing the training needs of such staff we will give consideration to:

- The level of fluency and linguistic ability required for the post;
- Which courses are the best suited to fulfil the specific training needs;
- How to use the acquired skills to the best effect.

17.3 Assistance by Companies House will include the provision of:

- Beginner, Foundation and Advanced Welsh classes will be held at Companies House on a weekly basis and 1 hour facility time will be granted;
- Proficiency Class held on a monthly basis for fluent Welsh language learners;
- Funding for Further Education courses by payment of tuition fees, cost of textbooks and other associated costs.

17.4 We will continue to offer existing Welsh speaking members of staff suitable training courses designed to enhance their knowledge of the language and ability to use it for the benefit of the organisation. Such training is aimed at ensuring that Welsh speaking members of staff will be able to:

- Converse fluently with visitors, telephone callers and at meetings;
- Understand and translate Welsh correspondence and documents, thus enabling action to be taken promptly (unless the document is of such a nature that we decide that we need a professional translation);
- Edit and check as appropriate outgoing documents and correspondence to ensure that translators have conveyed the correct message.

17.5 We will continue to make available guidelines to managers specifying the circumstances under which staff may be allowed time during working hours to attend appropriate Welsh Language training courses. The Welsh Policy Manager responsible for the overall running of the day to day Welsh Service and HR division will consider applications for such training and provide policy advice both to managers and those responsible for arranging the training.

18. RECRUITMENT

18.1 Companies House will continue to:

- Issue bilingual recruitment advertisements when advertising for vacancies in Wales and also place advertisements on our Welsh website;
- Welcome applications from Welsh speakers to join the Companies House workforce;
- Demonstrate our commitment where linguistic ability is considered to be essential or desirable for a post. This requirement will be specified when recruiting for the post;
- Ensure that when a non-Welsh speaker is appointed to a post where the ability to speak Welsh is considered essential, we will offer Welsh language training and fully support the post holder;

- Monitor the recruitment and allocation of Welsh speaking staff taking appropriate action through our recruitment process to maintain the delivery of our Welsh Language service.

19. ARRANGEMENTS WITH THIRD PARTIES

19.1 Where any services provided by Companies House are contracted out, we will ensure that any agreements or arrangements are consistent with the terms of the Scheme. We will make contractors responsible for particular services aware of the terms of the Scheme and the requirements it places on them in respect of the provision of Welsh language services. For the purposes of implementing the Scheme in respect of contractors Companies House will continue to either:

- Ensure that the contractors themselves adhere to the requirements of the Scheme, and introduce appropriate monitoring systems;
- Provide back up services itself to ensure that contractors comply with the Scheme; or
- Assume responsibility for providing a Welsh language service where for any reason it is not appropriate or practicable for the contractor to provide such a service.

19.2 In addition Companies House will continue to:

- Provide written procedures for staff dealing with agents and contractors;
- Specify in tendering documents the requirements as to the use of the Welsh Language in the provision of services;
- Monitor the performance of agents and contractors and call for regular performance reports from them.

20. MONITORING THE SCHEME

20.1 Companies House will have systems in place to monitor the implementation of the Scheme and our performance. It will achieve this commitment by ensuring that:

- It monitors the operation of the Scheme and progress against any of its undertakings;
- Any new policies, systems, procedures and publications are compatible with the terms of the Scheme;
- Response times for dealing with Welsh correspondence are monitored against normal customer targets;
- Welsh speaking members of staff are available for meetings and dealing with visitors;
- The implementation of the staffing and training measures set out in the Scheme are monitored on a structured and continuing basis;
- Periodic surveys are carried out among Welsh speaking customers about the range and quality of services provided by Companies House;
- Agents and contractors providing services on behalf of Companies House are aware of the Scheme and its requirements and that appropriate steps are taken to comply with the Scheme;
- The incidence and nature of complaints against the Welsh language service provided are monitored.

20.2 Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the Scheme will continue to rest with the Chief Executive and Registrar of Companies.

20.3 Companies House will continue to adopt an effective complaints procedure to deal with any grievances against the operation of the Scheme. The initial point of contact will be the officer responsible for the daily operation of the Scheme, with a right of appeal to the Chief Executive and

the Welsh Language Commissioner if Companies House cannot satisfy the complaint. Ultimately, the complaint may be referred to Companies House Independent Complaints Adjudicator or a constituent's Member of Parliament if all other avenues have been exhausted without resolution of the complaint. A copy of Companies House standard complaints procedure, which this procedure will follow, is available on request.

20.4 We will provide an Annual Monitoring Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner in June, describing progress against targets, implementation of the Scheme and recording the nature and number of any complaints received about the operation of the Scheme and will also include progress against the scheme's action plan. The updates will be made in a format agreed between the Welsh Language Commissioner and Companies House.

20.5 We have prepared and will regularly update an action plan that sets out how we will operate in accordance with this scheme.

21. TARGETS

21.1 Companies House will continue to monitor the implementation of the Scheme in respect of the following targets:

- The issuing of a reply to Welsh correspondence within the same target time as for all other customers;
- The simultaneous issue of bilingual and separate Welsh/English publications;
- The availability of Welsh speaking members of staff to attend meetings with customers who wish to conduct their business in Welsh.

22. FACILITATION OF THE SCHEME

22.1 In order to ensure the effectiveness, smooth running and proper implementation of the Scheme, Companies House will continue to ensure that:

- The Chief Executive of Companies House and all other parties responsible for implementing the requirements of the Scheme approve the commitments and arrangements set out in the Scheme ;
- Responsibility for facilitating the Scheme will be the responsibility of a Welsh Policy manager, with individual section managers being given responsibility for implementing those parts of the Scheme which apply to them directly;
- We make staff in Companies House aware of the requirements of the Scheme and how it affects the organisation, and provide them with appropriate briefing and guidance notes;
- Access to the scheme on the intranet is available to staff;
- Any new computer or other systems implemented by the organisation will take into account the needs for an effective Welsh language service;
- We retain translation services of a high calibre in order to provide a competent and prompt service.

23. TIMETABLE

23.1 Unless otherwise stated the provisions in this Scheme are already operational or will become so from the date the Welsh Language Commissioner approves the Scheme.

24. PUBLICITY FOR THE SCHEME AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE SERVICE

24.1 The availability of the Scheme will be publicised on our website, in notes for guidance and in appropriate Press Notices when the Scheme is approved and adopted.

24.2 Copies will also be freely available by post to anyone requesting them and from our Information Centre at Companies House in Cardiff. Written requests for copies of, or any questions about the Scheme should be addressed to:

Sarah Williams
Welsh Service Advisor
Customer Services
Companies House
Crown Way
Cardiff
CF14 3UZ

Email: swilliams3@companieshouse.gov.uk

Complaints and suggestions for improvement

Complaints related to this scheme, or suggestions for improvement, should be directed to the senior member of staff with responsibility for the scheme, at the following address:

Welsh Policy Manager
Companies House
Crown Way
Cardiff CF14 3UZ

Email: enquiries@companieshouse.gov.uk.
Telephone 0303 1234 500

Companies House Welsh Language Scheme - Action Plan

Action required	Target date	Action Owner	Progress to date / notes
1. Legislation and Initiatives			
Review Action Plan on a Quarterly Basis	Quarterly	Strategy and Policy	
Review Strategic plan quarterly to link to the Welsh Language Action Plan	Quarterly	Strategy and Policy	
Consider how new policies, projects and developments will conform with the commitments set out in the Welsh Language Scheme	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	
Enable “Welsh Experience” incorporation for Welsh companies	October 2012		
Enable full online incorporation for Welsh companies at CH	March 2013	Business Solutions Delivery	
Improve the WebFiling Change of Name service to produce a translation of the certificate (currently under review)	March 2013	Customer Delivery Directorate	
2. Staffing			
Maintain ongoing Welsh Language training, targeted at language speaking skills	Ongoing	Human Resources	
Ensure Welsh speaking staff are present in all major operational areas to provide cover for Welsh speaking customers	Ongoing	Directors	
Internally promote CH’s requirements under the Welsh Language Scheme, ensuring all staff understand their responsibilities and where to seek assistance.	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	
Maintain virtual Welsh team in CH to provide cover for Welsh speaking customers and hold regular meetings to discuss issues and progress.	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	
Publicity campaigns, exhibitions, advertising and press releases			
Ensure Welsh speakers attend all events at which there is a CH presence in Wales	Ongoing	Customer Services	
Ensure Welsh literature is available at events held in Wales	Ongoing	Customer Services	
Ensure adverts and press releases are available in Welsh, when published in Wales	Ongoing	Customer Insight	
4. Publications and forms			

Ensure all CH Welsh publications are updated in parallel with English versions	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	
Ensure all available Welsh statutory forms are updated in parallel with English versions	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	
Monitor usage of letters to ensure Welsh versions are used where appropriate.	Ongoing	Business Change Development	
5. Websites			
Ensure the Welsh website is updated in parallel with the English version, when relevant, and that the information on the Welsh website is up to date.	Ongoing	Customer Insight	
6. Face-to-face meetings			
Ensure that customers can request a Welsh speaker should they wish to conduct their business in Welsh	Ongoing	Customer Services	
7. Telephone Communications			
Ensure that customers who want to conduct their business in Welsh can ask (in English) to speak to a Welsh speaker	Ongoing	Customer Services	
8. Signs			
Ensure that all public signage for the Cardiff office is displayed bilingually	On going	Building Services	
9. Complaints			
To ensure complaints about CH's Welsh Language service are fully investigated and dealt with promptly, in line with the Companies House normal complaints procedure.	Ongoing	Customer Services	
Monitor complaints regarding bilingual service	Ongoing	Customer Services	