



Companies House

Companies House Annual Welsh Monitoring Report 2013-14



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at: Companies House, Crown Way, Cardiff, CF14 3UZ or email: enquiries@companieshouse.gov.uk

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Companies House is an Executive Agency of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Introduction

The CH Welsh Language Scheme was 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.

This annual report covers the period from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

Responsibility for the operation of the Welsh Language Scheme in CH lies with Alexandra Walters, Principal Policy Adviser. She has the support of the team of Welsh speakers on day to day matters and a committee that meets regularly to monitor progress and performance.

Interpretation

“CH” means Companies House

“2006 Act” means the Companies Act 2006

“the Registrar” means the Registrar of Companies

“LLP” means Limited Liability Partnership

“Wales company/LLP” means a company or LLP, as defined by section 88 of the Companies Act 2006 (as applied to LLPs), which has notified the Registrar that its registered office is to be situated in Wales. On incorporation, a company must indicate if its registered office is to be situated in Wales, England and Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. The company’s registered office address must be in the country where they have stated that their registered office is to be situated.

A Wales company has the option of having a Welsh company name and Welsh name ending (i.e. cyfyngedig, cwmni cyfyngedig cyhoeddus) and can file statutory documents in Welsh. An England and Wales company can have a registered office address in Wales or England but cannot have a Welsh company name or Welsh name ending and cannot file statutory documents in Welsh.

Compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme

Companies House remains committed to complying with its Welsh Language Scheme and from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, achieved the following:

- A Welsh committee met quarterly (June, September and December 2013, and March 2014) to drive adherence to the CH Welsh Language Scheme and review progress against the Action Plan, which is attached to this report.
- A team of Welsh speakers from various areas within CH continued to respond to customer enquiries with each member aware of the others’ areas of expertise. Fourteen Welsh speaking customers contacted us with queries, including how to inform members of an AGM, whether CH has to be notified when directors resign, whether particular documents have been received and advice on filing certain documents.
- We continued to correspond with customers bilingually, where appropriate, and to make the most commonly filed forms available bilingually, both in paper form and electronically.
- All guidance was available bilingually, except that which is specifically not applicable to Welsh Companies (e.g. guidance on matters that affect only Scottish companies).
- We attended six external events in Wales during the reporting period, at which we provided Welsh speakers and Welsh material. We attended three business shows, a business fair, an accountancy seminar and a ‘First Time Director’ seminar organised by CH.
- Customers are welcome to correspond with CH in Welsh and will receive a response in Welsh. Additionally, companies can opt into our bilingual service where all automatic correspondence is sent bilingually. In this reporting period, 19 companies opted to receive automatic bilingual correspondence, such as reminder notices. This facility is advertised on our website. At the end of the reporting period, approximately 637 companies and 29 LLPs, out

of a total register of 3.25 million, have indicated that they would like to receive automatic bilingual correspondence.

- 156 sets of Welsh language accounts were received from Wales companies, which is 9 less than last year. Each of these accounts were translated into English for the public record. CH is under a duty to translate certain filings from Welsh into English. Additionally, we requested translation of approximately 130 other pieces to satisfy the requirements of our Welsh Language Scheme. This included letters, guidance and project work, for our website and online services.
- We received one Freedom of Information request in the Welsh language and provided a bilingual response within the statutory deadline.
- Welsh speaking customers were kept up to date with filing deadlines, events and other notices through our website, bilingual correspondence and our Welsh twitter account @TyrCwmniau.
- We advertised 7 job vacancies bilingually on our Welsh website and through our Welsh Twitter account.
- All contracts issued included a clause ensuring our service partners comply with CH Welsh Language commitments.
- We made staff aware of any Welsh language events in the local area for those who may have an interest in attending.

Mainstreaming the Welsh Language

CH considered the Welsh language in the following ways:

- We have continued to consider our Welsh services at the earliest stage of all projects through the inclusion of Welsh in all project managers' checklists and other development plans.
- We introduced a Welsh Web Incorporation service

in April 2013 to allow Wales companies to register in Welsh with a bilingual incorporation document and certificate appearing on the companies register. This service has been used steadily and in the reporting period 278 Wales companies used the service.

- We provided a service to allow customers to register a mortgage or charge online for the first time in April 2013 and in line with our Welsh Language policy, screens were available in Welsh as well as English.
- In May 2013, we produced an online bilingual customer satisfaction survey to allow customers to feedback any issues they have in Welsh as well as in English.
- As we continue to develop our digital services, as part of the Government's digital by default agenda, we have begun development of a single online service to replace our current services. Over the next few years our core systems will be replaced. This will allow company information to be viewed and updated through a new single web service. Welsh Language users have been at the heart of these developments.

As this development has been progressing, we have made a commitment to make this single online service available in the Welsh language, which means searchers of the companies register will be able to do so through the Welsh Language for the first time. Furthermore, customers filing for Wales companies will be able to register more statutory filings in the Welsh language.

- The CH website will cease to exist as we move onto GOV.UK – a single website for dealing with Government. This move is currently scheduled for late 2014. We have been in continuous discussion with the Government Digital Service (GDS) to try to ensure that as much of the content of our Welsh website – www.tyrcwmniau.gov.uk – as possible will be taken across.

Performance indicators

- In the reporting period, there were 5,121 Wales companies and 53 Wales LLPs incorporated. 533,011 companies and 9,121 LLPs in total were incorporated during this period.
- By the end of the reporting period, there were 13,743 Wales companies and 144 Wales LLPs on the register, compared to a total of 3,250,325 companies and 59,998 LLPs.
- In the reporting period, there were 139 Wales companies and 13 Wales LLPs incorporated with a Welsh name ending i.e. (cyfyngedig). By the end of the reporting period, there were 830 Wales companies and 26 Wales LLPs incorporated with a Welsh name ending on the register.
- The total number of 'hits' on our Welsh website was 576,015 which was approximately 39,000 down on the previous reporting year.

Frontline Services

Percentage and number of bilingual staff:

CH Contact Centre

There were three bilingual staff in the Contact Centre. This equates to 4.7% FTE of Contact Centre Staff. There is a contractual requirement that our supplier provides 2 Welsh speakers.

If a customer specifically asks to speak to a Welsh speaker and one is not available, we offer the customer the choice of completing the call in English or request the customer's telephone number so that a Welsh speaker can contact them directly. This did not happen because our dedicated Welsh team was always available.

Public reception

There were no bilingual staff at the CH reception. The staff are able to give greetings in Welsh and there is a prominent

sign advising visitors that a Welsh service is available on request. Reception staff have a list of Welsh speaking staff they can contact if a request is made. However, no visitors requested to discuss their business in Welsh.

Telephone helpline

We continued to provide one dedicated external telephone number for Welsh speaking customers. The team of Welsh speakers was also available to deal with any Welsh enquiries.

Language Training and Awareness

Number of staff who received Welsh Language training to a certified level of qualification:

CH offered five Welsh courses, run by the University of Glamorgan: Entry 1, Foundation 1, Intermediate 2, Advanced and Proficiency.

- The Entry 1 class, which started in September 2013, had seven members of staff, and the Foundation 1 class had eight members of staff. Both classes met weekly during term time and followed the WJEC course book Cwrs Mynediad. Seven of the Foundation 1 class passed the Mynediad examination in June 2013.
- The Intermediate 2 and Advanced classes met weekly during term time and followed the WJEC course books Cwrs Sylfaen and Cwrs Canolradd. The Intermediate 2 class had five members of staff and the Advanced class had seven.
- The Proficiency class met monthly during term time to discuss work related scenarios, both written and spoken. There were six members of staff in this class.

In May 2013, we launched a Mentoring Scheme in conjunction with the University of Glamorgan where fluent Welsh speakers began to mentor those who are learning Welsh in CH. Eight people volunteered for the scheme and met informally on an ad hoc basis to discuss homework, Welsh related issues and to practice speaking in Welsh

with colleagues.

Number of staff who have received Welsh language awareness training:

- We include Welsh Language awareness training in CH induction days and one induction day was held in the reporting period (the low number of induction days is due to the low level of recruitment during the reporting period) for one new member of staff.
- We reminded all staff regularly of our Welsh Language commitments via notices on the CH Intranet site.

Information Technology

Number of IT systems assessed using the Board's bilingual software accreditation scheme:

- None, but our core software systems are by and large proprietary so that inclusion of Welsh is something we choose to build in

Number of improvement plans prepared following assessments using the Board's bilingual software accreditation scheme:

- Not applicable

Administering the Scheme

Number of complaints received about the lack of Welsh language service provision and steps taken to resolve complaints:

During the period of this report, CH received 10 complaints relating to its Welsh Language Service.

- One complaint came from a customer who had been advised that they needed to change their company from an England and Wales company to a Wales company in order to file statutory documents in Welsh. This customer felt that as the registered office

of his company was in Wales, there should not be a restriction on him submitting documents in the Welsh language. However, the 2006 Act provides that only those companies that have notified the Registrar that their registered office is to be situated in Wales, as opposed to England and Wales, can file documents in the Welsh language. The company in question however had notified the Registrar that their registered office was to be in England and Wales not Wales. This was explained to the customer and no further communication was received.

- Another complaint concerned an English email acknowledgment that a customer received from our Contact Centre. This acknowledgment is sent automatically as soon as an email arrives. The system cannot differentiate between languages, so regardless of the language of the email, an English automatic response is sent. Once the email has been opened, a holding reply is sent in the language of the email. A letter of apology was sent to the customer with an explanation as to why the first email was sent in English. The customer was told that he could send future queries directly to the Welsh Co-ordinator. No further communication has been received from the customer.
- One customer complained that the Joint Filing Accounts facility on our WebFiling pages is not available in Welsh. Certain companies are allowed to file accounts with CH and HMRC online at the same time. At the moment, this is only available in English. However, we are continuing to consider the scope of any future changes to our systems. A letter of apology was sent to the customer.
- Another complaint received criticised the standard of Welsh on some WebFiling pages. This was similar to a previous complaint we had received in the last reporting period referring to WebFiling pages in general rather than specific pages. On this occasion, the customer provided screen shots of an individual page, which did show an incorrect order of Welsh words.

A letter of apology was sent to the customer and our IT department was asked to correct the coding so that the Welsh wording would be correct in future. No further complaints have been received.

- A complaint was received from a company director who had received an English letter instead of a bilingual letter. When a company is in default for not complying with their filing requirements, we send automatic letters to the registered office address and also to the directors' addresses. If a company has asked for bilingual correspondence, the letter to the registered office address is sent bilingually but any letters to the directors' addresses are in English as our system notes bilingual preference against the company and not the individual. A letter of apology was sent to the director, with a Welsh translation of the letter in question. We have since enabled automatic bilingual letters to also be sent to directors' addresses.
- CH send reminder letters to the registered office address of companies when their Annual Accounts are due to be filed. Unless a company has specifically requested bilingual correspondence, these letters are sent automatically in English. A complaint was received by an officer of a company regarding an English only letter. We apologised and made a note on our system to ensure that all future automatically generated letters to this company would be bilingual.
- A customer using our WebFiling service was unable to use 'Cymru' in his address as the system automatically defaulted to 'Wales'. We use the Royal Mail 'look up address' system which is available in English only. A letter of apology was sent to the customer with instructions to manually insert 'Cymru' in future filings which will be accepted.
- A member of public brought to our attention that a notice in the toilet in the reception area was in English only. Our Welsh Language Scheme states that all notices in public facing areas will be bilingual. A reminder was sent to the Estates Management team along with a Welsh translation of the English notice.

This has now been rectified.

- A proposed company name was rejected because it contained a circumflex which is a prohibited character in the Companies Names Regulations, which all company names have to comply with. The customer escalated the complaint to the Welsh Language Commissioner. CH explained to the customer that it is unable to accept a circumflex in a company name but advised the customer that if application was re-submitted, it would be accepted although the name would appear on the Register without the circumflex. The company has now been incorporated.
- A letter offering a company the option to opt in to receiving bilingual correspondence was sent to a Welsh company. The letter was returned with instructions that Welsh correspondence was required and not bilingual correspondence. The customer also complained that by asking Welsh companies to "opt in" to Welsh we were not treating the Welsh Language on an equal basis to English. CH takes its Welsh Language Policy very seriously and where it is practical and not disproportionate, we treat both languages equally. A reply was sent to the customer explaining that whilst any letter received in Welsh will receive a Welsh only reply, all automatically generated letters are bilingual because companies may have a mixture of Welsh and English speakers.

Conclusion

The Principal Policy Adviser, Welsh Speakers Team and Welsh Committee will continue to ensure that all colleagues remain aware of their responsibilities under the Welsh Language Scheme. We remain committed to an incremental programme of continued improvements for our Welsh speaking customers.

Companies House - Action Plan

1. Legislation and Initiatives

Action required	Target date	Action Owner	Progress to date / notes
Review Action Plan on a Quarterly Basis	Quarterly	Strategy and Policy	The Action Plan was reviewed as part of the Welsh Committee which met in June, September and December 2013 and March 2014
Review Strategic plan quarterly to link to the Welsh Language Action Plan	Quarterly	Strategy and Policy	During the reporting period a new 5 year strategic plan was developed which took Welsh fully into consideration
Consider how new policies, projects and developments will conform with the commitments set out in the Welsh Language Scheme	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	We have continued to consider our Welsh Language Scheme in new policies, projects and developments, as indicated in the report
Enable "Welsh Experience" incorporation for Welsh companies	October 2012	Business Solutions Delivery	Completed in October 2012
Enable full online incorporation for Welsh companies at CH	March 2013	Business Solutions Delivery	Completed on 6 April 2013
Improve the WebFiling Change of Name service to produce a translation of the certificate (currently under review)	March 2013	Customer Delivery Directorate	As we develop a single online service for customers, the project has agreed to develop more Welsh services that are currently available, including the WebFiling change of name service

2. Staffing

Action required	Target date	Action Owner	Progress to date / notes
Maintain ongoing Welsh Language training, targeted at language speaking skills	Ongoing	Human Resources	As per report
Ensure Welsh speaking staff are present in all major operational areas to provide cover for Welsh speaking customers	Ongoing	Directors	As per report
Internally promote CH's requirements under the Welsh Language Scheme, ensuring staff understand their responsibilities and where to seek assistance	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	We regularly made staff aware of our commitment to our Welsh Language Scheme on our internal intranet site and will continue to do so
Maintain Welsh team in CH to provide cover for Welsh speaking customers and hold regular meetings to discuss issues and progress	Ongoing	Customer Delivery	The Welsh team continued to provide cover and met on a monthly basis

3. Publicity campaigns, exhibitions, advertising and press releases

Action required	Target date	Action Owner	Progress to date / notes
Ensure Welsh speakers attend all events at which there is a CH presence in Wales	Ongoing	Events team	As per report
Ensure Welsh literature is available at events held in Wales	Ongoing	Events team	As per report
Ensure adverts and press releases are available in Welsh, when published in Wales	Ongoing	Human Resources/ICT	All recruitment notices have been made available in Welsh on our website during this period. We have not made any press releases

4. Publications and forms

Action required	Target date	Action Owner	Progress to date / notes
Ensure CH Welsh publications are updated in parallel with English versions	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	CH continues to ensure that Welsh publications are updated at the same time as English publications
Ensure Welsh statutory forms are updated in parallel with English versions	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	As per report
Monitor usage of letters to ensure Welsh versions are used where appropriate	Ongoing	Business Change Development	As per report

5. Websites

Action required	Target date	Action Owner	Progress to date / notes
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	Over 124 website changes were submitted to update the Welsh website

6. Face-to-face meetings

Action required	Target date	Action Owner	Progress to date / notes
Ensure that customers can request a Welsh speaker should they wish to conduct their business in Welsh	Ongoing	Customer Services	As per report

7. Telephone Communications

Action required	Target date	Action Owner	Progress to date / notes
Ensure that customers who want to conduct their business in Welsh can ask (in English) to speak to a Welsh speaker	Ongoing	Customer Services	As per report

8. Signs

Action required	Target date	Action Owner	Progress to date / notes
Ensure that all public signage for the Cardiff office is displayed bilingually	Ongoing	Building Services	Completed. We will continue to monitor this.

9. Complaints

Action required	Target date	Action Owner	Progress to date / notes
To ensure complaints about CH's Welsh Language service are fully investigated and dealt with promptly, in line with the CH normal complaints procedure	Ongoing	Customer Services	As per report
Monitor complaints regarding bilingual service	Ongoing	Customer Services	As per report

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Contact Centre: **0303 1234 500**

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Mini-com: 029 2038 1245

enquiries@companieshouse.gov.uk

www.companieshouse.gov.uk

Cardiff: Companies House
Crown Way, Cardiff, CF14 3UZ.

Edinburgh: Companies House
Fourth Floor, Edinburgh Quay 2,
139 Fountainbridge, Edinburgh, EH3 9FF.

London: Companies House
4 Abbey Orchard Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 2HT.

Belfast: Companies House
Second Floor, The Linenhall,
32-38 Linenhall Street, Belfast, BT2 8BG.