




Companies House

Companies House **Annual Welsh Monitoring Report**

A decorative graphic consisting of two horizontal lines, one red and one green, that are slightly wavy and overlap each other. The red line is on top and the green line is on the bottom.

01 APRIL 2014 – 31 MARCH 2015



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

1. Introduction

The Companies House 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 report covers the period from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

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.

2. 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.

3. Compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme

CH remains committed to complying with its Welsh Language Scheme and from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, achieved the following:

3.1 A Welsh committee met quarterly (June, September and December 2014, and March 2015) to ensure adherence to the CH Welsh Language Scheme and review progress against the Action Plan, which is attached to this report. A monthly Welsh service meeting was also held to consider the service offered to Welsh speaking customers.

3.2 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. Our Contact Centre receives approximately 4,000 calls a day and approximately 2 or 3 Welsh calls a month. In this reporting period, 36 Welsh speaking customers contacted us with queries, including:

- 18 general enquiries, such as how to change director details, how to incorporate a Community Interest Company or how to dissolve a company;
- 2 letters regarding late filing penalties;
- 9 general enquiries about our Welsh Language Scheme and Welsh service, such as:
 - asking whether Welsh accounts could be submitted
 - enquiring about how to submit Welsh accounts
 - help needed with online filing in Welsh
 - enquiries about our Welsh helpline
 - changing registered office address to England and Wales
 - whether it is possible to file dormant accounts in Welsh
- One FOI request (see paragraph 3.8)
- 6 GOV.UK queries (see paragraph 5.4)

3.3 We continued to make the most commonly filed forms available bilingually, both in paper form and electronically.

3.4 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).

3.5 We attended 7 external events in Wales during the reporting period, at which we provided Welsh speakers and Welsh material. We attended two Accountancy Seminars, two Sterling Integrity events, a Business Wales event and an Information Day organised by Companies House. We also attended ‘Cymraeg yn y Gweithle’ event in Miskin Manor organised by the University of South Wales.

3.6 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. This facility is advertised on GOV.UK. At the end of the reporting period, approximately 1270 companies and 44 Limited Liability Partnerships (LLP), out of a total register of 3.46 million, have indicated that they would like to receive automatic bilingual correspondence.

3.7 198 sets of Welsh language accounts were received from Wales companies, which is 42 more 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 translated into Welsh approximately 77 other pieces to satisfy the requirements of our Welsh Language Scheme. This included letters, guidance and project work, for the website and online services.

3.8 We received one Freedom of Information request in the Welsh language and provided a Welsh response within the statutory deadline.

3.9 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.

3.10 All contracts issued included a clause ensuring our service partners comply with CH Welsh Language commitments.

3.11 We made staff aware of any Welsh language events in the local area for those who may have an interest in attending.

3.12 We held an internal Open Day and Learning at Work day where staff were reminded of our Welsh Language obligations and the services we offer. Staff were also encouraged to sign up to Welsh classes. Further information on our Welsh classes can be found in paragraph 5.2.

3.13 We attended the Interdepartmental Committee on Linguistic Services at the Welsh Assembly Government to discuss and share translation team updates across Government departments. We also discussed WordFast translation memory software. As a result of this meeting it was decided to trial the software and full licenses have recently been purchased.

3.14 In November 2014 and March 2015 we attended a committee of central government departments based in Wales. The purpose of this committee is to support the development of quality Welsh language customer services across central government departments. Representatives from the Government Digital Service and Wales Office attended the meeting in March to discuss the Welsh service on GOV.UK.

3.15 We introduced Welsh “contact” signs above desks of Welsh speakers and encouraged Welsh speakers to wear Welsh resources such as lanyards and ‘Cymraeg’ badges that were obtained from the Welsh Commissioner’s Office.

4. Mainstreaming the Welsh Language

CH considered the Welsh language in the following ways:

4.1 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.

4.2 CH has continued to develop our digital services, as part of the Government’s digital by default agenda. Over the next few years our core customer facing systems will be replaced. Welsh Language will be at the heart of these developments. 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.

4.3 Throughout the period, CH, in conjunction with our parent department, the Department of Business Innovation and Skills, has been preparing for the implementation of the Small Business Enterprise and Employment Bill. This received Royal Assent on 26 March 2015. We have been developing our services to account for the changes to our filing services and these will also be available in Welsh. The sections of the Act affecting company law will be implemented in two tranches – 1 October 2015 and 6 April 2016.

4.4 CH transitioned over to the single Government website, GOV.UK, in December 2014. We have been in constant discussion with the Government Digital Service (GDS) and have been able to place much of the content from our previous Welsh website onto GOV.UK. All bilingual forms and guidance are available via a ‘Cymraeg’ toggle at the top of the English page. These Welsh pages mirror the English pages. Also our Welsh Service page, informing customers that they can have bilingual correspondence, has been made available in Welsh.

5. Performance indicators

In the reporting period, there were 5,302 Wales companies and 35 Wales LLPs incorporated. 585,741 companies and 7,365 LLPs in total were incorporated during this period.

By the end of the reporting period, there were 16,255 Wales companies and 149 Wales LLPs on the register, compared to a total of 3,464,155 companies and 60,181 LLPs.

By the end of the reporting period, there were 1261 Wales companies and 25 Wales LLPs incorporated with a Welsh name ending on the register.

The total number of 'hits' on our Welsh website, between April 2014 and December 2014, when the Companies House website transitioned to GOV.UK, was 192,023.

5.1 Frontline Services

Percentage and number of bilingual staff:

CH Contact Centre

There are three bilingual staff in the Contact Centre.

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 contact telephone number so that a Welsh speaker can contact them directly. On two occasions, customers asked to speak to someone in Welsh. The correct procedure was followed on both occasions and the customers' calls were returned in Welsh to the satisfaction of both customers.

Public reception

There are 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.

5.2 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 South Wales: Entry Level 1, Foundation Level 2, Advanced Level 1, Advanced Level 4 and Proficiency. An Entry Level 2 Class ran for the Autumn Term but due to low attendance, this class was subsequently cancelled and attendees were given the option of joining one of the other classes.

- The Entry Level 1 class, which started in September 2014, consisted of 6 learners, and the Foundation Level 2 Class had seven members of staff. Both classes met weekly during term time and followed the WJEC course book *Cwrs Mynediad* and *Cwrs Sylfaen*. No examinations were sat in June 2014.
- The Advanced Level 1 class met weekly during term time and followed the Cardiff University course book *Pontio/uwch – Llyfr Uwch 1*. The Class had three members of staff.
- The Advanced Level 4 class was held weekly. From September 2014, a joint class was held with the Proficiency Group each month. No course book was followed by these groups as the tutors prepared sessions based on the needs of the learners and included work related scenarios, both written and spoken. There were seven members of staff in the Advanced Level 4 Group and six members of staff in the Proficiency Class.

Number of staff who have received Welsh language awareness training:

- We reminded all staff regularly of our Welsh Language commitments via notices on the CH Intranet site

5.3 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

5.4 Administering the Scheme

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

During the period of this report, CH received 2 complaints relating to its Welsh Language Service.

- i) The first complaint concerned a mistake in the order of Welsh words in an automatic email. This was corrected and an explanation provided to the customer.
- ii) The second complaint concerned a proposed company name which was rejected because it contained a circumflex which was 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 the 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. CH knew this was a problem for registering company names and so worked with the Department of Business Innovation and Skills to amend the Companies Names Regulations. These were amended on 31st January 2015 and now provided far more flexibility for Welsh companies to use circumflexes in registering their company name.

We received 6 additional complaints regarding the lack of Welsh and difficulty of accessing Welsh pages on the new GOV.UK website compared to our old website. These were not complaints against CH's Welsh service but complaints concerning the single Government website. The complaints were therefore passed onto the Government Digital Service and customers were asked to raise their concerns directly with GOV.UK.

6. 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 2014 and March 2015
Review Strategic plan quarterly to link to the Welsh Language Action Plan	Quarterly	Strategy and Policy	During the 2013-14 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	Where job adverts are published in Welsh press they are bilingual, however there is no facility for a bilingual job advert on the Civil Service Job website.

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	Approximately 30 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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For training and quality purposes your call may be monitored

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