



Companies House  
Tŷ'r Cwmnïau

# Annual Monitoring Report

Welsh Language Scheme

1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019

# COMPANIES HOUSE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

1 APRIL 2018 – 31 MARCH 2019

## 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 2018 to 31 March 2019.

Responsibility for the operation of the Welsh Language Scheme in Companies House lies with John-Mark Frost, Director of Operations. He has the support of a committee that meets regularly to monitor progress and performance, and a team of Welsh speakers on day to day matters.

## 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

“LP” means Limited Partnership

“Welsh company/LLP” means a company or LLP, as defined by section 88 of the 2006 Act (as applied to LLPs), which has given notice to 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 Welsh company has the option, under the Companies Act 2006, 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.

## **Achievements**

- 2.1 The current reporting period has seen substantial changes to CH's external environment, leading us to review and change some elements of our direction. It has been an extremely busy and challenging period for the organisation and its staff. Despite these challenges, we remain committed to providing fast and efficient services for our Welsh language customers.
- 2.2 CH carried out an internal review with a mind to ensuring that our Welsh language service keeps pace with improvements in other areas of the organisation. In parallel, we have worked with other government departments and executive agencies to investigate the potential of developing a dedicated Welsh Language Unit. This work will continue into the next reporting period.

### **3. Compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme**

CH remains committed to complying with its Welsh Language Scheme and achieved the following from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019:

- 3.1 CH's Welsh Committee met bi-monthly to ensure adherence to the CH Welsh Language Scheme and review progress against the Action Plan, which is attached to this report. Welsh service meetings were also held to consider the services offered to Welsh speaking customers.
- 3.2 A team of Welsh speakers from various areas within CH continued to respond to customer enquiries. Our Contact Centre received approximately 66,000 calls a month, of which approximately 2 were Welsh calls. They also received approximately 54,000 emails a month out of which approximately 6 were Welsh emails.
- 3.3 In this reporting period, 37 Welsh speaking customers contacted CH directly with queries, including:
  - 29 general enquiries, such as whether documents had been received, advice on filling forms, how to access Welsh pages on GOV.UK, how to change director details and requests for paper forms to be sent out
  - 5 letters appealing against late filing penalties
  - 1 Freedom of Information request
  - 2 pieces of correspondence relating to filing annual accounts
- 3.4 We continued to make the most commonly filed forms, which make up 95% of filings on the register, available bilingually both in paper form and electronically.
- 3.5 We are carrying out a programme of work to ensure that relevant guidance created by CH is available bilingually, except that which is specifically not applicable to Welsh companies (e.g. guidance on matters that affect only Scottish companies).

- 3.6 Customers who correspond with CH in Welsh receive a response in Welsh. Additionally, companies can indicate their preferred language for receiving annual correspondence by contacting CH. This facility is advertised on GOV.UK. 30 additional companies requested that they receive bilingual correspondence in the reporting period. As at 31 March 2019, out of a total register of over 4.2 million companies, 759 companies and 10 LLPs had indicated that they would like to receive annual correspondence bilingually.
- 3.7 112 sets of Welsh language accounts were received from Welsh companies, which is 14 fewer than last year. Each of these accounts were translated into English for the public record with 78 sets translated in-house using specialised translation software to help with providing consistent translation from Welsh. Additionally, we translated 48 pieces of correspondence into Welsh 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 had 1 tweet in Welsh which commented on our Welsh language GOV.UK home page.
- 3.9 All contracts issued included a clause ensuring our service partners comply with CH Welsh language commitments.
- 3.10 CH continued to participate in the UK Government inter-departmental *CALL Committee*. The committee regularly brought together representatives from the Welsh Language Units of various UK Government departments and executive agencies, and provided an ideal forum to share best practice and find solutions to improving our Welsh language services with a mind to achieving a more standardised approach across government.

#### **4. Mainstreaming the Welsh Language**

CH considered the Welsh language in the following ways:

- 4.1 We 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 We have continued to increase Welsh language content on GOV.UK and our digital channels, including mainstream pages maintained by the Government Digital Service (GDS).
- 4.3 We shared more Welsh language tweets from our main corporate account, which has more than 18,000 followers. In advance of the Easter bank holiday we tweeted in Welsh that the office would be closed during this period. The tweet had more than 10,000 impressions which is an exceptionally high number. We also included a link to our Welsh language office access and opening times on GOV.UK.
- 4.4 Around half the news stories we've published on GOV.UK have been translated into Welsh, and this is something we are aiming to increase over the next year.

- 4.5 We have ensured that CH's 10 '*who we are and what we do*' animations all have Welsh language subtitles. The videos with Welsh subtitles have been viewed 278 times in total. We are working to ensure that all of our new campaign animations have Welsh subtitles.
- 4.6 As we further develop the CH service for customers, which is a single service for registering and searching company information, CH will develop more end-to-end Welsh services. The timetable for this is unclear as we are commencing an organisational transformation programme. Welsh language provision will be considered as part of this.

## **5. Performance indicators**

- 5.1 In the reporting period, there were 6,002 Welsh companies and 22 Welsh jurisdiction LLPs incorporated. 672,893 companies and 5,298 LLPs in total were incorporated during this period.
- 5.2 By the end of the reporting period, there were 23,746 Welsh companies and 144 Welsh LLPs on the register, compared with a total of over 4.2 million companies and nearly 53,000 LLPs.
- 5.3 By the end of the reporting period, there were 1,298 Welsh companies and 6 LLPs incorporated with a Welsh name ending on the register. 230 Welsh companies were incorporated with a Welsh name ending in 2018/19.

## **6. Frontline Services**

Percentage and number of bilingual staff:

### **CH Contact Centre**

- 6.1 For the majority of the reporting period there were two full time members of staff in the Contact Centre. There is a contractual requirement to provide a service through the medium of Welsh. Any recruitment specifies Welsh language as desirable. There is an ongoing recruitment exercise.
- 6.2 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, as per our Welsh Language Scheme.
- 6.3 CH also has a designated group who are able to respond to Welsh related queries. This is communicated to all members of staff through our internal communications.

## **Public reception**

- 6.4 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 CH business in Welsh during the reporting period.

## **Telephone helpline**

- 6.5 We continued to provide one dedicated external telephone number for Welsh speaking customers, which received approximately 2 calls a month in the reporting period.

## **7. Language Training and Awareness**

CH has continued to promote Welsh language development opportunities for our staff:

- 7.1 CH offers Welsh language learning opportunities to all staff in line with its Adult Education Scheme. The organisation has fully supported those who have taken advantage of this opportunity by covering the cost of the course and any exams, as well as providing facilitation time to study. Staff are encouraged to sign up for courses via their local Welsh for Adults Centres and Universities. By the end of the reporting period, eight members of staff had enrolled in Welsh language learning programmes ranging from Entry Level to Proficiency Level. 5 had enrolled with Cardiff University, 2 with the University of South Wales and one with *Learn Welsh The Vale*.
- 7.2 Learners and fluent Welsh speakers are encouraged to join the dedicated groups on Yammer – including *Clwb Clonc Cymraeg* – where they can practice their skills, meet other Welsh speakers and access practical, social learning opportunities (e.g. Duolingo, public ‘Sadwrn Siarad’ courses, Clwb Cymraeg etc.). Welsh language volunteering opportunities are also available.
- 7.3 CH will continue to monitor take-up and keep the effectiveness of this approach under review.
- 7.4 We reminded all staff regularly of our Welsh language commitments via notices on the CH Intranet site and on Yammer. We continued to use the Welsh language social page on this site.
- 7.5 We also publicised Welsh language events in the local area, for those staff who may have had an interest in attending, and made overtures to the local Welsh language primary school regarding a potential visit to our office for its pupils.

## **8. Information Technology**

There were no IT systems that were assessed using the Board's bilingual software accreditation scheme; the inclusion of Welsh is something we choose to build in.

## **9. Administering the Scheme**

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

- 9.1 During this reporting period there were 8 instances where customers contacted CH relating to its Welsh Language Service. This is a reduction on the last reporting period which saw 20 complaints. A summary is below:
- 9.2 Two companies filed their accounts in Welsh and English during the peak filing period in December, a time of greatest workload for members of staff. Due to an administrative error it wasn't recognised that the English and Welsh accounts belonged to the same companies and as a result the accounts were processed separately. The English accounts were filed on our systems but the Welsh accounts were rejected as duplicate. The Document Management Service team now ensure that accounts filed in English and Welsh are not separate. CH formally apologised, and the customers were offered a dedicated point of contact for filing future accounts.
- 9.3 As part of an appeal against a Late Filing Penalty we received some general comments from a customer which suggested that our Welsh language service was inferior to the English service. No specifics, however, were included.
- 9.4 We received a tweet which contained a screenshot of CH's GOV.UK Welsh language homepage and a complaint about its content. In response our external communications team set out that CH is constrained by Government Digital Service templates as to what content we are able to include on our homepage. Despite this, we are continuing to add Welsh content to our homepage, as recommended by the Welsh Language Commissioner in response to last year's Monitoring Report.
- 9.5 A Welsh language query was translated using Google Translate and processed in English. The English language translation was subsequently sent to the Web Filing team who dealt with the query and communicated to the customer in English. The error was made by a new member of staff who was unfamiliar with CH Welsh language processes. Contact centre staff were subsequently reminded of our commitments under our Welsh language scheme and that all Welsh language correspondence is to be relayed to a designated member of staff. Google Translate is not to be used under any circumstances.
- 9.6 A customer telephoned the contact centre and asked to speak to a Welsh language customer service advisor, but no Welsh speaking member of staff was available at the time. Contact centre staff were reminded of the correct procedure in such instances – details of the customer should be taken to be called back or the email address of a dedicated member of staff shared.
- 9.7 We received a complaint from the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner regarding the functionality of the Welsh language Web Filing page on the CH

website. Our development team carried out an investigation and rectified the system failure. This was communicated to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

- 9.8 A Welsh language customer was issued with a reminder letter in English only. In response to our apology the customer enquired whether all correspondence issued to Welsh companies should be bilingual. In our response we set out that although CH makes every effort possible to correspond bilingually with those companies with a Registered Office in Wales, it is not always practical or possible to do so. A marker was placed on the customer's company record and all computer-generated correspondence going forward will be bilingual.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 The Welsh Committee will continue to ensure that CH remain aware of their responsibilities under the Welsh Language Scheme. We remain committed to providing an excellent Welsh language service to our customers.



## CH - Action Plan

Action required	Target date	Action Owner	Progress to date / notes
<b>1. Legislation and Initiatives</b>			
<b>Review Action Plan on a quarterly basis</b>	Quarterly	Strategy and Policy	The content of the Action Plan was reviewed as part of the Welsh Committee which met quarterly in 2018/19.
<b>Review strategic plan quarterly to link to the Welsh Language Action Plan</b>	Quarterly	Strategy and Policy	Our commitment to Welsh language services underpin two of our key strategic goals: <i>Excellence in company registration and search</i> and <i>Building a high performance culture</i> .
<b>Consider how new policies, projects and developments will conform with the commitments set out in the Welsh Language Scheme</b>	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	We have continued, and will continue, to consider our Welsh Language Scheme in new policies, developments and projects.
<b>Enable “Welsh Experience” incorporation for Welsh companies</b>	October 2012	Business Solutions Delivery	This was completed in October 2012.
<b>Enable full online incorporation for Welsh companies at CH</b>	March 2013	Business Solutions Delivery	This was completed on 6 April 2013.

<b>Improve the WebFiling Change of Name service to produce a translation of the certificate (currently under review)</b>	March 2013	Customer Delivery Directorate	As we further develop the CH beta service for customers, CH will develop more end to end Welsh services. However, the timetable for this is unclear at present.
<b>2. Staffing</b>			
<b>Maintain ongoing Welsh language training, targeted at language speaking skills</b>	Ongoing	Human Resources	Paragraph 7.1 of the report
<b>Ensure Welsh speaking staff are present in all major operational areas to provide cover for Welsh speaking customers</b>	Ongoing	Directors	CH ensures Welsh speaking staff are available in all areas to examine Welsh filings or respond to Welsh customers.
<b>Internally promote CH's requirements under the Welsh Language Scheme, ensuring staff understand their responsibilities and where to seek assistance.</b>	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	We regularly made staff aware of our commitment to our Welsh Language Scheme on our internal intranet site.
<b>Maintain Welsh team in CH to provide cover for Welsh speaking customers and hold regular meetings to discuss issues and progress.</b>	Ongoing	Customer Delivery	The Welsh team continued to provide cover and met regularly.
<b>3. Publicity campaigns, exhibitions, advertising and press releases</b>			
<b>Ensure Welsh speakers attend all events at which there is a CH presence in Wales</b>	Ongoing	Events team	CH no longer regularly runs promotional events.
<b>Ensure Welsh literature is available at events held in Wales</b>	Ongoing	Events team	Completed

<b>Ensure adverts and press releases are available in Welsh, when published in Wales</b>	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 Jobs website.
<b>4. Publications and forms</b>			
<b>Ensure CH Welsh publications are updated in parallel with English versions</b>	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	CH continues to ensure that Welsh publications are updated at the same time as English publications.
<b>Ensure Welsh statutory forms are updated in parallel with English versions</b>	Ongoing	Strategy and Policy	CH continues to ensure that Welsh forms are updated at the same time as English forms.
<b>Monitor usage of letters to ensure Welsh versions are used where appropriate.</b>	Ongoing	Business Change Development	CH continues to monitor usage of letters to ensure a response is provided in Welsh where required. Throughout the period our Customer Delivery Support team have reviewed the provision of our Welsh letters.
<b>5. Websites</b>			
<b>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.</b>	Ongoing	External comms	We continued to increase Welsh content on GOV.UK.
<b>6. Face-to-face meetings</b>			

<b>Ensure that customers can request a Welsh speaker should they wish to conduct their business in Welsh</b>	Ongoing	Customer Services	CH continues to offer this service although there were no requests made in the reporting period.
--	---------	-------------------	--

<b>7.Telephone Communications</b>			
-----------------------------------	--	--	--

<b>Ensure that customers who want to conduct their business in Welsh can ask (in English) to speak to a Welsh speaker</b>	Ongoing	Customer Services	Paragraph 6.2 of the report
---	---------	-------------------	-----------------------------

<b>8. Signs</b>			
-----------------	--	--	--

<b>Ensure that all public signage for the Cardiff office is displayed bilingually</b>	On going	Building Services	All public signage is produced bilingually
---	----------	-------------------	--

<b>9. Complaints</b>			
----------------------	--	--	--

<b>To ensure complaints about CH's Welsh language service are fully investigated and dealt with promptly, in line with the CH normal complaints procedure.</b>	Ongoing	Customer Services	Paragraph 9 of the report
--	---------	-------------------	---------------------------

<b>Monitor complaints regarding bilingual service</b>	Ongoing	Customer Services	The Welsh Service Advisor monitors all complaints regarding the bilingual service as per Paragraph 9 of the report.
---	---------	-------------------	---