



Companies House
Tŷ'r Cwmnïau

Annual Monitoring Report

Welsh Language Scheme

1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020

COMPANIES HOUSE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

1 APRIL 2019 – 31 MARCH 2020

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 2019 to 31 March 2020.

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 CH build on the transformative and reforming environment of 2018-19. During this exceptionally busy period, the organisation progressed work to deliver fundamental changes to the way in which it operates and contributes to driving confidence in the UK economy.
- 2.2 We have worked with colleagues from across government to prepare for anticipated legislative reforms and for CH's move on 1 April 2020 from being a trading fund to being part of central government within the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.
- 2.3 CH's ongoing commitment to providing a high-quality service to our Welsh language customers has been an important consideration throughout this process. Building on the findings of our internal review, and working with other departments and executive agencies, we have developed interim proposals for a dedicated Welsh Language Unit within CH. Recruitment for the WLU is expected to commence in summer 2020.

3. Compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme

CH remains committed to complying with its Welsh Language Scheme and from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, achieved the following:

- 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. During the reporting period 11 customers asked to speak in Welsh and we received 18 e-mails in Welsh.
- 3.3 In this reporting period, 24 Welsh speaking customers contacted CH directly with general queries, including:
 - Assistance with amending articles and changing address and rectification of incorrect nationality listed
 - Confirmation that documents had been received, and assistance with filing documents
 - Confirmation on how to change director details on confirmation statement
 - Clarification on use of sensitive names in a company name
 - Assistance with dissolving a company

- 3.4 We also received 5 general queries which questioned the level of Welsh language service provided, although no complaints were made. These regarded:
- A delay in bilingual incorporation as form was incorrectly processed
 - A translation request for an e-mail which was incorrectly referred before being actioned
 - A customer recording a “promise to file” which subsequently was delayed
 - A data breach occurred due to incorrect information being placed on a Welsh authorisation code letter
 - A company name required the approval of the Secretary of State. Approval was granted but issues resulted in a delay in the bilingual letter being despatched
- 3.5 CH assisted a prominent figure in the Welsh language religious community to set up a community interest company. This required the dedicated support of a member of staff, who guided the customer in Welsh through the application process to the successful incorporation of the company. The member of staff was commended by the customer on his professionalism and dedication.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 We are continuing to review CH guidance to ensure that all guidance created by CH is available bilingually, other than that which is specifically not applicable to Welsh companies (e.g. guidance on matters that affect only Scottish companies).
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 Each set of Welsh language accounts received from Welsh companies were translated into English for the public record, as required by law. Additionally, we continued to translate 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.
- 3.9 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 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. Colleagues from the CALL Committee provided support for the establishment of the WLU at CH.

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 prioritised our Welsh language GOV.UK content over the last year. All sections on our homepage that can be translated were translated into Welsh. Our corporate information pages were also translated.
- 4.3 We translated most of our guidance pages and news stories over the last year.
- 4.4 We published a news story about our Welsh language services in February 2020:
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/welsh-language-services-available-at-companies-house>
- 4.5 We continued to increase the number of Welsh language messages shared on our corporate Twitter account which now has more than 20,000 followers. During 2019/20, we aimed to post at least one Welsh language tweet per week. These tweets highlighted our Welsh language content including videos, online guidance and our first Welsh language blog post.
- 4.6 We tweeted in Welsh in April 2019 that the office would be closed over the Easter bank holiday with a link to our Welsh language office access page on GOV.UK, and the tweet had more than 10,000 impressions. This is higher than average.
- 4.7 We shared two Welsh language graphics to support our highly successful digital apprentice recruitment campaign in September 2019.
- 4.8 We posted our first Welsh language content on Facebook, in celebration of both Welsh Language Music Day in February 2020 and St David's Day in March 2020.
- 4.9 We updated our Twitter bio to encourage questions from the public in Welsh.
- 4.10 We published our first Welsh language blog post in February 2020 to celebrate Welsh Language Music Day:
 - <https://companieshouse.blog.gov.uk/2020/02/07/dathlu-diwylliant-cymru-trwy-gerddoriaeth/>

5. Performance indicators

- 5.1 In the reporting period, there were 6,351 Welsh jurisdiction companies and 30 Welsh jurisdiction LLPs incorporated. 665,495 companies and 4,909 LLPs in total were incorporated during this period.
- 5.2 By the end of the reporting period, there were 26,014 Welsh jurisdiction companies and 155 Welsh jurisdiction LLPs on the register, compared with a total of 4,350,913 companies and 51,153 LLPs.
- 5.3 By the end of the reporting period, there were 1,432 Welsh companies and 7 LLPs incorporated with a Welsh name ending on the register. 233 Welsh companies and 2 Welsh LLPs were incorporated with a Welsh name ending in 2019/20.

6. Frontline Services

Percentage and number of bilingual staff:

CH Contact Centre

- 6.1 There are 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 The vast majority of customer interactions are done online or via postal contact. CH reception 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.
- 7.2 Work has been carried out to move to an approach to Welsh language learning which will focus on digital learning and signposting colleagues to online or app based learning (e.g. Duolingo or learnwelsh.cymru). Funding will continue to be provided.
- 7.3 Formal learning opportunities for members of staff include 'Sadwrn Siarad' and 5-day residential courses.
- 7.4 CH continues to encourage and support volunteer days which we believe are a positive means of contributing to the local community while developing Welsh language skills.
- 7.5 Our Internal Comms team produced a plan to raise awareness of Welsh language opportunities within CH on a quarterly basis with special pitches for enrolment dates.
- 7.6 CH has a dedicated Welsh language page which is accessed via our social media site.
- 7.7 CH will continue to monitor take-up and keep the effectiveness of this approach under review.

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 4 instances in which customers contacted CH relating to its Welsh Language Service. This is a reduction on the last reporting period which saw 8 complaints. A summary is below:
- 9.2 On two separate occasions customers submitted a version of a bilingual form which had been incorrectly placed on our website. The forms were subsequently rejected. We apologised to the customers, processed the correct forms and updated the website.
- 9.3 A company filed its accounts in Welsh and English simultaneously. Due to an administrative error it wasn't recognised that the English and Welsh accounts belonged to the same company 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. CH formally apologised, and the customer was offered a dedicated point of contact for filing future accounts.
- 9.4 A company submitted its accounts electronically in English, while submitting in paper its accounts in Welsh. The company contended that it did so as it was unable to file bilingual accounts online. The issue was resolved to the satisfaction of the company.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Welsh Language 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
1. Legislation and Initiatives			
Review Action Plan on a Quarterly Basis	Quarterly	Strategy and Policy	The content of the Action Plan was reviewed as part of the Welsh Language Committee which met bi-monthly in 2019/20.
Review Strategic plan quarterly to link to the Welsh Language Action Plan	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> .
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, and will continue, to consider our Welsh Language Scheme in new policies, developments and projects.
Enable “Welsh Experience” incorporation for Welsh companies	October 2012	Business Solutions Delivery	This was completed in October 2012.
Enable full online incorporation for Welsh companies at CH	March 2013	Business Solutions Delivery	This was 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 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.
2. Staffing			
Maintain ongoing Welsh Language training, targeted at language speaking skills	Ongoing	Human Resources	Paragraph 7 of the report
Ensure Welsh speaking staff are present in all major operational areas to provide cover for Welsh speaking customers	Ongoing	Directors	CH ensures Welsh speaking staff are available in all areas to examine Welsh filings or respond to Welsh customers.
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.
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 regularly.
3. Publicity campaigns, exhibitions, advertising and press releases			
Ensure Welsh speakers attend all events at which there is a CH presence in Wales	Ongoing	Events team	Paragraph 3.6 of the report
Ensure Welsh literature is available at events held in Wales	Ongoing	Events team	Completed

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			
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	CH continues to ensure that Welsh forms are updated at the same time as English forms.
Monitor usage of letters to ensure Welsh versions are used where appropriate.	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.
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	We continued to increase Welsh content on GOV.UK.
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	CH continues to offer this service although there were no requests made in the reporting period.
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7.Telephone Communications			
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Ensure that customers who want to conduct their business in Welsh can ask (in English) to speak to a Welsh speaker	Ongoing	Customer Services	Paragraph 6 of the report
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8. Signs			
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Ensure that all public signage for the Cardiff office is displayed bilingually	On going	Building Services	All public signage is produced bilingually
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9. Complaints			
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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	Paragraph 9 of the report
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Monitor complaints regarding bilingual service	Ongoing	Customer Services	The Welsh Service Advisor monitors all complaints regarding the bilingual service as per Paragraph 9 of the report.
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