

Ministry of Defence Welsh Language Scheme Annual Reporting to the Welsh Language Commissioner

December 2022

INTRODUCTION

About this Report

1. This is the Ministry of Defence Welsh Language Scheme (MODWLS) Annual Monitoring Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner, submitted in Welsh and English. This report outlines our performance against our MODWLS policy commitments during 2022.

About the MODWLS

2. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to treating the Welsh and English languages equally when conducting public business in Wales. The MODWLS sets out how we will deliver on this commitment when providing services to the public in Wales.

Managing the MODWLS

3. Laurence Lee, Second Permanent Secretary within the Ministry of Defence, retains overall responsibility for the Department's legal compliance of the MODWLS. It is managed on his behalf by the Defence Digital, Information Stewardship team.

POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

MOD Welsh Language Champion

4. Air Cdre Dai Williams remains our MOD Welsh Language Champion. He is well placed to lead engagement and compliance with the MODWLS throughout the department. His strong relationships with senior stakeholders throughout Wales enable him to advise us on the impact our policies and projects may have.

5. Air Cdre Dai Williams is vital to the monthly *Amser am Baned?* / *Time for a cuppa?* sessions with the MOD Welsh Speakers Network as a native speaker, chairing the group and encouraging participation. He also chairs the quarterly meetings of the MOD Welsh Speakers Network and the MODWLS Ambassadors, guiding participants in Welsh and English through proceedings.

6. Air Cdre Williams is adept at raising awareness throughout MOD and has directed several units to the MODWLS team for them to discuss compliance and MODWLS services. His role as Air Officer Wales gives him considerable reach and prestige which he leverages well to be a tremendous advocate of the MODWLS.

MODWLS Ambassadors

7. In June we completed the training of twelve Ambassadors representing all three Armed Services and the Civil Service in MOD. The names and contact information for the MODWLS Ambassadors are available on the MODWLS Toolkit and the MOD enterprise social network, Defence Connect. All the Ambassadors have an especially designed MODWLS Ambassador email signature. The MODWLS Ambassadors include this important role in their annual performance goals and review.

8. The MODWLS Ambassadors have already been very successful in increasing awareness throughout the Departments Top-Level Budget (TLBs) areas, thereby increasing departmental compliance. The MODWLS Ambassadors attend quarterly meetings with the MODWLS team and MOD Welsh Language Champion to share updates, best practice as well as to collaborate on

upcoming events. We will continue to update and refresh the training of the MODWLS Ambassadors annually.

MOD Welsh Speakers Network

9. The MOD Welsh Speakers Network was successfully launched on 5th April 2022 with an inaugural meeting streamed live from Cardiff.

10. The MODWLS team facilitates monthly MOD Welsh Speakers Network *Amser am Baned? / Time for a cuppa?* sessions. These sessions are well-attended helping us to build a strong and active Welsh-speaking community within MOD. Network members have reported that the monthly sessions are something they look forward to and that they contribute positively towards their well-being. Network members who are learning Welsh also gain from participation or listening to Welsh being spoken for thirty minutes on topics that are of interest to them.

11. The MODWLS also facilitates quarterly meetings with external speakers. These are advertised internally on MOD intranet as well as cascaded to MOD Welsh Speakers Network members, to ensure anyone in the department can attend. These meetings have been of great benefit to the Network provoking a good deal of thoughtful discussion as well as ideas for future activities and development.

12. The MOD Welsh Speakers Network has a Defence Connect site which is updated regularly by the MODWLS team with the MOD Welsh Language Champion's blog, news items of interest, upcoming meeting notifications as well as discussion groups for Network members. This site is moderated by the MODWLS Ambassadors and is operated in Welsh and English.

Cross-Whitehall Welsh Language Scheme group

13. The MODWLS team and the MOD Welsh Language Champion attend the quarterly cross-Whitehall Welsh Language Scheme group to share ideas, best practice and to connect with our counterparts in Other Government Departments. This initiative is led by the Wales Office.

DELIVERY AND STANDARDS OF SERVICE

MODWLS Toolkit

14. We launched and have been consistently updating and streamlining the MODWLS Toolkit on MOD intranet. The MODWLS Toolkit is accessible to all in MOD. It contains all information relevant to compliance, what actions and, or assessments must be undertaken plus contact information for the MODWLS team and the MODWLS Ambassadors. Our most viewed page this year is the 'Translation Request' page followed by the 'How to Comply' page.

Translation

15. We have seen a significant increase in translation requests and approvals. This is due to awareness raising by the MOD Welsh Language Champion, the MODWLS Ambassadors, MOD Welsh Speakers Network members, the MODWLS Toolkit and the MODWLS team outreach.

16. We have maintained our positive working relationship with the HM Courts and Tribunal Services (HMCTS) Welsh Language Unit who deliver an excellent service. We have experienced some small delays in the rendering of translations this year due to unforeseeable increases to the HMCTS Welsh Language Unit workload. These have been well managed by the Unit and communicated to us in good time.

17. From January to November 2022 we have facilitated the translation over 210,000 words into Welsh. This work has been from a wide range of sources; from MOD Royal Navy People and Training to the Defence and Security Accelerator, to MOD Space Directorate, and in a number of different forms; from STEM workbooks, to the Defence Space Strategy, to webpages.

THE YEAR AHEAD: 2023

18. The MOD Welsh Speakers Network will join Armed Service colleagues at the 2023 Royal Welsh Show to showcase the great strides we have made delivering the MODWLS. We have convened a working group to work through the specifics of the Network's participation.

19. The MODWLS team and the MOD Welsh Language Champion will be conducting a series of TLB outreach and training sessions on the MODWLS in the coming year to improve awareness of the MODWLS and the tools and support available.

20. The MODWLS team has chosen to undertake a peer review of its policy, services and performance with another similarly placed Whitehall department as good practice and an opportunity for further development and growth.

21. As part of the drive to raise awareness of the Welsh language and the MODWLS, the MODWLS team will look to mandate a ten-hour beginners Welsh language course for all Commanding Officers of units based in Wales. We will seek to do this in the period immediately prior to individuals taking up their new posts in Wales.

21. The MODWLS team is considering organising a cross-Whitehall and stakeholders Welsh Language Scheme conference in Autumn 2023 with speakers and workshops.

CONCLUSION

22. We remain committed to the MODWLS and to continuing to improve and refine our inward and outward facing policy and activities. We are focussed on developing and promoting the MODWLS throughout the department, on continuously growing and improving our services and to offering high-quality guidance to all MOD staff. We will continue to develop and engage the Welsh speaking community within MOD. As part of this pathway of development, we will continue to maintain close working relationships with the Welsh Language Commissioner and her office.