



# Annual Report on Welsh Language Scheme 2011

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## Introduction

1. The revised version of Ofgem's Welsh Language Scheme received the full endorsement of the Welsh Language Board on 19 January 2011.
2. Ofgem is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Welsh Language Act 1993. Ofgem has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales it will, so far as is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable, treat the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality.
3. As a result of the revisions to the Scheme, Ofgem has undertaken to report annually on the implementation of the Scheme.
4. This report summarises how the Scheme has been implemented in 2011 and sets out targets for the coming year.
5. This is the first full year since the establishment of a permanent presence in Wales with the opening of an Ofgem office in Cardiff in July 2010. This report captures increased work and contact in both languages in Wales over the past 12 months.

## Round up of targets 2011

1. Last year's monitoring report included a number of targets for 2011.
2. The table below sets out how they have been achieved.

| Target   | Progress   |
|--|--|
| Brief staff to ensure they are aware of the amendments to the Scheme as a result of Ofgem's increased presence in Wales. | <p>Guidance for staff on the intranet updated in May.</p> <p>Reminder of our Welsh language commitment included in internal seminar for staff in June.</p> <p>Intranet news story on Eisteddfod launch of Energy Best Deal in Welsh in August.</p>   |
| Ensure new starters to Ofgem are made aware of the Scheme.   | Reference to Scheme included in induction programme from February.   |
| Publish the amended version of the Scheme on Ofgem's website.  | Published online – January.  |
| Develop best practice in bilingual publication.  | <p>All factsheets for consumers printed as single bilingual documents since January, setting the standard for all other consumer publications and information materials produced specifically for Wales.</p> <p>Any delay in publishing consumer material online, as a result of translating market sensitive information, is kept to a minimum.</p> |
| Maintain knowledge of skills in the Welsh language throughout the organisation.  | Questionnaire completed by all new starters from December onwards includes request to give information on ability in Welsh.  |
| Ensure Ofgem's corporate identity in Wales is bilingual.   | Bilingual display and information material is used at events held and attended in Wales as standard.   |
| Increase use of Welsh at public events.  | Ofgem jointly held an event at the National Eisteddfod for the first time, with translation provided from Welsh to English.  |
| Monitor, explain and respond to changes to Welsh Language legislation.   | <p>Staff kept informed of developments relating to Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 through internal bulletins.</p> <p>Directors alerted to changing Welsh language legislation in November.</p>  |

## Key points for delivery and actions to take in 2012

1. Ofgem is aware that the implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 will impact on its work when the Welsh Language Commissioner replaces the Welsh Language Board on 1 April 2012. In the meantime, our Welsh Language Scheme remains the statement of principle by which the conduct of our public business in Wales will be organised.
2. At the same time, Ofgem does not stand still. Changes in our own work and organisation require that we need to constantly review how we meet our commitment to treat the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality, so far as is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable.
3. To enforce our commitment to treating the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality, we are submitting a further Revised Welsh Language Scheme to the Board along with this report. This includes one amendment to clarify our position on correspondence initiated by Ofgem with members of the public in Wales. Accordingly, the table below sets out key targets for the coming year.

| Target  | How to be achieved   |
|---|--|
| Revise the Welsh Language Scheme to clarify that correspondence initiated by Ofgem with members of the public in Wales will be bilingual. | Revised Scheme submitted with this Monitoring Report.  |
| Monitor, explain and respond to changes to Welsh Language legislation.  | Staff to be kept informed of implementation of Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, pending further guidance from the Board/Commissioner.  |
| Continue to develop best practice in bilingual publication with focus on online presence.   | Maintain standards established for printed materials.<br>Work with Communications to ensure need for bilingual consumer information is addressed in on-going wider review of digital strategy.   |
| Appraise knowledge of skills in the Welsh language throughout the organisation.   | Liaise with Human Resources to monitor and review data collected from new starter questionnaires on an annual basis. Work with Human Resources to widen this data so that it includes all staff. |
| New starters to Ofgem will continue to be made aware of the Scheme and guidance available to them.  | Induction programme run by Learning and Development includes reference to the Scheme and provides contact details for advice on contact with the public in Wales.                                |

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|--|---|
| <p>Ensure requirement to provide bilingual service to consumers is integral in planning of new services.</p> | <p>Promote awareness of our Welsh Language Scheme across all policy teams through publication of this report.</p> <p>Contact with policy teams working on consumer facing activity, particularly new initiatives.</p> |
| <p>Research into consumer issues to include consideration of any Welsh language issues.</p>                  | <p>Work with Consumer Policy, including specific research with Welsh Language consumers as appropriate through in depth interviews and focus groups in Welsh.</p>   |

## Implementing the Scheme

1. On submission of the 2010 monitoring report, Ofgem was asked by the Welsh Language Board to provide further details this year on the establishing of a database to identify the preferred language for correspondence. During 2011, Ofgem's External Relations team – which takes the lead on stakeholder relations in Wales - has introduced a new Customer Relationship Management system. Details of contacts who express a preference to correspond in Welsh are kept up to date using this system. A search facility has been added for the purpose of identifying contacts whose language of choice for correspondence with Ofgem is Welsh. A similar system is used by the Consumer Affairs team which looks after correspondence with consumers.
2. The Board also asked for more information on how records are kept of how many Welsh speakers work for Ofgem. As reported in the round up of targets for 2011, new starters have been asked about their language skills from the start of December. The ethnic monitoring questionnaire, which is completed by all new recruits to the organisation, makes specific reference to Welsh. Data collected from this form will be used to report on numbers of Welsh speakers in future years.
3. The External Relations Manager for Wales takes responsibility for day to day implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme. During the first full year since the creation of this post, there has been further progress on achievements in the second half of 2010. Highlights this year have been:
  - First bilingual information videos produced and published online for the Energy Best Deal campaign – launched at the Eisteddfod in Wrexham in August.
  - Production of Welsh materials for Energy Best Deal advice sessions during winter 2011-2012.
  - Interviews conducted in Welsh as part of market research for the Consumer Policy team undertaken around Caernarfon during the summer.
  - Appearances of Ofgem spokesman in the Welsh language on Welsh TV bulletins.
  - Publication of 17 bilingual consumer factsheets. Ofgem's Consumer Bulletin is now produced bilingually.
  - Single bilingual publications are now standard, replacing Welsh and English versions, for consumer materials.
  - A summary of Ofgem's Annual Report was produced bilingually for the first time.
  - Callers to the office in Cardiff have been able to conduct conversations in Welsh.
  - Continued use of training budget to develop proficiency in the Welsh language.

## Monitoring the Scheme

1. As a result of the Revised Welsh Language scheme, Ofgem has committed to annually monitoring performance on a series of indicators.
2. The following observations are made on each indicator:

**Forward planning and procurement:** Procedures have been in place throughout 2011 to improve delivery of bilingual services – most notably in terms of simultaneous publication of materials aimed at the consumer. The External Relations team works with Communications to plan for bilingual public information campaigns. In areas where Ofgem is taking on additional public facing roles, advice and guidance is available for policy teams.

**Dealing with the Welsh speaking public:** The Consumer First Panel has met in Swansea and Abergavenny during 2011. Focus groups with small and medium businesses were held in Cardiff. Additional research has been carried out in rural Gwynedd and Caernarfon. After the sessions in rural Gwynedd by an external provider were conducted in English only, provision was made for interviews to be available in Welsh in subsequent work in Caernarfon. This resulted in Welsh being used in in-depth consumer interviews including one-to-ones and small group work for Ofgem for the first time.

**Services under contract in Welsh:** Ofgem contracts a minimal number of services in Wales. All current contracts comply with the Scheme.

**Publicising the bilingual service:** Consumer publications for use in Wales are now produced bilingually as standard. Ofgem's website gives prominent signposting to the Welsh language version, where available. In correspondence from the Cardiff office, reference is made and website links provided to Welsh and English versions of publications as standard. Further work will be undertaken to extend this principle to letters handled by the Consumer Affairs team.

**Grievances and complaints:** Ofgem assisted the Welsh Language Board with one complaint of an alleged breach of its Welsh Language Scheme in late 2011. After receiving evidence from Ofgem, the Welsh Language Board rejected the allegation and concluded there had been no such breach. Ofgem had already indicated it would look at its Scheme in light of the complaint. Submitted along with this report, a Revised Scheme clarifies that written correspondence with members of the public in Wales which is initiated by Ofgem will, in the first instance, be bilingual. When Ofgem responds to correspondence in Wales, it will be in Welsh or English, as guided by the correspondent.



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