



Natural Resources Wales

Board Meeting

19 March 2013

Paper Title	Welsh Language Scheme
Paper Reference:	Paper 5 (03/13)
Paper Prepared By:	Mark Hughes

Purpose of Paper:	Decision
Recommendation:	To note the response to the public consultation on Natural Resources Wales' Welsh Language Scheme and the proposed response prepared by the Living Wales Programme Welsh Language Scheme Group.
Decision Required:	Approval of final Scheme for submission to Welsh Language Commissioner

Impact: To note – all headings might not be applicable to the topic	Impact on the Environment: Impact on the Economy: Impact on Community: Impact on Knowledge:
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Issue

- 1 Natural Resources Wales is required by the Welsh Language Commissioner to submit a Welsh Language Scheme for her consideration not later than March 29th 2013.

Summary

- 2 Natural Resources Wales has carried out a public consultation on its proposed Welsh Language Scheme with the agreement of the Welsh Language Commissioner. The consultation ended on March 5th 2013. The responses have been considered by the Living Wales Programme Welsh Language Scheme Group. The responses can be summarised as:
 - 2.1 46 responses were received, including 10 from staff in the two weeks prior to the consultation being opened to the public. Out of these 12 (~26%) were fully supportive of the scheme, 24 (~52%) were generally supportive but with concerns about the scheme, and 9 (~20%) were seriously concerned about the implications of the scheme. This proportion is similar to that identified in the UNISON response on behalf of its members where the percentages were ~28%, ~47%, and ~25% respectively. Key areas of concern as follows:
 - 2.2 Concern for individual's current roles and career progression, particularly as they transfer into Natural Resources Wales.
 - 2.3 Unease that we may prioritise Welsh language skills over other skills, particularly some of the specialist skills within Natural Resources Wales.
 - 2.4 A view that business priorities were being skewed in favour of Welsh Language at a time of wider economic hardship and when Natural Resources Wales needs to transition and deliver the benefits of its creation.
- 3 The Living Wales Programme Welsh Language Scheme Group has prepared a redraft of the scheme to address concerns of prescriptive and complex wording, and to distinguish between the services and systems offered from day 1, and the more aspirational aspects of the Scheme, which will take time to deliver. The redraft has also made some small changes to address discrimination claims by ensuring references to how we apply the scheme to staffing and recruitment are made with sound business justification. The recent statement by the Minister for Education and Skills has also prompted some other minor amendments to ensure that we apply our scheme to working with others in a proportionate way. Annex 1
 - 3.2 A question and answer document addressing key areas of concern has also been produced to form part of the formal consultation response.
 - 3.4 A suite of guidance documents has been developed for the Natural Resources Wales' intranet to assist all staff in understanding the Scheme and

what it means for them, in addition to providing specific guidance on certain key subjects, such as recruitment and training.

Background

- 4 Public bodies require Welsh Language Schemes under the Welsh Language Act 1993. All three legacy bodies have extant schemes. The Welsh Assembly has formally named Natural Resources Wales under this act and the Welsh Language Commissioner has served notice requiring a scheme to be produced. The Living Wales Programme Welsh Language Scheme Group has prepared a scheme using the best of the schemes from the legacy bodies and has managed the public consultation in agreement with the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Next Steps

- 5 A submission will be prepared for the Welsh Language Commissioner by March 29th 2013. Members of the Living Wales Programme Welsh Language Scheme Group, and after 1 April Natural Resources Wales Welsh Language staff, will work with the Commissioner to ensure the scheme is approved during April 2013. The Scheme will then be formally launched to staff and the public, including publication of how we have dealt with issues raised in the consultation.

Risks

- 6 Not submitting a scheme to the Commissioner by the required deadline will result in censure from the Commissioner and strong action to impose a scheme; up to now the Commissioner has worked in a constructive manner, placing a representative on the Living Wales Programme Welsh Language Scheme Group.
- 7 Failing to implement the scheme sensitively and ensuring we always have sound business justification for Welsh Language requirements may result in some continued concern over the scheme.

Financial Implications

- 8 A “business as usual” budget has been included in the 2013-2014 Operational Plan based on that available in the legacy bodies in previous years. Any additional funding requirements will be identified during 2013-2014 as the scheme and skills strategy action plans are implemented. These will be fed into procedures for in year adjustment or future operational planning as necessary.

Communications

- 9 Communication input will be required in April to formally launch the scheme and the consultation response.