

27 March 2015

Paper Title	Welsh Language Standards Investigation and Scheme Progress
Paper Reference:	NRW B B 22.15
Paper Sponsored By: Paper Prepared By:	Ashleigh Dunn Lyn Williams

Purpose of Paper:	Information
Recommendation:	- To inform the Board of the forthcoming Welsh Language Standards and our ongoing work to ensure compliance when the Standards are imposed. – the annex should first be referenced in the body of the paper, not the covering summary sheet - To provide feed-back on the Annual Monitoring Report 2013-14 and the success of our Welsh Language Training programme.
Decision Required:	N/A

Impact:	Impact on the Environment: A bilingual Natural Resources Wales will be in a stronger position to work with other Welsh organisations and partners to deliver better environmental outcomes. Impact on the Economy: Not applicable Impact on Community: Enables our organisation to deliver a bilingual service to the public and to be able to communicate effectively with all the communities we serve. Impact on Knowledge: Increasing our bilingual capability will strengthen our ability to share and develop knowledge with partners and academic institutions across Wales.
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Issue

1. To provide information to the Board on the forthcoming Standards, the key milestones and our ongoing work to ensure compliance.
2. To update the Board on the Annual Monitoring Report 2013-14 and the success of our Welsh Language training programme.

Summary

3. The Standards will explain how public organisations are expected to use the Welsh language and ensure consistency of Welsh language services across public organisations and improve their quality. This will provide greater clarity to Welsh speakers on the services they can expect to receive in Welsh.
4. To provide feedback to the Board following a review meeting with the Welsh Language Commissioner on our Annual Monitoring Report 2013-14. To highlight the areas of best practice identified and how we plan to develop these further.

Background

5. Since the last Board paper in July 2014, the Welsh Language Commissioner completed the first phase of the Standards Investigation involving Welsh Ministers, County Councils and County Borough Councils. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is part of the second phase of the Standards Investigation along with 119 other publically funded organisations.
6. This required NRW to provide information and evidence to demonstrate to what extent the organisation would be able to comply with the standards specified, if those standards are made specifically applicable to us. The response is available by request to the Board Secretariat.
7. In preparation of the Investigation, NRW's Welsh Language Scheme was written with the forthcoming Standards in mind. As a result the majority of the information required for the Investigation was found in the Scheme itself, further information not covered by the Scheme was gathered from appropriate parts of the business.
8. The Annual Monitoring Report 2013-14, which was approved at the July 2014 Board meeting, was submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner in August 2014. This report has since been approved by the Commissioner and published on their website.
9. In a follow-up meeting in November 2014 the Commissioner's office indicated it's satisfaction with NRW's progress made to date in implementing our Welsh Language Scheme. Two areas of good practice were highlighted at the

meeting - the Welsh Language Policy Advisors involvement with the recruitment process and NRW's Welsh Language Training Programme.

10. NRW's Welsh Language Training programme was launched in June 2014 giving all staff the opportunity to learn or improve their Welsh language skills.
11. This programme has been successful with 256 staff with no Welsh language skills attending a one day "Cyfarch" course to enable them to pronounce place names, personal names and greetings in Welsh. In-house "Mynediad/Beginners" classes have taken place for the past year with 115 staff attending. 128 staff are also attending classes at various levels with learning providers across Wales. This programme continues to help NRW achieve the target of 30% staff being able to communicate with confidence in Welsh by 2018, as set out in the Bilingual Skills Strategy.

Next Steps

12. Following the completion of the Standards Investigation process, the Welsh Language Commissioner will produce a standards report for the attention of Welsh Ministers by the end of May 2015. The report will set out the conclusions of the Standards Investigation, the Commissioner's reasons and a copy of the report will be sent to NRW.
13. Welsh Ministers will debate the findings of the report at the Senedd in Autumn 2015 and decide which standards should be included and a date when each standard will become operational.
14. It is likely that not all of the Standards will be imposed on NRW at the same time, but once they are, they will replace NRW's current Welsh Language Scheme.
15. Once the Standards which apply to NRW are confirmed, an action plan will be developed to ensure NRW is fully compliant with each of the Standards by the implementation date. We are confident that we can do this as our Welsh Language Scheme was written with the forthcoming Standards in mind.
16. NRW's Bilingual Skills which forms a part of our Welsh Language Scheme will become fully operational by December 2015. This information will be used when recruiting staff.
17. The next Annual Monitoring Report (2014-15) will be submitted to the Board for approval in July 2015 before submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Risks

18. The Commissioner will regulate NRW and may impose a civil penalty if there is failure to comply with a relevant Standard; this could result in reputational damage to the organisation and could lead to lack of trust with the communities, partners and members of the public we serve.

Financial Implications

19. Continued implementation of the Scheme is within current budgets but this will be reviewed once we know the full impact of the Standards.

Communications

20. We will continue to raise awareness of our Internal Language Policy whilst the Standards are being set. Once set, the Welsh Language Policy Advisor and Grŵp Pencampwyr members will attend team meetings across Wales to raise awareness of the Scheme, its requirements and provide updates on the Standards.

Equality impact assessment (EqIA)

21. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the Welsh Language Scheme prior to vesting day for the organisation. We will review the EqIA once the Standards are set as part of the development of the action plan.