

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>LANGUAGE COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>OCTOBER 11 2012</b>
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>STANDARD NAMES OF STREETS, HOUSES AND PLACES</b>
<b>AUTHOR:</b>	<b>EQUALITY AND LANGUAGE OFFICER</b>
<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>REQUEST BY LANGUAGE COMMITTEE FOR FURTHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION</b>

## **1. Street Names**

- 1.1. When a new street or development is built, the developer or builder is expected to contact the Council with a proposed name. If a non-Welsh name is submitted, correspondence is sent out, asking them to re-consider in view of the linguistic background, culture and history of the area.
- 1.2. The Council has no power to enforce Welsh names on new developments, but through the correspondence outlined above we exploit the opportunity as best we can to promote Welsh names. The relevant Officers report that most names suggested respect the Welsh language and that the suggestion to reconsider is effective in most cases when a non-Welsh name is initially suggested. Examples of insisting on English names are by now rare (and mainly to be found in the South of the County).
- 1.3. The Council passes new addresses to the Post Office, which has no problem with accepting Welsh-only names; the only basis they may have for refusing a new name would be if it's too similar to an existing name or would cause any confusion.
- 1.4. With historic names, we do not have as much influence over the Post Office list. In these cases the English and Welsh versions are noted (where two versions exist) but no emphasis is put on promoting the Welsh version.
- 1.5. . For the purpose of standardization and cross referencing, the Council's standard list (the Land and Property Register) has to acknowledge the English versions (where they exist) as well as the Welsh. However, within the Council the emphasis is placed upon the Welsh version; the Welsh Language Scheme states:

**“...the Welsh name only shall be used by the Council in respect of places, rivers, mountains, etc. and also in respect of the Council's establishments except where the Council itself has authorised the use of another version/other versions.” (4.2.1.)**

- 1.6. A Report was presented to the Language Sub-Committee on 27/04/04 regarding the Land and Property Register (under the title Standardizing Addresses in Data Banks) and the Sub-Committee decided to recognize the Welsh versions of addresses:

**RESOLVED to approve the arrangement for synchronising address data in a manner which gives priority to Welsh, where there is an alternative and ensuring linguistic consistency for address data throughout the Council's data bases.**

- 1.7. The principle of using Welsh addresses can be seen in our Language Scheme and the Language Sub-Committee's decision. However the Committee may consider strengthening this commitment: For example, reminding Service Heads of the requirement to only use Welsh street names (within English language correspondence too) and also make it clear that this expectation extends beyond "new streets" (with the rare exception of names that have no Welsh version).
- 1.8. The Welsh Language Commissioner is currently investigating an enquiry regarding the use of Welsh language addresses. The Council has already provided information, and obviously we will follow progress and respond to any instructions which may arise from this work.

## **2. House Names**

- 2.1. A report on house names was presented to the Language Sub-Committee on January 27 2009. It was reported then that the Council has no power to impose Welsh house names or to enforce historical names.
- 2.2. However as all new names or name changes have to be reported to the Consultancy Department, it was noted that the Department sends out a standard letter to those proposing a non-Welsh name or name change, noting the cultural, historical and demographic reasons for keeping Welsh names. In 2009, it was noted that this persuasion was successful in the great majority of cases.
- 2.3. It would appear that the situation has not changed since 2009. The standard letter has been adapted to reflect changes in terms of setting up the role of the Language Commissioner, and it can be confirmed that the tendency towards choosing Welsh names which was noted in the earlier report continues as can be seen from the table below:

## Changing house names in Gwynedd March 2010- April 2012

English to Welsh	Welsh to English	Welsh to Welsh	English to English	Other
23	2	21	2	1

### 3. Place Names (Settlements)

3.1. On December 5 2008, a meeting was arranged between a Task Group of the Language Sub-Committee and the Welsh Language Board's Place Name Standardization Team. The scope of the discussion centered on the names of settlements in Gwynedd. The meeting's minutes were presented to the full Sub-Committee on 27/01/09, and it was decided:

**a) To approve the minutes of the Task Group held on 5 December 2008.**

**b) To consider the article in the forms submitted and to invite the Names Standardization Team back for further discussion.**

3.2. There was no further contact between the name Standardization Team and the Sub-Committee, and following the establishment of the Language Commissioner's role, this work is currently under review. Further information is expected by the end of the year, but in the meantime we are welcome to contact the Commissioner's Advice and Support Unit. It should also be noted that we have reported on this matter following the Welsh Language Commissioner's comment on our Annual Monitoring Report.

### 4. Place Names (Geographical)

- 4.1. At the June meeting of the Committee, the importance of using local Welsh names for geographical features, such as headlands, islands, cliffs etc was raised. It was also emphasized that Welsh names should be used on the Wales Coastal Path.
- 4.2. The Welsh Language Scheme states clearly that the Council is to use the Welsh version of place names ( see 1.5. above).
- 4.3. When the Council provides names for the Wales Coastal Path, the Welsh version is used. Of course, there may be exceptions and other examples when the names are provided by the Ordinance Survey. The best way to deal with this is by noting individual examples and pressing

for change.

- 4.4. The same would apply to English names on Ordnance Survey maps. It is perhaps worth noting that the Welsh Place Name Society is active in this area; one of the Society's aims is to "Protect the place-names of Wales." It may be possible to invite a representative of the Society to meet the committee to discuss the Society's work and discuss how the Council could support their aims.

**5. To Committee is asked to:**

- 5.1. Provide comment on the current arrangements for promoting Welsh names for new developments (streets, houses) and the use of names already existing on the Land and Property Register
- 5.2. Consider revisiting our discussions with the Place Names Standardization Team.
- 5.2. Note any specific examples of non-Welsh names for geographical features and consider establishing discussions with the Welsh Place Names Society.