

MEETING	Language Committee
DATE	23 April 2015
TITLE	Update on the Language Standards
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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	Update the committee on the timetable and the next steps of imposing the Language Standards on organisations

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 24 March 2015, the National Assembly for Wales approved the regulations that determine the Welsh Language Standards.

2 IMPLEMENTING THE STATUTORY PROCESS

- 2.1 This means that the Welsh Language Commissioner can now move forward to implement the statutory process – according to the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 – of imposing standards on organisations.
- 2.2 In accordance with the Measure, it is a matter for the Language Commissioner to determine which Standards to impose on each organisation by way of a ‘compliance note’, and also the date by which they are required to comply with the Standards.

3. WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

- 3.1 The following is a link to the Regulations which were unanimously approved by the plenary meeting of the Assembly on Tuesday, 24 March 2015. The Regulations came into effect on 31 March 2015.
[http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/sub-ld10115%20-%20the%20welsh%20language%20standards%20%20\(no.%201\)%20regulations%202015%20rheoliadau%20safonau%e2%80%99r%20gymraeg%20\(rhif%201\)%202015/su b-ld10115-e.pdf](http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/sub-ld10115%20-%20the%20welsh%20language%20standards%20%20(no.%201)%20regulations%202015%20rheoliadau%20safonau%e2%80%99r%20gymraeg%20(rhif%201)%202015/su b-ld10115-e.pdf)
- 3.2 Schedule 1 of the Regulations specifies **service delivery standards** (1-87). The service delivery standards are numerous, and involve the way in which an organisation communicates with:
- i) other bodies

- ii) staff
- iii) public

The standard concerning meetings organised by bodies which are open to the public notes that it must be ensured that simultaneous translation services from Welsh to English are available, and those present must be notified orally in Welsh –

- (a) that they are welcome to use the Welsh language, and
- (b) that simultaneous translation services are available.

- 3.3 Schedule 2 of the Regulations specifies **policy making** standards (88-97)
The policy making standards concern how consideration is given to the Welsh language when making, amending or reviewing policy whilst ensuring that a policy has positive or increased positive effects, or no adverse or decreased adverse effects on:
- (a) opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - (b) not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English

Similarly, there is a standard for making, amending or reviewing policy on awarding grants which notes which effects if at all (positive or detrimental) that awarding a grant would have on:

- (a) opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- (b) not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English

Similarly, when commissioning or undertaking research to assist with making policy decisions, it must be ensured that the research considers how the policy decision in question can be made in order to have positive, or increased positive effects, or no adverse or decreased adverse effects on:

- (a) opportunities for people to use the Welsh language, and
- (b) not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.

- 3.4 Schedule 3 specifies **operational** standards. (98-144)
The operational standards involve internal use of the Welsh language, and the way in which an organisation uses the Welsh language in its day to day operations with staff.

The standards regarding using the Welsh language for internal administration notes that a policy must be developed on the internal use of the Welsh language, with the intention of promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language.

Several of the standards also note the need to publish policies such as performance management, absence from work, working conditions etc. in Welsh.

One standard in the context of information technology notes the need to provide computer software for staff to check spelling and grammar in Welsh ; and another standard notes the need to provide Welsh interfaces for software (where an interface exists).

The standards relating to developing Welsh language skills through workforce planning and training make it mandatory to assess the Welsh language skills of staff; and to provide text or a logo for staff e-mail signatures which enable them to denote whether they are fluent Welsh speakers or learners.

3.5 Schedule 4 of the Regulations specifies **promotion standards** (145-146).

◀ The promotion standard makes it mandatory to produce and publish a 5 year strategy explaining how it is intended to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in the area. The strategy must include:

- a) a target (the percentage of speakers in the area) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the area by the end of the 5 year period concerned
- b) a statement setting out how it is intended to reach that target.

The strategy must be reviewed and a revised version of the strategy published within 5 years of publishing a strategy.

Following the publication of a strategy, the promotion standard notes the need to:

- a) assess to what extent the organisation has followed that strategy and has reached the target set by it
- b) publish the assessment, ensuring that it contains the following information:
 - i) the number of Welsh speakers in the area, and the age of those speakers
 - ii) a list of the activities which were arranged or funded during the previous 5 years in order to promote the use of the Welsh language.

3.6 Schedule 5 of the Regulations specifies **record keeping** standards (147-154).

The record keeping standard makes it a requirement to:
keep a record of the number of complaints received relating to compliance with the standards.

keep a record of the steps taken in order to ensure compliance with the policy making standards.

keep a record of the number of employees who have Welsh language skills; where the information is available, a record must be kept of the skill level of those employees.

3.7 Schedule 6 of the Regulations specifies standards which deal with **supplementary matters**.

These supplementary matters include standards that make it a requirement to ensure that there is a document available which records the following standards that must be complied with:

- i) service delivery (155-160)**
- ii) policy making (161-166)**
- iii) operational (167-172)**
- iv) promotion (173-174)**
- v) record keeping (175-176)**

and that it is available:

- (a) on the website**

(b) in each of the offices that are open to the public.

4. THE TIMETABLE

4.1 The process of imposing the Language Standards for the first round of 26 organisations including Welsh Ministers, County Councils and County Borough Councils, and National Park Authorities will correspond with the following timetable:

- **April-June 2015**

The Language Commissioner will prepare individual draft compliance notices for each of the organisations

- **22 June 2015**

A consultation period with the organisations on the contents of the compliance notices will begin in accordance with section 47 of the

Measure

- **20 July 2015**

The consultation period ends and the Language Commissioner analyses the responses, and prepares the final compliance notices for each organisation.

- **September 2015**

The Commissioner gives final compliance notices to the 26 organisations in accordance with section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.