

MEETING	Language Committee
DATE	13 October 2025
TITLE	Report of the Environment Department on the implementation of the Language Policy and contribution towards the realisation of the Welsh Language Strategy 2023 - 2033
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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present information to the Language Committee on the Environment Department's contribution to the Council's Welsh Language Strategy.
- 1.2 The Department covers a range of services across the areas of Waste and Recycling, Transport, Planning and Public Protection.
- 1.3 The nature of these services means that staff come into regular contact with members of the public, councillors, other Council staff, and other authorities and external partners.
- 1.4 As a Department, we ensure that services are provided in the customer's preferred language, and the Department's officers strive to promote the use of the Welsh language in various activities and by virtue of their work.

2. RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE'S QUESTIONS

1. What policies and plans are in place within your department to contribute to the objectives of the language strategy? Identify the priority area (early years, learning, work and service, the community or research and technology)

Relevant policies and strategic plans / Projects in the Council's Plan

Local Development Plan

The Environment Department is leading on the Council Plan's project of preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP), which is a priority under the Green Gwynedd theme in the Council Plan 2023 – 2028. The Planning Policy Team within the Department is leading the preparation of the new LDP, where consideration of the Welsh language will be central to the work. Work on the preparation of the LDP is ongoing.

In the meantime, the work of the Planning Policy Team continues to monitor, review and amend the Joint Local Development Plan (2011-26) including the preparation of Supplementary Planning Guidance. Consideration of the Welsh language has been central to the preparation of the Plan which incorporates Planning Policy PS1 which relates specifically to the Welsh language and Welsh culture.

The Supplementary Planning Guidance (Maintaining and creating distinctive and sustainable communities) includes detailed guidance on how to take the Welsh language into account when dealing with applications for new developments.

Article 4 Direction

The 'Second home management and short-term holiday accommodation' project under the 'A Homely Gwynedd' theme of the Council Plan includes the work of preparing and implementing an Article 4 Direction. The aim of this work is to try and reverse the social inequality that exists in some of Gwynedd's communities, and to try and ensure that a provision of housing is available to meet local needs.

The Article 4 justification paper states: *'In relation to the Welsh language, creating sustainable communities where the Welsh language is fully immersed within communities, and providing and replicating the necessary social context for using the Welsh language as part of the normal fabric of society, is essential in order to protect and encourage the growth of the Welsh language. With the Welsh Government's commitment to reach a million Welsh speakers by 2050, the ability to have better control of the housing stock and subsequently ensure that there is an adequate and affordable provision of housing for local people is a way of supporting this goal.'*

The Direction has been in place since 1 September 2024, and the Planning Service accepts applications for a change of use from main homes to second homes or short-term holiday accommodation; change of use of second homes to short-term holiday accommodation and certain mixed uses and change of use of short-term holiday accommodation to second homes and certain mixed uses where previously planning permission was not required.

Since becoming operational, 16 planning applications for change of use arising directly from the Article 4 Direction have been received. Of these 16 applications, 10 applications have been refused, 4 applications have been withdrawn, and 2 applications are yet to be determined.

On 24 September, Cyngor Gwynedd received the High Court judgment in relation to the Article 4 Direction. The judgment concluded that the claim against the Cabinet's decision is successful.

Cyngor Gwynedd intends to appeal the decision, and work is already underway to commence this process. In the meantime, and until a formal Court Order is received, the Article 4 Direction remains in place.

Other projects and schemes

Planning, Planning Policy and Building Management

When dealing with any planning application, decisions are made in accordance with the Joint Local Development Plan, which includes a specific Welsh language policy and a Supplementary Planning Guidance which provides detailed guidance on how to implement the policy.

With this approach, the Planning Service continues to contribute towards the promotion of the language in the area ensuring that applications give consideration to the Welsh language.

During the period April 2024 to March 2025, 3 Language Assessments and 22 Language Statements were received with applications determined to meet the thresholds within Planning Policy PS 1. In addition, in accordance with Annex 5 of the Supplementary Planning Guidance, consideration has been given to the Welsh language for applications falling below the threshold of those requiring a formal Statement or Assessment.

Four planning applications were rejected partly due to language issues, and 24 applications were granted permission with a planning condition for language mitigation measures. These included that any new name should be derived from historical, geographical or local links to the area where possible.

This ties in with the Place Name Protection project to which several Services from the Environment Department contribute, including the Planning and Building Control Service.

The Building Control Service has responsibility for managing the naming of streets and the naming and numbering of properties, and it has a statutory duty to ensure that any new name or revisions to the names of streets and properties are allocated logically and consistently.

Whilst it does not have enforcement powers to reject an application unless there is duplication or the name is inappropriate, the Building Control Service takes a proactive approach to highlight the historical and cultural significance of Welsh place names.

The latest annual statistics show that 113 applications were made to change or register a property's name, with 88% of the names that were registered through Royal Mail being Welsh names. It should be noted that where applicants applied to change a name from Welsh to English, there were connections with the business name(s). It is very encouraging that 18 owners changed back from English names to Welsh names, with many appreciating the original historical name (others changed from one Welsh name to another or put a name on the property for the first time and chose to do so in Welsh).

The Planning Service has also been working with the Council's Language Unit on the work of Y Gymraeg mewn Busnes (Welsh in Business). A note that raises awareness and also offers advice goes out with pre-application advice responses and an information note is also available for officers to use on planning decisions. A planning condition was imposed on any new housing developments to ensure a Welsh name for the house or estate.

During 2024/25, a condition was imposed on 54 planning permissions which secured a Welsh name for new businesses and over 110 new homes.

Llŷn Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Llŷn Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan is a statutory document which the Council is required to prepare and review under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The current Plan recognises the Welsh language and local culture as

one of the special qualities of the area and includes policies and actions to support and promote the language. Work is currently underway to review the Plan.

Officers in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit hold Welsh-medium/bilingual events such as rural skills training, walks (including specific ones for new Welsh speakers) and talks and attend events such as the Nefyn Show to raise awareness of the designation and the work. The Unit also publishes an annual bilingual newsletter – Llygad Llŷn, with hard copies distributed in the area and an electronic version available also on [the AONB website](#).

Landscape and Nature

Much of the officers' work in the area of Landscape and Nature involves working closely with the public, and facilitating access to our natural environment is an integral part of their work.

Biodiversity officers carry out regular work to encourage interest and promote nature. Officers have developed "Geiriadur Coed Cymru" ("Trees of Wales Dictionary") which is a useful resource that lists Welsh names for plants, trees and flowers. The booklet is shared at various events which officers attend and hold as part of efforts to promote Welsh names on wildlife.

As part of a biodiversity project funded through the Gwynedd Nature Partnership at Parc Meurig in Bethesda, community engagement work has taken place in relation to a historic tree where conservation work has been carried out. With input from local historians and the Council's Archives Service, a timeline placed next to 'Coeden Meurig' identifies some events of historical and cultural significance that have taken place in the Dyffryn Ogwen area during the 500 years since the tree began to grow. Another bilingual display board has also been installed which explains the significance of the tree and the plants and animals that live near the tree, and the display boards have been well-received locally.

Pen Llŷn and Sarnau Special Area of Conservation

The Pen Llŷn and Sarnau Special Area of Conservation (SAC) team continues to lead on the bilingual 'Land and Sea' education package for primary schools. Since we reported on this previously, hard copies of the pack which offer standard resources available for teachers to use with their classes, have been distributed to all primary schools in Gwynedd, and a digital version is available free of charge on the www.tiramor.cymru website, widening access for teachers, pupils and families. Further details of this work can be found in section 6.

The SAC team produces a bilingual magazine 'O Dan y Don', which focuses on marine issues and is being created through the work of the Llŷn and Sarnau Peninsula Special Area of Conservation. This free publication raises awareness of Gwynedd's unique marine environment, promoting the use of Welsh alongside English. The fourth issue will be distributed to key locations across Gwynedd in the coming weeks, with a digital copy of the magazine also available on-line, allowing readers to engage digitally in both languages. Each issue includes articles, features and stories highlighting local marine life, conservation work and opportunities for people to get involved. The latest issue also includes an article about old Welsh terms for places and species in Gwynedd, helping readers to engage with the local language and heritage. Through attractive language

and high-quality design, *O Dan y Don* encourages people to read in Welsh and helps to normalise the language in everyday contexts.

Along with our main projects, the SAC team runs a wide range of engagement activities including talks, events and stalls at local shows. The officers actively promote the Welsh language through guided tours in Welsh, where participants explore local place names and species names, deepening their understanding of the language and landscape. They have also worked with new Welsh speakers, offering a talk and walk to help them practise their Welsh and expand their vocabulary in an informal and supportive environment.

Public Protection

Two Public Protection Services (Trading Standards and Licensing; Environmental Health) provide bilingual campaign materials, and application forms are all offered through the medium of Welsh.

Policies such as the Statement of Licensing Policy 2024 recognise the need for businesses to consider the Welsh language and factors relevant to an area's culture when applying for an alcohol licence, and when running a business.

Waste and Recycling

Recycling officers are constantly engaged in encouraging the county's residents to maximise the Council's recycling services. All information and publicity material produced is bilingual, with priority given to the Welsh language.

Officers attend events to promote the services and communicate and deliver in Welsh, visiting and engaging with 19 schools in the county in the period from January to July 2025. This includes presentations to whole schools, discussions with schools' Eco Councils, more practical activities and conversations about the benefits of recycling.

The promotional material produced ensures the use of clear Welsh, and all the internal messages for the workforce are provided bilingually, with priority given to the Welsh language.

Road Safety

Road Safety officers work closely with schools and colleges and visit a number of locations in the county to educate and promote safety while walking and cycling. These visits are conducted in person and take place through the medium of Welsh unless a member of the public's chosen language requires communication in English. The team also promote their work bilingually on websites and social media.

The following summarises the team's main activities during the 2024/25 academic year:

- 74 schools have received cycling training - provided to 775 children.
- 3,412 have received general training in primary schools – Story Time/Wear It!/Quiz/Radar Gun Session etc.
- Kerbcraft training has been delivered to 525 children.
- Pass Plus training (adults) has been delivered to 49 individuals.
- Awareness raising events have been delivered:
 - Visits to Libraries in Caernarfon, Pwllheli, Tywyn, Blaenau Ffestiniog (x2), Porthmadog,

- Fun Day Visits (Council Family Support Department) – Leisure Centres at Blaenau Ffestiniog (x2), Byw'n Iach Caernarfon, Plas Silyn Penygroes (x2), Deiniolen, Canolfan Maesgeirchen Bangor, Plas Ffrancon Bethesda, Byw'n Iach Glan Wnion Dolgellau
- Launch of 'Carys Ofalus' New Active Travel Books, offering a valuable resource for families. As part of the launches, officers visited schools, held story time and crafts including Scooter Sessions.

2. What more needs to be addressed in the next year to raise the status of the Welsh language and ensure opportunities for people to use Welsh?

Continue work on the preparation of a new Local Development Plan, where full consideration will be given to the Welsh language in the specific stages involved in the work which is outlined within the Delivery Agreement for the Plan. This shows how consideration is given to the Welsh language at certain stages of the process starting with the Preferred Strategy Document.

In addition, as the Article 4 Direction has been in place since 1 September 2024, the Planning Service Enforcement Unit is moving forward to deal with complaints about the change of use from main homes to second homes or short-term holiday accommodation; the change of use of second homes to short-term holiday accommodation and certain mixed uses and the change of use of short-term holiday accommodation to second homes and certain mixed uses. Since 1 September 2024, 15 complaints have been received by the Enforcement Unit.

We will continue to highlight the training opportunities and language refresher courses to develop confidence in the Welsh language among Departmental staff. Information about these opportunities is shared in the Department's bulletins and through regular messages about new courses or training.

3. Has the development of technology interfered with your ability to provide opportunities to use Welsh? If applicable please provide an example. How do you ensure that the development of technology does not affect your ability to provide opportunities to use the Welsh language?

As previously stated, any external systems used are usually only available through the medium of English. With the support of the Council's Information Technology Service, we continue to ensure that any public-facing systems are available in both Welsh and English.

Work is underway to install a new waste computer system commissioned by an external company. By working with the company and with the support of the Council's IT Service, we have been able to ensure that the data is available bilingually or in Welsh to internal staff, although it has not been possible to change the back-office menus which are in English only.

We ensure that any initial correspondence goes bilingually, with Welsh first, in order to try and encourage and promote the use of the language wherever possible.

4. How do you keep a record of the people who use your service through the medium of Welsh? Can you share relevant data?

Although there is no easily accessible data on the number of people receiving a service in Welsh, details of the chosen language of members of the public and stakeholders are entered through our systems ensuring that any correspondence is provided in the preferred language of the recipient.

We always ensure that any initial correspondence is provided bilingually, with Welsh first, trying to encourage and promote the use of the language.

5. What are the language skills of your staff?

The latest figures (September 2025) show a positive increase compared to the previous year in the number of Departmental staff who have received a language assessment, whether it is a self-assessment or a line manager's assessment.

Number who have received an assessment (self-assessment or line manager assessment) – **93.83% (380)**

Number who have completed a self-assessment – **82.96% (336)**

Number who reach the language designations of the post – **89% (337)**

However, it should be noted that just because a member of staff does not meet the language requirements, this does not mean they are unable to offer a Welsh language service, and the Department promotes any opportunities for staff to attend training to develop language skills or a refresher.

There are regular efforts to draw the attention of staff to opportunities to improve and develop Welsh language skills, and a member of staff in the Waste area has recently registered to attend a course.

6. Please provide examples of any obstacles, complaints and commendations associated with the provision and promotion of Welsh-medium services.

The Llŷn and Sarnau Special Area of Conservation (SAC) team have led work to prepare the bilingual 'Land and Sea' education package for primary schools. It offers resources for teachers to use with their classes, with a digital version available which widens access for teachers, pupils and families.

By embedding the Welsh language in all activities, the pack reinforces the use of the language in the classroom and in the wider community. It also helps to expand pupils' Welsh vocabulary by introducing specialist terminology, including species names and environmental terms, giving learners more confidence to use Welsh in different contexts.

The pack has been developed in partnership with a wide range of organisations through the Llŷn and Sarnau SAC team, promoting the Welsh language beyond the education sector and supporting collaboration with other authorities. Isle of Anglesey County Council has already adopted the pack, and there is interest in rolling this out as an all-

Wales resource through future funding. The feedback from teachers and pupils has been overwhelmingly positive.

In terms of general obstacles, it has already been noted regarding the challenges that can be experienced in terms of external computer systems. Although elements of the back-office element are in English, positive collaboration with the Council's Information Technology Service ensures that internal systems are available in Welsh, and any elements facing the public are fully bilingual.

When a public sector body wants to buy any goods, works or services over a certain value ("threshold") it must advertise through the Find a Tender system (FTS). FTS does not accept notifications in Welsh only, as English is the mandatory language for this publication, but we arrange bilingual notifications.

A copy of the Council's Language Policy is included in any tender documents of the Department, and all applicants are asked to read it to ensure that they understand what the requirements are in terms of the Welsh language but also that they understand the importance of the Welsh language to Cyngor Gwynedd. The language requirements (which reflect the Council's Language Policy) of every contract are determined according to the needs of that contract.

The department's report to the Language Committee in 2024:
[Report of the Environment Department.pdf](#)