

National Assembly for Wales
Draft Bilingual Services Scheme
and Consultation Paper

August 2011



The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

An electronic copy of this report can be found on the National Assembly's website:
www.assemblywales.org

Copies of this report can also be obtained in accessible formats including Braille, large print; audio or hard copy from:

Communications
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Tel: 0845 010 5500
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National Assembly for Wales
Draft Bilingual Services Scheme
and Consultation Paper

August 2011



Comments invited on draft Bilingual Services Scheme

The National Assembly for Wales (the National Assembly) is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account. It consists of the 60 Assembly Members elected by the people of Wales.

The National Assembly for Wales Commission (the Assembly Commission) serves the National Assembly to foster a strong, accessible and forward looking democratic institution and legislature that delivers effectively for the people of Wales.

Background

As Wales's principal democratic institution, the National Assembly has a duty to enable all citizens and Assembly Members to be informed about, and contribute fully to, the democratic process in Welsh and English. In providing bilingual services, the National Assembly aims to become a truly bilingual institution.

The Government of Wales Act 2006 provides that:

“The Assembly must, in the conduct of Assembly proceedings give effect, so far as is both appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable, to the principle that the English and Welsh languages should be treated on a basis of equality”.

and,

“In the exercise of the functions of the Assembly Commission effect must be given, so far as is reasonably practicable, to the principle that the English and Welsh languages should be treated on a basis of equality”.

The duties of the National Assembly and the Assembly Commission with regard to the provision of bilingual services to date have been modelled on the Welsh Language Act 1993. Under this legislative framework the Assembly Commission developed a Welsh Language Scheme for the Third Assembly. The Welsh Language Act was superseded by the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure in 2011, and in line with fundamental constitutional principles, neither the National Assembly nor the Assembly Commission are subject to the new legal arrangements of the Measure.

With this in mind, at its July 2011 meeting, the Assembly Commission agreed to propose a new Bill, the (Draft) National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Bill, in order to clearly place the duties of the National Assembly and of the Assembly Commission on a sound statutory footing.

The draft Bill provides that the Assembly Commission must, with the approval of the National Assembly, adopt and publish a scheme, to be known as the Bilingual Services Scheme, specifying the measures which it proposes to take in order to comply with its duties in this regard.

The Assembly Commission has prepared a draft Bilingual Services Scheme and would like to invite you to comment on its content. The Scheme, as amended in the light of this consultation process, will then need to be considered and approved by the National Assembly.

Issues on which your views would be particularly welcomed:

- a) Do you agree that the detail of how the principle of bilingualism is to be achieved in practice should be set out in a Bilingual Services Scheme prepared by the Assembly Commission and approved by the National Assembly?
- b) If not, by what other means should the details of how bilingualism is delivered in the National Assembly be defined?
- c) What are your views on the general approach of the Scheme?
- d) What alternative approach should be adopted, if at all?
- e) What is your opinion of the bilingual services we provide to members of the public as proposed in the Scheme?
- f) Have we proposed suitable and adequate ways for the National Assembly to ensure that those who wish to deal with us through the Welsh language are treated fairly?
- g) Are there any additional points which you think the draft Scheme does not cover?
- h) Do you have any other observations on the Scheme and its implementation?

Comments may be submitted until 14 October 2011. Comments should be submitted in writing to:

BilingualServices@wales.gov.uk

Rebecca Spiller
National Assembly for Wales
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Draft Bilingual Services Scheme

Introduction

The National Assembly for Wales

The National Assembly for Wales (the National Assembly) is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account. It consists of the 60 Assembly Members elected by the people of Wales.

The National Assembly for Wales Commission

The National Assembly for Wales Commission (the Assembly Commission) was established in May 2007 to ensure that the National Assembly is provided with the property, staff and services required for the National Assembly to carry out its role effectively and efficiently.

The Assembly Commission is the National Assembly's corporate body; and sets its strategic aims, objectives, standards and values; considers performance against their delivery; oversees change and encourages innovation and enterprise for the National Assembly.

The Assembly Commission consists of the Presiding Officer, plus four other Assembly Members, one nominated by each of the four party groups. The five Commissioners are accountable to the National Assembly for the Assembly Commission's functions. To help with the delivery of these functions the Commissioners are responsible for cross-cutting portfolios.

Further information regarding the structures, work programme and people of the National Assembly can be found on at <http://www.assemblywales.org>

As Wales's principal democratic institution, the National Assembly has a duty to enable all citizens and Assembly Members to be informed about, and contribute fully to, the democratic process in Welsh and English. In providing bilingual services, the Assembly Commission aims to ensure that the National Assembly is a truly bilingual institution.

The Assembly Commission also provides information in accessible formats, including Braille, large print and audio, and much of our public information for visitors to the National Assembly estate is available in other languages.

To be prepared and adopted in accordance with the proposed new paragraph 8(3) of Schedule 2 to the Government of Wales Act 2006, this scheme sets out how the Assembly Commission plans to deliver

bilingual services to Assembly Members and members of the public. It covers:

- the National Assembly's aspiration to become a truly bilingual organisation that enables Assembly Members and staff to work in both languages;
- bilingual arrangements for preparing for, conducting and recording National Assembly proceedings in Plenary and committee;
- bilingual communications with the public with the aim of encouraging people to take part in the democratic process.

Any communication the National Assembly undertakes with the public in Wales that has not been specifically described here will be conducted in a way that is consistent with the general principles embodied in this Scheme and as outlined in the Government of Wales Act 2006.

The Welsh Government

This scheme does not relate to the functions of the Welsh Government, which has its own arrangements for the delivery of its bilingual services.

Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

This scheme is not governed by the legal framework set out in the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011.

Definition of the public

In this scheme, the term 'public' means individuals, legal persons and unincorporated bodies. It includes the public in general, or a section of the public, as well as individual members of the public. The term includes voluntary bodies and charities. Directors and others representing limited companies also come under the term 'public'. However, it does not include people in public bodies when they fulfil official duties.

Background

Section 35(1) of the Government of Wales Act 2006 currently provides, in the context of Equality of Treatment, that:

(1)The Assembly must, in the conduct of Assembly proceedings, give effect, so far as is both appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable, to the principle that the English and Welsh languages should be treated on a basis of equality.

Schedule 2, paragraph 8 (3) of the Act, relating to the principles in accordance with which the functions of the Assembly Commission are to be exercised, adds that:

(3)... effect must be given, so far as is both appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable, to the principle that the English and Welsh languages should be treated on a basis of equality.

Section 111 (5) of the Act requires that Acts of the Assembly be made in both Welsh and English.

The National Assembly's ambition

It is the National Assembly's ambition to be a truly bilingual institution.

The National Assembly considers that this Scheme enables that ambition to be achieved.

The National Assembly is an institution where Assembly Members and members of the public can choose to work or communicate through either or both Welsh and English. This means that all staff should have some skills, appropriate to their roles, in both languages, varying from basic greetings to the ability to draft and translate complex documents in both languages.

The strategies and aspirations of the National Assembly aim to achieve equal status for the Welsh and English languages under the Government of Wales Act 2006.

To do so the National Assembly must:

- be able to carry out every aspect of its business in Welsh and English on an equal basis;
- guarantee that any consultation process between the National Assembly and the people of Wales will be fully bilingual;
- ensure that interactions between the National Assembly and the people of Wales are bilingual.

To achieve this ambition we will take the following factors into consideration:

- the current provision of bilingual services;
- best practice in offering bilingual services demonstrated in other organisations;
- the current bilingual staff resource, and realising all opportunities to increase that pool;
- financial constraints and competing priorities;
- lessons learnt from other bilingual parliaments;

- good practice in bilingual public engagement;
- the report of the Assembly Commission's Independent Review Panel on Bilingual Services;
- The principles of the (Draft) National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Wales Bill.

Authority and responsibility for co-ordinating this Scheme

This Scheme carries the full authority, support and approval of the National Assembly and the Assembly Commission.

The Chief Executive and Clerk to the National Assembly has the overall responsibility for ensuring that this Scheme is operated and monitored annually. The Head of Communications is the Senior Manager with responsibility for co-ordinating the work to monitor and revise this Scheme.

On a day-to-day basis, Bilingual Services Scheme Co-ordinators located in each service area will be responsible for delivery of the Scheme in those areas. Co-ordinators should meet quarterly to consider progress against the Scheme's requirements, while continuously keeping the Translation and Reporting Service informed of any changes to delivery commitments.

Every manager has a delegated responsibility for operating those aspects of the Scheme that are relevant to their work and for encouraging staff to use their language skills.

It is the responsibility of all Assembly staff to ensure that they are aware of the measures that are in this Scheme and for ensuring compliance as they carry out their daily work. Line managers will need to ensure that any new staff members are aware of the Scheme, its ambition and service standards, and the bilingual ethos of the National Assembly.

Monitoring and reporting

Operating in accordance with this Scheme will be a compliance issue.

Each financial year, we will monitor compliance with the Scheme and prepare a report for consideration by the Assembly Commission. That report will be laid before the National Assembly.

Monitoring arrangements will be put in place, which may include the opinions of individuals and institutions who have received services from the National Assembly through the Welsh language including focus groups, surveys and mystery shoppers.

Progress in terms of fulfilling this Scheme will be monitored and measured.

Reviewing and updating the Scheme

This Scheme will be reviewed after five years in preparation for the next Assembly. To measure progress in terms of fulfilling the intention of becoming a truly bilingual organisation, the review will analyse any changes to the number of bilingual staff and how bilingual services are offered.

This Scheme may need to be amended because of changes in roles, or in the circumstances in which those roles are undertaken, or for any other reason either at the end of the five year period or during it. No changes will be made to this Scheme without the approval of the National Assembly.

A draft Scheme or proposed amendment may not be adopted by the Assembly Commission unless the drafts have been:

- consulted upon and any representations have been considered;
- published;
- laid before the National Assembly;
- approved by resolution of the National Assembly.

Publicising and promoting our bilingual services

Every effort will be made to ensure that Assembly Members, members of the public and Assembly staff are aware of this Scheme and the services to be provided. We will publicise our bilingual services by:

- promoting the Scheme's existence when engaging with the public and our stakeholders;
- placing the Scheme in a prominent place on our website;
- including references to the Scheme in staff bulletins or other communications;
- providing the 'Working Welsh' materials to Welsh-speaking staff in all public places on the National Assembly's estate;
- ensuring that all our public services, to the best of our ability, can offer a bilingual service at the beginning of their contact with us, whether it be orally, face to face, written or through other service providers on our behalf;
- include the promotion of the Scheme in the induction programme for new Assembly Members, their support staff and for Assembly staff;
- making language awareness training part of the mandatory induction process for new recruits.

Dealing with complaints

Our standard practice will be to ensure that concurrent high standard services are available in both Welsh and English. We will actively

promote the services available as outlined, and advise our customers when this is not possible.

We want members of the public, Assembly Members and staff to report examples of non-compliance to us as soon as possible. This will enable us to rectify the situation, to close gaps, learn lessons and improve the service we aim to deliver.

Complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the National Assembly's Code of Practice on Complaints which notes that we will respond within 15 working days from the date the complaint was received.

Complaints can be made in writing or by telephone call to:

Bilingual Services Scheme Manager

National Assembly for Wales

Tŷ Hywel

Cardiff Bay

CARDIFF

CF99 1NA

Tel: 029 2089 8647

Email: BilingualServices@wales.gov.uk

Should staff not be able to resolve an issue to the complainant's satisfaction, they are entitled to ask for the matter to be reviewed by the Assembly Commission.

Bilingual Services for Assembly Members and their staff

The National Assembly is proud of its achievements in enabling fully bilingual proceedings and its internationally-recognised status as a democratically elected body committed to delivering innovative bilingual services in a parliamentary context.

Our ambition is to facilitate the means for National Assembly proceedings to be truly bilingual by empowering Assembly Members with bilingual materials and the means to communicate with each other and the public bilingually.

The remainder of this section outlines how we deliver bilingual services in preparing for, conducting and recording National Assembly business in Plenary and committee meetings. It also outlines the provision which allows Assembly Members to produce bilingual publicity material to support their work as Assembly Members.

Bilingual services: preparing for Plenary and committee meetings

Documents for consideration during Plenary drafted by the Commission, Assembly Members (with the exception of those undertaking Ministerial duties) and staff of the Assembly will be available simultaneously in Welsh and in English. Where an item is to be included on the Plenary agenda at short notice, it may not be possible to produce those papers bilingually although we aim to do so on every occasion.

Documents for consideration during committee meetings drafted by the Commission, Assembly Members (with the exception of those undertaking Ministerial duties) and staff of the Assembly will be simultaneously available for the committee members in Welsh and in English and at least two working days prior to the relevant meetings. Bilingual committee chairs will be provided with a bilingual brief to encourage more use of Welsh in our proceedings. Where an urgent item is to be included on a committee's agenda at short notice, it may not be possible to produce those papers bilingually although we aim to do so on every occasion.

Requests for documents or written responses to committee consultations and documents from external organisations and third parties intended for publication and / or use in National Assembly proceedings will be requested bilingually from the outset. Those organisations with Welsh language schemes, standards, policies or schemes should submit responses in both languages to ensure that Assembly Members and the public can engage with proceedings in either Welsh or English. Where it is not possible to secure documents in both languages, we will publish in the original language submitted, stating that it has been submitted in that language only. Where this might be to the detriment of National Assembly business e.g. if a

document is submitted in Welsh only, it may be necessary for the National Assembly to request an English summary or arrange a translation from the third party.

Supporting documents for committee and Plenary such as research briefings, will be prepared in both official languages as far as reasonably practicable. We will make these available to facilitate greater use of Welsh in our proceedings by Assembly Members. Where this is impractical, the relevant Head of Service will be advised.

Bilingual services: conducting Plenary and committee meetings

The National Assembly's proceedings in Plenary and committees are guided by procedures laid down in the Government of Wales Act 2006 and in National Assembly Standing Orders 2011.

Contributions in Plenary or committee meetings may be made in English and Welsh. Simultaneous interpretation facilities are provided for contributions made in Welsh. Headphones are provided for non-Welsh speakers (committee members, witnesses and visitors to the public galleries) to enable them to follow the proceedings.

Witnesses

Those providing evidence in committees may do so in either Welsh or English. We will encourage witnesses to use Welsh if they are able to do so.

Video conferencing in committees

When video conferencing meetings / presentations are conducted, the same principles as for face-to-face meetings with members of the public will apply, subject to technological limitations.

Consideration of draft Welsh legislation

Any Assembly Bills considered by the National Assembly will be available in both languages and Assembly Members may undertake their scrutiny role in either language except for the circumstances outlined in Standing Order 26.5.

Bilingual services: recording Plenary and committee meetings

In accordance with Standing Order 31, the Assembly Commission must "make arrangements, in accordance with the requirements of section 31(6) of the Act where applicable, for: (i) recording the decisions of the Assembly, including the decisions of committees and sub-committees; (ii) reporting Assembly proceedings, including those proceedings of committees and sub-committees which are held in public; and, (iii) publishing that record of decisions and report of proceedings."

[The Assembly Commission will confirm the arrangements for recording the National Assembly's proceedings in the early autumn 2011 and this section will be updated in light of its decision. We welcome your comments on these matters as part of this consultation.]

Assembly Members' publicity and constituency correspondence

Assembly Members' letterheads, business cards and surgery advertisements of a non-party political nature will be produced bilingually and funded by the Assembly Commission.

Correspondence sent to Assembly Members from constituents is not covered by this Scheme. However, if constituents wish to correspond with Assembly Members through the medium of Welsh, a service to provide Welsh to English text translation for this work will be available to Assembly Members. Under the arrangement, each Assembly Member will be allocated an annual allowance which is managed through party group offices.

Developing Welsh language skills

The Assembly Commission is committed to providing an ongoing resource to enable Assembly Members to learn or improve their Welsh language skills.

This service will be tailored to suit the specific needs of individual Members and offer a range of learning opportunities which will incorporate use of technology.

Staff communications to Assembly Members

Staff communications sent to Assembly Members as a group, whether by email or by publishing to the Assembly Members' Intranet, will be bilingual.

We aim to communicate in writing with individual Members, party groups, or other forums bilingually or in Welsh or English when a choice has been expressed. Members will be notified when this is not possible.

Monitoring our services

When we cannot deliver the bilingual services outlined, it will be necessary for Assembly staff members to inform their service's Bilingual Services Scheme Co-ordinator. Co-ordinators will be responsible for keeping a record of occasions where we fail to deliver truly bilingual services and ensuring they are included in our annual compliance report.

Bilingual Services for communicating and engaging with the public

The National Assembly is proud of its achievements and commitment to delivering bilingual services of the highest quality to the public.

Our ambition is to enable the public to communicate and engage bilingually with the National Assembly.

The remainder of this section outlines how we will achieve this.

Our public image

We will aim to deliver bilingually all advertising, publicity, campaigns or other methods that target the public, or have separate Welsh and English versions which are available concurrently. We will treat both languages equally ensuring that, where relevant, the Welsh wording appears first or uppermost. If Welsh and English versions are available separately, they will be equal in format, size, quality and prominence. This will be standard practice for the following publications:

- press releases;
- signage, and exhibitions, whether permanent or temporary;
- posters and public information booklets (including electronic ones);
- brands, logos, pop-up displays and display materials;
- consultation documents, codes of practice or similar;
- decision letters which are intended to convey policy to a wider audience;
- letterheads, business cards, stationery and certificates;
- forms, surveys and inquiries;
- public response lines or answerphones for campaigns or competitions;
- advertisements placed in English language newspapers, magazines or circulars distributed mainly or wholly in Wales;
- advertisements placed on websites;
- recruitment advertising;
- audio visual displays, CD Roms, virtual reality tours or other interactive media;
- social media, television, cinema, internet or radio adverts;
- all promotional multimedia information (videos, podcasts, emails etc).

Items intended solely for Welsh language television, media, publications or websites may be prepared in Welsh only. Welsh subtitles or dubbing into Welsh will be avoided, except for voiceovers or for accessibility purposes.

Legal documents and legal agreements with individuals, organisations or groups will be offered in either Welsh or English. Maps and other

inserts in such agreements which are borrowed or used under licence will appear in the language of the original source.

While our corporate identity is bilingual, the following locations are known in Welsh only:

- the Senedd and certain areas located inside it; Neuadd, Cwrt, Oriel and Siambr;
- Tŷ Hywel and an area inside it; Siambr Hywel.

Audio announcements over the public address systems including the lifts on the estate will be bilingual.

When we release information under the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations, we will translate it to the preferred language of the applicant, on condition that it will not be necessary to translate more than 100 words. Covering letters or emails will be provided in either Welsh or English depending on which of these languages the request was made.

It is necessary for members of staff to keep a record of each occasion where we have not met these standards in order to measure the extent of the practice.

Corresponding with the public (email or hard copy)

When a member of the public contacts an Assembly staff member, we will:

- reply in the same language;
- respond to all correspondence, whether received in Welsh, English or both languages, within 15 days;
- ensure that any correspondence following a meeting or telephone conversation in Welsh will be in Welsh unless we are aware that the recipient would prefer to receive it in English or bilingually.

When we initiate correspondence with an individual, group or organisation:

- we will do so bilingually unless we know that they would prefer to correspond in Welsh or English only;
- standard or circular correspondence to several recipients in Wales will be bilingual unless we know that all recipients would prefer to receive it in Welsh or English only;
- if the Welsh and English versions of any correspondence have to be published separately, our normal practice will be to ensure that both versions are available at the same time and that both versions are of the same standard, form, size and prominence reflecting the principle of equality;

- enclosures sent with bilingual letters will be bilingual, when available;
- a short declaration welcoming correspondence in either Welsh or English will be included on official paper, email auto signatures and official publications;
- all members of Assembly staff's auto signatures and out-of-office messages will be bilingual.

Telephone communications

Our normal practice will be to ensure that the public can speak in Welsh or English when dealing with us by telephone. Services are in place to ensure that:

- any member of the public contacting our switchboard will be answered with a bilingual greeting;
- our main switchboard will use a bilingual message on its answer phone;
- the rest of our staff will answer the telephone with a bilingual greeting by 2012 and will record bilingual messages on their personal answer-phones;
- if a caller rings one of our direct lines and wishes to speak Welsh, but the person taking the call cannot do so, they will try to transfer the call to a Welsh-speaking colleague able to deal with the enquiry;
- if a Welsh speaker is not available to deal with the enquiry, the caller will be given the choice of having a Welsh speaker call back as soon as possible, or if they wish, continuing the call in English or submitting their query in Welsh, by letter or email.

Individual meetings

When a member of the public wishes to discuss the National Assembly's procedures or services face-to-face, they are welcome to do so in Welsh or in English. We will facilitate the meeting by ascertaining beforehand the member of the public's preferred language, and if that is Welsh, provide a Welsh speaker to attend the meeting and where this is not possible, arrange simultaneous translation where reasonably practicable. If neither of these options is available, the member of the public will be invited to deal with the issue by correspondence in Welsh or to continue with a meeting in English. When face-to-face meetings are held at short notice, the above steps will be followed but we cannot guarantee to provide a Welsh speaker on every occasion.

Video conferencing

When video conferencing meetings are held, the same principles as for face-to-face meetings with the public will apply, subject to the limitations of the available technology.

The internet and social media

All documents prepared by the National Assembly and downloadable from our websites will be bilingual. Our social media feeds will also be available bilingually either through one bilingual or through separate Welsh and English accounts.

Information relating to the National Assembly is published on two websites, one in Welsh on www.cynulliadcymru.org and the other in English on www.assemblywales.org. It is structured in a way that enables the user to navigate directly from a page in one linguistic version to the corresponding page in the other language. Our standard practice will be to publish bilingual or separate Welsh and English versions of National Assembly produced documents onto the website. This may not be possible on all occasions if the documentation has a particularly short lifespan or needs to be published as a matter of urgency. We will keep records of occasions when we publish National Assembly produced documents in only one language in order to monitor the practice.

For search and indexing purposes, the information on some of our social media profiles is published English first and Welsh second. We will respond to queries on all our social media profiles in the language they are posted, regardless of the linguistic version of the profile they are using (eg a query in Welsh on the English Facebook page will still be replied to in Welsh, and vice versa).

When we design new websites, or when we develop our website, we will always consider the latest guidance on bilingualism and information technology.

Engaging with the public - Assembly events

For all public meetings, seminars, events or exhibitions arranged by Assembly staff, relating to National Assembly proceedings, we will:

- issue bilingual invitations and advertisements;
- assess the demand for a simultaneous interpretation service from Welsh to English and inform prospective attendees of the facility at the event to encourage them to contribute in their preferred language;
- provide supporting papers, any subsequent reports and all other information bilingually;
- do all we can to ensure that Welsh speaking staff are available at such meetings / events.

The same principles will apply to events at which we have a presence but which we have not organised.

Assembly Member-sponsored events and exhibitions

Organisations that have Welsh language bilingual standards, policies or schemes and hold events on the National Assembly estate which target Assembly Members or the public, are expected to operate in accordance with the principles of their schemes. Organisations without language schemes will be encouraged to operate in accordance with our outlined principles.

Visitors to the National Assembly estate

Front of house bilingual staff will wear the Welsh Language Board's 'Working Welsh' badges.

In those public places that are managed by the Assembly Commission (the Senedd, the Pierhead, Tŷ Hywel and the National Assembly's north Wales office, and in committee meetings and public events held beyond the National Assembly buildings) members of the public may speak with a front-line staff member either in Welsh or in English, in accordance with their preference.

At the point of booking, customers will be offered the choice of conducting education visits and Senedd tours through the medium of Welsh or English. We will continue to offer impromptu Senedd tours in Welsh or English to the best of our ability.

From time to time it will not be possible to ensure the presence of Welsh speakers as part of our front of house service but we are committed to improving the Welsh language skills of staff who offer these services and this Scheme's principles will be considered when planning for their staff training and recruitment.

Developing new services for the public

In dealing with the public in other ways, Welsh and English will be treated on a basis of equality and this will be built into the planning processes. New services will be bilingual from the outset. This includes various items such as audio commentary, interactive media and audio virtual and guided tours.

Assembly staff and our corporate arrangements

The Assembly Commission employs some 350 staff of which around one third are bilingual. Since the National Assembly's first Welsh Language Scheme in 2007, the proportion of Welsh-speaking staff has increased annually to facilitate, in particular, bilingual working in the majority of our front line areas. A number of other staff continue to learn Welsh, have undertaken bilingual telephone answering training sessions or informal meet and greet training.

Managing and encouraging Assembly staff's bilingual skills

In order to achieve our ambition of becoming a truly bilingual institution, we will:

- assess the provision of bilingual staff in each of our service areas annually;
- consider whether our bilingual provision is adequate to deliver services;
- prepare service area language skills plans to address any gaps in provision;
- recruit appropriately to posts which are designated as Welsh essential or desirable;
- provide mandatory language awareness training during corporate induction courses.

We will continue to ensure that only accredited translation and interpretation staff undertake text translation and simultaneous interpretation, and they will be encouraged to be members of the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters, or a similar professional organisation. Trainees will also be employed from time to time. However, and in order not to be over-reliant on the translation service, we will continue to encourage Welsh speaking staff with the necessary skills to provide a bilingual service.

In addition to encouraging our staff to learn or improve their Welsh language skills, we propose to place less reliance on our translation service over time. This is likely to mean that more of our bilingual staff will need to develop their Welsh drafting skills. The increased use of the text checking service suggests that there have been improvements in this area and that more staff are preparing drafts bilingually. However, this is an area we need to develop further in the future. If this Scheme's ambition is to be realised, the numbers learning Welsh also need to increase. It is proposed that by July 2012, all members of staff will be able to speak some level of Welsh in keeping with our bilingual ethos.

To facilitate growth in the use of our bilingual skills, we will prepare a draft bilingual skills strategy by March 2012 which will take the following factors into account:

- periodic audits on the number of bilingual staff and their location;
- skill levels in speaking, reading and writing in Welsh and annually monitoring improvements;
- formal training in learning and improving Assembly staff's Welsh skills and evaluating the success of the investment;
- lessons learnt from the tutoring of Assembly Members;

- a structured approach to helping staff increase their informal meet and greet and bilingual telephone answering skills;
- the need to establish a pool of Welsh language mentors and coaches within service areas;
- how we present our bilingual ethos and language awareness training in the induction process;
- the increasing pool of good examples of learning Welsh in the workplace;
- how we raise staff awareness about Welsh language learning options;
- how we include improving language skills in our Performance Management Development & Review objectives and Career Aspiration Plans;
- the Assembly Commission's budget;
- the need for flexible learning opportunities;
- how we implement the plan and monitor and evaluate progress.

The bilingual skills strategy will be implemented following a process of internal consultation and discussion with the Welsh Language Board or its successor.

Recruitment

The Assembly Commission is an equal opportunities employer. This means that everyone has the same opportunity for employment and promotion, based on ability, qualifications and suitability for the post. Consequently no one should be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be justified.

Each service area's language plan will be considered when they need to recruit staff. Where no suitable Welsh speaking candidates can be found for a post where Welsh is desirable, all appointed candidates will be encouraged to learn Welsh, and induction materials will clearly outline how this is beneficial for Assembly staff.

A candidate who is unable to speak Welsh may be appointed to a post for which Welsh is considered *essential*, on the understanding that time can be allowed to learn the language. In these cases, learning the language to the required level of competence, within a reasonable agreed period, will be a specific performance criterion.

When no suitable Welsh-speaking candidates can be found for a post where Welsh is *essential* (or while a candidate who is unable to speak Welsh has been appointed and is learning the language) we will make temporary arrangements under which the Welsh language service can be provided (by using, for example, Welsh speaking staff from elsewhere in our organisation to deliver parts of the service).

Information packs and application forms will always be provided bilingually. Applicants can complete the application forms in their preferred language.

Interviews will be held bilingually for posts where Welsh and English linguistic skills are essential. In addition, the proficiency of the candidate in English and Welsh will be assessed as part of the selection process.

Internal communications

Since the National Assembly's first Scheme was approved in 2007, there has been an increase in our bilingual internal communications to reflect the fact that around one third of our staff are bilingual and many are learning Welsh. To make the best use of limited resources, we will continue to prioritise the availability of bilingual documents for Assembly Members and the public.

In accordance with the bilingual ethos of the organisation we will always prepare the following internal communication messages to staff bilingually:

- all short messages on our staff newpage (though links which take users to other internal documents or Intranet pages may not always be bilingual);
- group email messages to all staff;
- staff surveys.

We will endeavour to increase the use of bilingual information to staff in other ways too such as bilingual static landing pages on our Intranet site and forms which may be used by members of staff from time to time. These developments will be considered by service areas with the aim of increasing the use of Welsh internally and working towards achieving our ambition of becoming a truly bilingual organisation.

Simultaneous translation is provided at all-staff meetings, and its provision at meetings of smaller groups will be developed to provide increasing opportunities to speak Welsh at meetings.

Using bilingual Information Communication Technology

The need to provide information and services in both English and Welsh, and to act according to this Scheme, is reflected in the Assembly Commission's approach to Information Communication Technology. In developing and purchasing Information Communication Technology the Welsh Language Board's *Bilingual Software Guidelines and Standards* will be fully considered.

Working in partnership

We will continue to work in partnership with other organisations that operate bilingually to monitor, review and enhance our bilingual services as appropriate.

If the Assembly Commission operates as the strategic and financial leader within a formal partnership, it will ensure that the partnership's public service elements will conform to this Scheme.

If the Assembly Commission joins a formal partnership that is led by others, the Assembly Commission's input will conform to this Scheme and other partners will be encouraged to conform to this Scheme or at a minimum with the spirit of the Welsh Language Act 1993.

If the Assembly Commission becomes a partner in a consortium, we would encourage the consortium to conform to this Scheme. When we operate in the name of this consortium, we would do so in accordance with this Scheme.

Services through third parties

Any contracts or arrangements between the Assembly Commission and third parties (such as recruitment agencies, catering companies, consultants, contractors etc.) to provide services to the public, will be in accordance with the relevant parts of this Scheme. Information will be provided to suppliers during the tendering process outlining in detail which goods or services will need to conform to this Scheme. This will be done in writing at the start of the process in order to ensure that bids and prices are on an equal and consistent basis. Suppliers of goods or services will be required to report on compliance with the relevant parts of the Scheme in accordance with the relevant clause(s) in the service agreement/contract/order between the Assembly Commission and the individual contractor. Specific written guidelines (which take into account advice from the Welsh Language Board or the Welsh Language Commissioner) will be provided for staff and suppliers in order to ensure consistent implementation and reporting on compliance.

Invitations to tender will normally be sent to suppliers in their language of choice where known, or otherwise bilingually. Unless all those involved in the process understand Welsh, for the purposes of internal evaluation, any tender bids completed in Welsh alone will be translated. Staff undertaking the assessment process will allow sufficient time for translation in their timetable. Over a period of time, with increased numbers of bilingual staff, the need for such translations should decrease.