Ofcom's annual report for the Welsh Language Commissioner

Our progress complying with the Welsh language Standards in 2021-22

Read the Welsh version of this report

Contents

1. Overview

This document sets out our annual progress on complying with Welsh language legislation, over the course of 2021-2022. [1]

We remain committed to promoting the Welsh language and enabling people to interact with Ofcom in their preferred language – whether that is Welsh or English. We have achieved this in a way that is proportionate and consistent with our existing duties.

The Welsh language Standards legislation was issued to Ofcom in a compliance notice by the Welsh Language Commissioner in January 2017. [2] This included 141 Standards, which enabled us to increase our work in Welsh, such as producing more consumer research and information about our work.

Ofcom's Welsh language progress

Ofcom's final compliance notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner has Ofcom's full authority, support, and approval. We have a Senior Welsh Language Advisor and a Welsh language Associate in place to manage Ofcom's Welsh language activities. This includes compliance work, translation requirements, social media, print and online production.

We continued to adapt our events programme successfully to the restrictions of Covid-19 to ensure we remained compliant with the legislation. We have held two virtual events in the past year, using simultaneous translation technology to ensure contributors can use the Welsh language with no impediment. We also held an in-person bilingual event at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show in July 2022.

When producing our Welsh language communications, we tailor our approach to ensure that content is relevant to our audiences in Wales and communicated in an engaging way. Our key activities working in the Welsh language over the past year include:

- Translating over 796,000 words into Welsh including key publications such as Connected Nations Wales and its interactive dashboard.
- Producing our first Welsh language podcast, as part of the 'Life Online' series.
- Running a fully bilingual media campaign, 'Stamping out Scams'.
- Producing several Welsh language videos, which we have shared on social media, including our Stamping out Scams videos, BSL videos and videos from the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show.
- Launching a new interactive learning module on the Welsh language for staff.
- Collaborating with the Welsh language Commissioner's office by featuring in two videos highlighting effective practices in our work promoting the Welsh language to staff and providing public events online.

Full details of our Welsh language activities over the past year are available in Section 3.

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[1] From September 2021-September 2022.

[2] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/96920/Hysbysiad-Cydymffurfio44-Y-Swyddfa-Gyfathrebiadau-en.pdf

2. About Ofcom

2.1   Ofcom is the independent communications regulator in the UK. Headquartered in London, with offices in each UK nation, we regulate the TV, radio and video on demand sectors, fixed line and mobile telecoms, postal services, plus the airwaves over which wireless devices operate. Earlier this year the UK Government published its Online Safety Bill, setting out Ofcom's new responsibilities that will help to keep people safe when they are online. We are also taking on new responsibilities related to telecoms security.

2.2   Ofcom makes sure that people in the UK get the best from their communications services. We also help to make sure people don't get scammed and are protected from bad practices. This is particularly important for vulnerable or older people. Our duties come from the UK Parliament.

Ofcom in Wales

2.3   While Ofcom's headquarters are in London, we ensure that we have a perspective across the nations and regions of the United Kingdom. We have a statutory duty to have regard to, among other things, the views, and interests of those who live across the UK. Our operations in the nations are led by senior Directors in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh, and London. Our national offices can draw on the full resources of the whole organisation to tackle issues that affect one part of the UK.

2.4   The Ofcom Wales office is based in Cardiff, employing six full-time staff who are fluent Welsh speakers and one part-time staff member who is not. Ofcom provides information to encourage staff to learn Welsh on the staff intranet. Welsh lessons for staff are also funded by the organisation.

Engaging with the Welsh language Commissioner

2.5   Ofcom has engaged constructively with the Welsh Language Commissioner's office for many years, ensuring that we have a thorough understanding of the Commissioner's requirements.

2.6   We have attended briefing sessions arranged by the Commissioner and responded in a timely manner to all queries with the Welsh language. We were pleased to have our work selected as examples of effective practice by the Commissioner this year. We welcome further opportunities to engage with the Commissioner's office.

3. Our approach

3.1   Ofcom seeks to treat the Welsh and English languages equally. When providing a service in the Welsh language, we ensure that the Welsh language is treated on the same basis as English in Wales. This applies to:

- the visual presentation of material
- when and how the material is published, provided or exhibited
- the size, position, and prominence of the material in any public place and its publication format.

Our approach is designed to allow people to engage with our work through the Welsh language.

3.2   We aim to innovate in our communications, and always encourage greater engagement from Welsh speakers. This includes inviting a range of external Welsh speaking contributors to take part in our public events, producing Welsh language interactive content and engaging Wales related content on social media.

3.3   In deciding when to provide a Welsh language service, we apply a consistent criterion. If the issue in question relates to matters that affect – or is likely to be of relevance to citizens and businesses in Wales, then we will provide a Welsh language service as standard practice.

Our progress over the past year

3.4   Our new Online Safety Regulatory Affairs Officer is a fluent Welsh speaker and has been in post since June 2022. This new role will be the main point of contact in Wales as Ofcom takes on responsibility for online safety. The individual has the skills and knowledge needed to factor in the Welsh language from the start.

3.5   In June 2021 we advertised three vacancies for our Advisory Committee Wales where speaking Welsh was a desirable criterion. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the interviews were held online using simultaneous translation to ensure candidates could use the Welsh language with no impediment. Two out of three of the successful candidates are fluent Welsh speakers, the third speaks Welsh as a second language.

3.6   In August 2021, we advertised a vacancy for a new Ofcom Content Board member for Wales where speaking Welsh was a desirable criterion. The successful candidate is a fluent Welsh speaker.

3.7   In total, Ofcom translated around 796,000 words into Welsh over the past year including publications, newsletters, news releases, update emails and webpages[3].

3.8   In September 2022 we launched our first Welsh language podcast, as part of Ofcom's 'Life Online' series. Featuring podcasters and presenters, Jessica Davies, and Melanie Owen, and

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[3] From September 2021 to September 2022

hosted by our Regulatory Affairs Online Safety Officer for Wales, we discussed the realities of life online for young women.

3.9   Our 'Stamping out Scams' campaign, which ran for 6 months from October 2021, focused on informing the public about phone and text scams and the importance of reporting these to Action Fraud by texting 7726. The campaign was fully bilingual and included Welsh videos and graphics.

3.10   We produced Welsh language videos which we shared on social media and our website on a variety of themes including our event at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, information about emergency video relay facilities for BSL users, and a video explainer about Ofcom's work.

3.11   We were delighted to take part in two promotional videos for the Welsh language Commissioner. Our work promoting the Welsh language internally in an engaging video and producing online events were selected as examples of effective practice in March 2022. Our case-studies and the accompanying videos are available on the Commissioner's website.

3.12   Taking inspiration from the Welsh language Commissioner's best practice suggestions, we produced a survey asking our Welsh speaking stakeholders about their views on our Welsh language services in May 2022. 94% of participants found our work in Welsh to be of an equivalent quality as our work in English. Comments included: "*The Welsh language services and information provided is of a high quality and assists us to ensure we use the correct terminology when we work bilingually.*"

3.13   We produced a Welsh interactive Power BI report to accompany our Connected Nations Wales report in December. This innovative dashboard allows users to examine Connected Nations data in their local area including coverage and usage statistics for both fixed and mobile networks.

3.14   Our pan UK English Twitter account promotes our Welsh account regularly. We are also working to improve engagement by posting bilingually on our other social media channels such as Instagram and Facebook if the subject matter is about Wales. We recently published a Welsh and English video from the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show on Instagram. We also published a bilingual post on Facebook in July showing photos taken by our Spectrum Officer in Carmarthen whilst looking for interference.

3.15   Our Wales events include bilingual participants and presentations, with stakeholders choosing to speak Welsh in the Q and A sessions. We provide simultaneous translation at our Wales events allowing participants to contribute using the language in which they are most comfortable. Highlights over the past year include the Welsh language S4C online session 'Medru Hansh' at our international Diversity in Broadcasting event in late September 2021, our Ofcom Plan of Work online event in February 2022 and an in-person event in partnership with the Farmers Union of Wales at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show in July 2022 exploring mobile coverage in rural areas.

3.16   We produced a range of major publications recently in the Welsh language, including a Consultation on Modernising the BBC's Operating Licence[4]; Ofcom's Annual Report 2021-22[5]; Ofcom's Annual Report on the BBC 2021[6]; Connected Nations Wales 2021[7] and Media Nations Wales 2022[8].

3.17   Our major consultations[9] include a Welsh language response form, to ensure Welsh speakers can provide feedback and comments in the language of their choice.

3.18   Our compulsory interactive training module on the Welsh language was launched in September 2022 which all key staff will complete via our Intranet Learning and Development online portal.

3.19   Our Welsh language Champions [10]took part in testing our new Welsh language interactive learning module in May 2022 providing valuable feedback before launch.

3.20   Finally, Ofcom audits how we take the interests of Welsh language speakers into account when we make regulatory decisions. As outlined in Ofcom's compliance notice, we have adopted a formal process of identifying the outcomes for Welsh speakers in a more structured and measurable manner when making policy decisions. We do this through our Welsh Language Standards Implementation Plan.[11] We updated the Plan following feedback from the Commissioner's Office in March 2022. This is modelled on a framework used across Ofcom to evaluate outcomes for customers.

Complaints

3.21   In May 2022, a complaint was sent to the Welsh language Commissioner regarding Ofcom's social media activities in Welsh. Ofcom is co-operating with the Commissioner's investigation into the complaint.

3.22   In June 2022 we launched a new bilingual complaints form using Salesforce, a system that Ofcom uses to manage complaints, for members of the public who wish to complain about our work in Welsh. This ensures that these complaints are dealt with in the same manner as other complaints sent to Ofcom.

3.23   Ofcom's Complaints Procedure explains how we aim to deal with complaints about our service delivery standards. The Complaints Procedure can be viewed on our website[12] and is also available as a hard copy in the Ofcom Wales office. Members of the public can

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[4] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/cymru/consultations-and-statements/category-1/modernising-bbc-operating-licence
[5] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/cymru/about-ofcom/annual-reports-and-plans/2021-22-annual-report
[6] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0030/228549/2020-21-adroddiad-blynyddol-ofcom-ar-y-bbc.pdf
[7] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0033/229785/cysylltur-gwledydd-2021-cymru.pdf
[8] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/242705/wales-report-2022-cym.pdf
[9] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/cymru/consultations-and-statements
[10] Our Welsh language Champions are a group of staff located strategically across key teams who ensure colleagues are aware of our Welsh language obligations.
[11] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/103023/welsh-language-standards-implementation-plan.pdf
[12] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/how-ofcom-is-run/nations-and-regions/wales/welsh-language

contact us at any time to discuss Welsh language matters or related complaints, and we encourage them to do so on the website.

Contact details

If you wish to contact us regarding our Welsh language Standards or the content of this annual report, please email us at: welshenquiries@ofcom.org.uk

A1. Our standard procedure for translating documents

A.1.1 **Assessing the need for translation**. If a document, (for example a consultation, report, executive summary, news release, web page, tweet, or stakeholder-update email), relates to matters that affect – or are likely to be of relevance to – consumers and citizens in Wales, then we will publish a Welsh language version of the document simultaneously with the English.

A.1.2 **Regular discussion about translation requirements.** Decisions regarding Welsh translation are discussed and agreed through regular meetings between Ofcom's Nations teams, including our Welsh language team, and our main communications team based in London.

A.1.3 **Working closely with policy teams.** The person leading a project is informed by the communications team, and the Welsh language team, of the need to publish a Welsh language version of the document. Policy teams can also highlight the Welsh language requirement in the new PPM Anywhere Project Management tool. This requirement is then incorporated into our publication schedule, to ensure the Welsh version is treated on an equal basis and published simultaneously with the English version.

A.1.4 **Working closely with translators.** Ofcom has a positive working relationship with our translators. They are alerted as far as possible in advance of forthcoming translation requirements, and a timetable for turnaround is agreed to coincide with the publication date. An approximate word count is also provided when possible. Our translators consistently translate Ofcom documents to the highest standard on a timely basis. They also maintain a glossary of complex Ofcom terms, to ensure consistency across translations. They seek to ensure that Welsh translations are as clear and comprehensible as possible, by following "Cymraeg Clir" ("Clear Welsh") principles.

A.1.5 **Checking for quality.** Ofcom's Welsh language team proof-reads and edits documents translated externally to ensure consistency, style, and tone appropriate to the organisation as well as technical accuracy. The documents are then forwarded to the digital team for simultaneous publication alongside the English versions.