

The Official Languages Scheme: Annual Report 2024-25

July 2025



The Welsh Parliament is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people. Commonly known as the Senedd, it makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

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Adam Price MS

Commissioner with
responsibility for
Official Languages

Foreword

The past year has been a period of strategic preparation as we look ahead to the Seventh Senedd. As a result of the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024, we foresee a significant increase in demand for bilingual services. We will also need to ensure that our language provision remains robust, effective, and appropriate for the future.

The Official Languages Scheme continues to be a cornerstone of our work, reflecting our commitment to dignity, respect, and linguistic diversity across the organisation. We are proud of the way our staff, regardless of their level of bilingualism, contribute professionally and passionately to supporting Members of the Senedd, their support staff, and the public in both official languages.

Over the past year, we have strengthened our internal provision by developing new resources, and continued to enhance the language training available to both Members and staff. The success of the Courtesy Module and the development of the Welsh Confidence Module are testament to our commitment to nurturing language skills and confidence at all levels.

This year has also seen new developments, with the adoption of the new HR and Payroll system offering a high-quality bilingual experience for users. The lessons learned from this project have been valuable in shaping our approach to assessing tenders and ensuring that service providers understand and respect the Senedd's bilingual ethos.

We have continued to share our expertise with other organisations, welcoming a variety of interparliamentary visitors, and participating in learning events and conferences. Our closer relationship with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office also offers new opportunities to benchmark and improve our provision.

Looking to the future, we will continue to consult and engage with stakeholders to ensure the Official Languages Scheme reflects the needs of the organisation and the people we serve. The coming year presents opportunities to strengthen our commitment to bilingualism, and we are determined to continue leading the way as a truly bilingual legislature. In the Seventh Senedd, our ambition is to see Welsh become a natural working language in every aspect of Senedd life.



Our performance

Our commitment and values

The Senedd is an organisation that acts according to its values, and those values reflect a commitment to diversity across the organisation. We appreciate and encourage diversity within our workforce. We appreciate every member of staff – whatever their level of bilingual skills – for their commitment to the Senedd and for their professional and parliamentary expertise. The principles enshrined in the dignity and respect policy are at the heart of everything we do. We expect every member of staff to be committed to providing support and parliamentary services of the highest standard to Members of the Senedd and their support staff, and to the public, in both official languages.

The main aim of the Official Languages Scheme is to ensure that we maintain the highest possible standards and respond positively to the expectations of those involved with us. Inevitably, the changes brought about by the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024 mean that we will need to take a fresh look at the official languages framework to ensure that it is fit for purpose and that we are in a position to continue providing first class bilingual services, with a significant increase in demand for the services, which will happen by default.

Service standards

Senedd business

Members of the Senedd can prepare for committee meetings in their preferred language. The integrated teams for individual committees prepare briefing documents in accordance with the wishes of committee members. All documents prepared for the proceedings of committees are bilingual, and Members can choose to contribute and discuss in their preferred language. Members who receive support from the Official Languages Team can arrange sessions to prepare for proceedings. This often includes practising the delivery of a 90-second statement, asking a question in plenary, or questioning a witness at a committee meeting.

The Parliamentary Procedures and Skills Service is a centre of expertise for procedural knowledge, skills and resources. Part of the Service's work is to provide specialist training to Senedd Commission staff in order to ensure that Senedd committees receive first-class support, and operate in the most effective way possible. The training includes elements relating to bilingualism where appropriate. The team has also modified the guidelines available to witnesses on taking part in Senedd proceedings, in order to ensure that they are as comfortable as possible when appearing before Committees. This includes information about the bilingual nature of committees and the simultaneous translation provision.

Internal communications

Following discussions regarding communication with Members and their support staff, the Learning and Member Engagement Team is working on creating a new template for sending emails to Members and their support staff. It was important for Members and their support staff to be able to easily recognise messages from the team, and see the information in the official language of their choice by default. Feedback has already been received on the template and further work will be needed to ensure that it complies with the Senedd's accessibility and cyber security rules before it can be launched. The template will ensure that information sent to Members is in a suitable format and complies with the requirements of the Official Languages Scheme.

Engagement

As the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024 comes into force, preparations for the Seventh Senedd are now underway. It is necessary that we create and share information that is suitable for all the people of Wales in order to explain the upcoming changes. In trying to ensure that all people in Wales are aware of the changes, Members and their support staff will be in a unique position to convey the information as they come into direct contact with their constituents when working in their constituencies. The Communications Service has created a package of resources that Members of the Senedd can use to share information about the 2026 election and the changes to the voting system and constituencies, all available bilingually. Senedd Research also publishes articles on any changes and developments for those who wish to read more.

Senedd Research published '25 Years Welsh Law-making' to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Senedd in June 2025, the collection of articles considers the key elements that come together to make law-making in Wales unique including its role as a bi-lingual legislature. It continued to publish articles looking at Senedd reform and wider electoral changes such as proposals on automatic voter registration, recall and deliberate deception.

Senedd Research is developing a dedicated resource page on Senedd 2026 elections. Resources will include in-depth and explainer articles on the 2026 Senedd election and Senedd Reform, wider electoral changes and use of interactive mapping and infographics to show these changes in a visual format. It is also producing timeline for election that will set out key deadlines and dates in the run up to the election next year.

It is very important that the staff of the Senedd Commission are also fully familiar with all these changes. They will need to provide services to the members elected under the new system, but also, they will need to be prepared to convey the information as they engage with others. This could be in their personal lives, or as part of their work. The Communications Service has created bilingual, easy-to-use resources for Commission staff, and has produced display material for the Senedd building to support the work of the Engagement Team as well. The information and exhibitions all reflect the natural bilingual ethos of the Welsh Parliament.

Procurement and partnership working

Over the past year the Senedd Commission has adopted a new human resources and payroll system. The ability to work bilingually is an integral part of the provision, with the whole system available in the user's choice of official language. The non-functional requirements were used as part of the procurement process, and the tenders were assessed against those requirements. While testing and adopting the new system, several issues related to the ability to work in the individual's choice of official language have arisen. The team had to work with third party software to ensure the quality and accuracy of the system language. Following additional time investment by the project team, and the translation and human resources teams, we succeeded in ensuring a high quality bilingual system for Members, Support Staff and Commission Staff. Work on the project will continue as we gradually adopt additional elements of the system over the coming year. In undertaking this work, the Official Languages Team has learnt a lot about procuring bilingual systems, and these lessons will be recorded along with any other lessons learnt as part of the project.

Sharing expertise

Sharing our experiences and expertise and learning from others is important to the Senedd Commission. This year, as usual, we have engaged with others to offer an overview of our work, or to offer people the opportunity to experience our work practices. During the year, as part of the provision to celebrate St David's Day, our Welsh Tutors were available to provide a Taster Lesson for beginners and a *Clonc Cyflym* (quick chat) session for people to practice their Welsh skills. Both things are an integral part of the team's provision internally, and it is nice to be able to share these working methods more widely. The Official Languages Team has also provided sessions on working bilingually and the Official Languages Scheme. Presentations were made as part of the Interparliamentary Workplace Learning Week, and visits from the Northern Ireland Assembly and the House of Commons Library. In addition, the Translation and Reporting Service recently welcomed students from the MA course in Professional Translation Studies. The students heard about our work on language technology and working bilingually as well as simultaneous translation in proceedings broadcast as part of the day.

Our work to prepare for the Seventh Senedd requires an evaluation of the official languages framework. We will carry out a review of the legal framework underpinning the Official Languages Scheme during the coming year as part of our preparations for the Seventh Senedd. We will also consult with Members, their support staff and Senedd Commission staff to understand their views on the Official Languages Scheme, our bilingual services, and the provision for supporting

people to develop and use their Welsh language skills at work. The feedback will be extremely valuable as we plan for the future. Ensuring that we are at the cutting edge in terms of our provision is also very important, and to this end, the Official Languages Team has ensured that we establish and maintain relationships with other leading bodies in this field. The Welsh Tutors regularly receive information from the National Centre for Learning Welsh and take part in training sessions as needed. The Tutors will also attend the Centre's conferences where possible in order to foster links and ensure that they learn about best practices for supporting new speakers.

Over the past year, the Official Languages Team has also established a more active relationship with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office. A specific point of contact has been established for sharing expertise and seeking support going forward. The Official Languages Team will receive invitations to briefing and training sessions, and will join the Commissioner's Conference on the use of Welsh in the Workplace in July. As part of the work of planning for the Seventh Senedd the relationship will be very valuable in terms of benchmarking standards and provision and receiving feedback on any possible changes.

Skills strategy

The reviewing and updating of service language plans has been ongoing. A new template was introduced for the plans, which makes it easier for Heads of Service to collect the necessary information and update the information regularly. Most of the services have now drawn up a draft plan in the new template and we will set about refining the plans and importing the information from the Welsh language skills survey carried out last year into the plans. This work places us in a strong position to assess the capacity of services to provide bilingual services for the Seventh Senedd.

We are already laying the groundwork for a comprehensive language audit across the organisation, to be carried out in the Seventh Senedd, so that we can map in detail the linguistic skills and needs of everyone within the institution – including Members, support staff, group staff and the entire Commission workforce.

Following a pilot period last year, a new Welsh Language Skills Matrix was adopted which offers clearer descriptions of the different levels and links the levels to the courses of the National Centre for Learning Welsh or other qualifications in order to give context to those who self-assess. We are aware of the fact that individuals often underestimate their linguistic skills when self-assessing, and the hope is that this will ensure a clear and accurate picture of the language skills of Senedd Commission staff.



Statistical information

In accordance with Service Standard 11.3 of the Official Languages Scheme, the Senedd Commission is required to include statistical information in its annual report on the Official Languages Scheme. We use this information to ensure that we continue to provide world-class bilingual services, and that we're implementing the Scheme consistently and in accordance with all service standards and our stakeholders' expectations. The previous year's statistical information is also provided for reference.

Recruitment

Table 1: Number of posts advertised at courtesy-level Welsh, or with a higher language skills requirement

External

	Posts advertised	Courtesy level	Combination of skills*	Level 1-5
2021-22	47	32	0	15
2022-23	51	34	0	17
2023-24	34	24	0	10
2024-25	40	29	0	11

Internal

	Posts advertised	Courtesy level	Combination of skills*	Level 1-5
2021-22	20	9	0	11
2022-23	19	13	0	6
2023-24	27	20	0	7
2024-25	36	28	0	8

Total

	Posts advertised	Courtesy level	Combination of skills*	Level 1-5
2021-22	67	41	0	26
2022-23	70	47	0	23
2023-24	61	44	0	17
2024-25	76	57	0	19

Percentages

	Courtesy level posts	Level 1 - 5 posts
2021-22	61%	39%
2022-23	67%	33%
2023-24	72%	28%
2024-25	75%	25%

The language skills required for each position are set out in each individual service's language schemes, and are decided in discussions between Official Languages Co-ordinators, Heads of Service and the Official Languages Team. Teams confirm the language skills required for each vacancy or new position as part of the process of seeking the Executive Board's permission to advertise posts.

We have seen a reduction in the number of level 1- 5 posts advertised over the past few years. The majority of posts advertised have become vacant due to post holders moving on to new roles either internally or outside the organisation. Any new posts advertised in preparation for the Seventh Senedd have been individually assessed in accordance with the requirements of the role and the service, and language skills requirements are set out in the individual Service Language Plans. The results of the Welsh Language Skills Audit conducted in April last year provide assurance that the number of staff members with Welsh Language Skills has been maintained. The number of staff members self assessing at level 4 or 5 remained at the same level, with the number of staff members with level 1-3 skills increasing. The number of staff members stating that they have no Welsh Language skills at all has decreased.

Senedd business

Table 2: Documents published by Senedd Committees in Welsh and English, and bilingually for the year 2024-25

Type of document	Welsh	English	Bilingual
Prepared in-house		35	1154
Secretary of State		20	4
Welsh Government		40	1079
Individual members		21	9
External	33	677	314

Senedd Committees draft all documents to be published on the Senedd website in both languages. In accordance with the requirements of the Official Languages Scheme, letters and documents for individuals or organisations who have stated a

preferred language will be drafted in that language only. It is for members of individual Committees to decide in which format any documents for consideration in private Committee sessions (e.g. draft reports), and Members' briefings are provided. This includes the language used in those documents. Committee support staff speak to Members to understand their ways of working, and to ensure that they are able to prepare for meetings and take part in proceedings in a timely manner, and in their preferred official language.

Table 3: Number of documents laid in Welsh and English, and bilingually.

Year	Number of documents laid	Number of documents not laid bilingually	Percentage
2021-22	930	69	7%
2022-23	885	47	5%
2023-24	777	39	5%
2024-25	811	33	4%

Documents by the Senedd Commission are drafted and laid in both languages. In accordance with Standing Order 15.4, any document laid or business tabled by the Presiding Officer, the Commission, the government, any committee or the Clerk, must be laid or tabled in both English and Welsh, so far as is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable.

The documents that were not laid bilingually this year come under two categories:

- Reports by external bodies that the Senedd Commission or Welsh Government are required to lay before the Senedd;
- Subordinate legislation;

The Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee has continued to seek to address a long-standing issue which involves some types of subordinate legislation being laid in the Senedd in English only.

As detailed in last year's annual report, the Committee has previously sought the views of committees in the UK Parliament on the procedural barriers to the laying of bilingual instruments in the UK Parliament. In response, the House of Commons Procedure Committee told the Committee that no procedures prevent the laying of bilingual instruments if the relevant Act requires this.

In April 2024, the Committee wrote to the Welsh Government's then Counsel General, Mick Antoniw MS, to bring the views of UK Parliamentary committees to his attention. The Counsel General welcomed the Committee's findings; however

he said that the UK Government's well-established position – that the relevant instruments should be made in English only – presents a significant barrier to addressing the issue.

The Committee therefore wrote to the Secretary of State for Wales, Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP, in September 2024 to seek to understand the UK Government's position. In response, the Secretary of State highlighted the Procedure Committee's statement that bilingual instruments may only be laid in circumstances in which the relevant Act requires it. In light of the fact that no statutory requirements prescribe the language in which a statutory instrument must be made, the Secretary of State said that the "default position" would be that the relevant statutory instruments are laid in English only.

The Committee has written again to the Secretary of State and to the Procedure Committee to seek further clarity on this issue, and will publish responses on its website once received.

Table 4: Business laid in the Table Office

Year	Oral Questions	Written Questions	Motions	Amendments	Statements of Opinion	Topical Questions
2021-22 (Welsh)	14%	4%	2%	4%	10%	18%
2021-22 (Both)	0	0	11%	11%	3%	0
2022-23 (Welsh)	15%	3%	2%	0	6%	10%
2022-23 (Both)	0	0	51%	32%	2%	0
2023-24 (Welsh)	9%	1%	3%	11%	4%	6%
2023-24 (Both)	1%	0	55%	31%	2%	0
2024-25 (Welsh)	11%	9%	6%	25%	1.5%	7%
2024-25 (Both)	1.5%	0.5%	63%	32%	3%	0%

Individual Members can table business in their preferred language. Training is available for Members and support staff who wish to improve their written Welsh skills, and we actively promote the training further to ensure they are confident in using their skills when tabling business.

Proceedings

Table 5: Percentage of Welsh language contributions in Plenary proceedings and Committee meetings.

Type of contribution	Percentage of contributions in Welsh 2021-22	Percentage of Welsh language contributions 2022-23	Percentage of contributions in Welsh 2023-24	Percentage of contributions in Welsh 2024-25
Plenary proceedings	30%	30%	28%	29%
Committee proceedings	12%	8%	9%	9%

Support is available to Members in their preferred official language when preparing for plenary and committee proceedings, including briefing documents. A number of external issues affect the percentage of contributions, including the language choice of witnesses giving evidence to committees, and the less structured nature of discussions in committee meetings.

The figures for the contributions in committee meetings continue to be a source of concern. We will continue with our efforts to ensure that Members and others who take part in proceedings are aware of their right to use their preferred language in proceedings, and are confident to do so. As well as continuing to provide services such as bespoke training for Members learning Welsh, bilingual briefing documents and glossaries. Committee arrangements are already being strengthened: Chairs are offered a standard script to encourage Welsh language contributions, and together with the Chairs' Forum, we will develop a plan to expand the use of Welsh in committees to be piloted in 2025-26. As part of our preparations for the Seventh Senedd, we will need to better understand the reasons for the low levels of Welsh contributions, and discuss what kind of support would encourage participants to use their Welsh skills in proceedings.



Themes

Procurement

The non-functional requirements adopted last year were used for several procurement processes this year. Tenders are assessed against the requirements with the score counting as part of the assessment of the total project requirements. On the whole, the requirements have worked well, and have ensured that those submitting tenders are aware of our ethos as a bilingual organisation and what is meant by default bilingual provision. However, the recent experience of introducing the Human Resources and Payroll system has given us the opportunity to consider once again what would help those submitting tenders to understand our ethos and culture. The process of gathering lessons learned for this project will be an opportunity for us to reassess the type of information needed by companies that submit tenders and respond to the non-functional requirements.

Language skills

While planning for the Seventh Senedd, the Official Languages Team has made additions to our provision that go above and beyond the courses of the National Centre for Learning Welsh to ensure tailored provision for the Senedd. After a successful pilot period last year, the new Courtesy Module was adopted. The module is now available to Commission staff who are appointed to Courtesy level posts as part of their induction period, and to anyone else who wishes to receive the training including Members and their support staff.

The wide provision of training and support for those who wish to learn Welsh or improve their skills continues, and this year 23 new speakers have sat the examinations of the National Centre for Learning Welsh. As well as providing lessons and support for new Welsh speakers, this year we have focused on provision for more experienced Welsh speakers. In addition to the ongoing language skills refresher provision, the Official Languages Team has also collaborated with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to offer Commission staff and support staff the opportunity to gain the Language Skills Certificate. The Certificate gives formal evidence of the level of Welsh language skills, and the ability to use Welsh in the workplace. Four candidates are currently working towards the qualification. Further to that, the team has also developed a Welsh Language Confidence Module. The aim of the module is to offer Welsh speakers an opportunity to improve their oral Welsh skills, and increase their confidence to use their skills at work. We will pilot the module during the 2025 summer term. It

is hoped that this module and the Courtesy Module will be offered regularly as part of the team's provision.

Over the coming year, the Senedd Commission will also adopt the Learning element of the Human Resources and Payroll system. As part of the process, there is likely to be a new facility for the provision of e-training. This will be timely as part of the preparation work for the Seventh Senedd, and an opportunity for the Official Languages Team to review the e-learning resources available to those who wish to study independently. The team will also be able to develop packages of e-learning tailored to the needs of Members, their support staff and Commission staff. It is hoped that these packs will be available for distribution as part of the induction period at the beginning of the Seventh Senedd.

Use of Welsh language skills

As previously mentioned, the Official Languages Team provides training to develop or improve the Welsh language skills of Members and their support staff. An integral part of this work is to look for ways to support Members to continue using their Welsh skills confidently in meetings and at events on the estate. This includes specific provision for Welsh speakers who wish to make more use of their skills at work whether verbally or in writing. The team can also provide tailored training for individuals or groups as required. The simultaneous translation team is aware of the developments in the field and their expertise ensures the best experience for users of the service. This includes ensuring that we are at the cutting edge in terms of equipment and simultaneous translation technology used in proceedings. The provision of reliable, easy-to-use and convenient equipment was central to the considerations for the Siambr redesign, and temporary relocation of proceedings to Siambr Hywel.

Our official languages are also a key part of the wider planning work for the Seventh Senedd. There is representation from the Official Languages Team on the Seventh Senedd Project Board in order to ensure oversight of all the developments and changes that are taking place. As part of the consideration of the official languages framework to ensure that it is fit for purpose for the Seventh Senedd, we will be working on an approach to ensure that we collect information about Members' language choice. The intention is to collect the information as part of the induction process in the early days following the election. At that time, we will reinforce Members' awareness of the Official Languages Scheme and their right to use their chosen official language in all elements of their work. We will also try to understand more about their needs in terms of Welsh language skills training, and let them know about the support available to them whether that be from the team or via technology.

Monitoring and compliance

Three complaints were received this year, and we managed to deal with all on an informal level without having to move to the formal complaints process. The complaints related to:

The language choice of support staff on joining the organisation

A new member of support staff wished to receive a Welsh e-mail address and ICT interfaces. An appropriate record was not made of the individual's choice of official language as part of the process of applying for ICT equipment. In the first instance, efforts were made to ensure that the member of support staff could use interfaces etc. in their chosen language as soon as possible, and the email address was changed. Subsequently, changes were made to the profile request form and tools for new support staff to ensure that information about the individual's language choice cannot be omitted in the future. In addition, there was further discussion with the individual and it was an opportunity for the teams involved to understand more about how support staff work and their expectations in terms of our official languages.

Letter on behalf of a committee in English only

Following a scrutiny session by one of the Senedd committees, it was agreed that a letter would be sent with further questions and comments to the witness. Unfortunately, the letter was sent in English only with the Welsh version following later. However, the person receiving the letter had informed us that Welsh was their official language of choice. As a result, it was not possible for them to act on the content of the letter until they subsequently received the Welsh version. After investigating the complaint it was clear that this was a mistake, and was not a reflection of the normal processes of the team. The complainant was contacted to issue an apology and to explain that this was a mistake. In addition, the opportunity was taken to strengthen the processes for sending correspondence on behalf of committees, namely to send correspondence in the recipient's language of choice, if known, or alternatively to send all correspondence bilingually with both versions being sent at the same time.

The system for recruitment to senior officer posts and public appointments

A complaint was received regarding the fact that the Senedd Commission was using an agency to recruit for senior officer positions and public appointments, and that not every element of the agency's provision was in line with the requirements of the Official Languages Scheme. Following investigation, it was concluded that we had not complied with the requirements of the Official Languages Scheme in terms of the service provided on our behalf by a third party, despite the fact that we had outlined our expectations in terms of bilingualism to the agency. The agency was unable to provide the expected level of service to Welsh speakers contacting them or wishing to apply for a post. As a result, steps were taken to rectify the issue in order to avoid such a situation in the future. We will, when advertising jobs in the future with the agency, emphasise the need to ensure that the process is completely bilingual and that it is necessary to communicate with individuals in their language of choice by default. We will also look again at the content of the contract for recruitment services during the procurement process when the contract is advertised for renewal.

Failure to comply

We have also failed to reach the high standards that have been set out in the Scheme, or failed to meet the expectations of users of our services in relation to papers provided for one of the Senedd Commission meetings. The nature of the discussion, including the fact that matters changed rapidly, the length and quantity of the papers and the need for contributions from external organisations meant that it was not possible to translate all the papers into Welsh in time for the meeting. An apology was made to the Commissioners and every effort is made to ensure that papers are prepared in a timely manner to allow for them to be translated for each meeting.







Senedd Cymru
Welsh Parliament

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