

Ministry of Defence Welsh Language Scheme

This scheme has been prepared in accordance with section 21(3) of the Welsh Language Act 1993, and received the full endorsement of the Welsh Language Board on 15 June 1999.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has adopted the principle that in the conduct of its business with the public in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages on a basis of equality.

1.2 This Scheme sets out how the Ministry of Defence will give effect to that principle. The Scheme applies equally to the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Ministry of Defence Headquarters and its agencies and trading funds. In drawing up the measures set out in the Scheme, the Department has taken account of what is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable.

1.3 This Scheme will only be altered with the agreement of both the Ministry of Defence and the Welsh Language Board.

The Ministry of Defence

1.4 The Ministry of Defence is the largest Department of State, employing approximately 106,000 civilian personnel throughout the world and some 210,000 Service personnel. It has a dual role: it functions as a Department of State, in formulating defence policy, directing the implementation of that policy, and supporting Ministers in their accountability to Parliament, and it incorporates the highest-level military headquarters, giving military advice to the Government and providing strategic direction down to the Commands.

1.5 The MOD's purpose is to define the strategy and maximise, within the resources allocated, the defence capability required to:

- deter any threat to, and if necessary defend, the freedom and integrity of the United Kingdom and its dependent territories, including by providing support as necessary for the civil authority in countering terrorism; and
- contribute to the promotion of the UK's wider security interests, including the protection and enhancement of freedom and democratic institutions, and the promotion of free trade;

and thus to promote peace and to help maximise the UK's international prestige and influence.

1.6 The Ministry of Defence has a major presence in Wales, with a number of military units, central divisions and agencies being based or represented in the Principality. However, only a small proportion of its work involves the provision of services to the public in Wales. Those units for whom services to the public are a major function include the Meteorological Office (through the Cardiff Weather Centre), the RAF Community Relations Office in Welshpool, and various Armed Forces Careers Offices.

2. SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY

New policies and initiatives

2.1 The MOD will ensure that in introducing new policies and initiatives which involve an interface between the Department and members of the public, early consideration will be given to the need to provide for the use of the Welsh language. In this way new policy will move the Department closer to implementing language equality in its dealings with the public at every opportunity.

2.2 It is the objective of the MOD that new policies and initiatives should be consistent with this Welsh Language Scheme, assessing the linguistic consequences of new policies and initiatives and applying the measures contained in this Scheme to them as they are developed. The MOD will consult with the Welsh Language Board in advance regarding proposals which will affect the Scheme or the schemes of other organisations.

2.3 The content of the MOD Welsh Language Scheme will be publicised within the Department, and guidance made available by means of annual Defence Council Instructions and Personnel Instructions to all civilian and military personnel involved in policy planning and development.

Delivery of service

2.4 Service provision by the MOD or its Agencies to the public in Wales will be delivered in accordance with the principles set out in this Scheme in sections 3-5. The approach by each division will depend greatly on its size, the amount and nature of its contact with the public and the service being delivered. However, resources can be used flexibly between divisions in order to meet the Scheme's commitments. Staff have been informed of their responsibilities in respect of the Welsh Language Act, and detailed guidance and instructions will be made available to those who provide services to the public in Wales.

Standards of service

2.5 Services delivered in the Welsh language will be of an equally high standard to those delivered in English in accordance with the principles in this Scheme. The MOD will ensure that new and existing computer systems used by staff will allow this to be achieved. Arrangements to monitor and review standards of service provision will ensure that the quality of service provision, whether in Welsh or English, is maintained consistently throughout the Ministry of Defence

3. DEALING WITH THE WELSH SPEAKING PUBLIC

Written correspondence

3.1 Members of the public in Wales will be welcome to correspond with the Ministry of Defence in English or Welsh. Letters received in Welsh will receive a written reply in Welsh.

3.2 The Service First (formerly Citizen's Charter) target of 20 working days for reply will apply to letters received in Welsh. As with communication in English, a holding reply will be sent in the appropriate language where this target is unlikely to be met.

3.3 Any individual or organisation who expresses a preference to conduct their business in Welsh will receive future correspondence in Welsh. The MOD will initiate correspondence in Welsh with an individual or organisation who is known to prefer that language. This includes correspondence to those who have spoken to the Department in Welsh by telephone or at a meeting. Staff will maintain a

record of persons who have expressed a preference for Welsh to them, to enable the MOD to fulfil this commitment.

3.4 Where a letter directed at multiple individuals or organisations in Wales includes some addressees whose language preference may not be English, the letter will be bilingual, or if necessary be sent in separate English and Welsh versions. This includes circular and standard letters.

3.5 The provisions above for written correspondence in Welsh will apply equally to electronic correspondence. All correspondence received by e-mail in Welsh in the future will receive a reply in Welsh.

Telephone communication

3.6 The Ministry of Defence have set up a Welsh helpline as a service to the Welsh-speaking public. All calls to the Welsh helpline will be conducted in Welsh. If possible, the call will then be transferred to a Welsh speaker in the MOD unit most able to help with the enquiry. If no Welsh speakers in the MOD have the necessary expertise to answer the enquiry directly, the caller will be given the option of a) continuing the call in English, b) writing in Welsh (to which a written reply in Welsh will be provided) or c) leaving a message with a Welsh speaker to which a written reply in Welsh will be sent.

Public meetings

3.7 Where members of the public attend the MOD's public meetings, presentations or other official events in Wales, organisers of such events will either:

a) provide and publicise a full or stand-by interpretation facility; or

b) invite those proposing to attend to notify the organiser if they wish to contribute in Welsh, so that an interpretation facility may be arranged.

3.8 Where an individual or organisation attending an MOD public meeting in Wales has given prior notification, or where an interpretation facility has been publicised, contributions in Welsh will be welcome. Welsh speakers will wherever possible be present to welcome them and deal with any queries. Consideration will also be given to the need for Welsh speakers to help with presentations, school visits, careers fairs and other occasions when the MOD comes into contact with the public.

3.9 Written material associated with public meetings, presentations and other official events in Wales will also provide for Welsh speakers' requirements where Welsh speakers are known or expected to attend, or where an interpretation facility has been publicised.

Other dealings with the public

3.10 If a member of the public wishes to speak Welsh in a private meeting with an MOD official or Minister, they will be welcome to contribute in Welsh. Suitable interpretation facilities will be arranged provided that sufficient notice is given of this requirement. Guidance to staff will make clear that, when arranging a private meeting, Welsh speakers should be offered the right to speak Welsh.

3.11 This commitment covers security vetting interviews with referees, but not with the vetting subjects. Other interviews with members of the public are also included, but the commitment cannot be extended to recruitment interviews with applicants for the Services or for civilian posts where fluency in English will be required.

3.12 Where new means of communicating with the public are developed, for example using televisual links, the requirements of the Welsh Language Act will be considered.

4. THE DEPARTMENT'S PUBLIC FACE

Corporate identity

4.1 Units and establishments in Wales will adopt a bilingual corporate identity to members of the public. The name, address, logo, visual details and other standard information will be bilingual on letters and faxes written by these units to members of the public in Wales, on business cards, identity badges, vehicles and any other relevant goods and materials.

Signs and notices

4.2 All signs in public areas in Wales for which the MOD is responsible will either be bilingual or with separate Welsh and English versions. This includes external signs at the entrance to and on the boundaries of sites, and other signs in areas to which there is regular public access.

4.3 Where separate Welsh and English signs are provided, they will be equal in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence. All comparable Welsh and English text on signs and notices will be equal in terms of size, quality, legibility and prominence.

4.4 All signs at the entrance of sites, and all new or replacement signs, will conform to these principles by 30 June 1999. All other relevant signs and notices will conform by 30 June 2000.

Published material (including forms)

4.5 The Ministry of Defence produces a vast range of publications, forms and other printed material for the general public, for recruitment, for Parliament, and for more specialist foci. Priority will be given to providing in Welsh those publications and forms whose prime audience is the general public and which relate specifically to Wales or will have the widest readership among the Welsh-speaking public. Due weight will also be given to the need to provide a sufficient range of information in Welsh, and the importance of supplying material for Welsh schools in both languages. While it is not possible because of the range of material involved to be absolutely precise, decisions will be taken on an objective and consistent basis. In order to ensure this, proposals of the relevant areas of MOD with regard to publications will be regularly reviewed centrally, and if necessary revised. In turn, the monitoring unit will pass information regarding bilingual/Welsh language material to the Welsh Language Board.

4.6 Material translated into Welsh will be provided bilingually or, if this is not feasible for financial or practical reasons, in separate Welsh and English versions. Where separate versions are produced, both versions will be equally accessible to the public and of the same quality. Where it is a new document, publication will be simultaneous both in England and Wales wherever possible; where exceptionally this cannot be achieved, the Welsh or bilingual version will be available as soon as possible. Written guidance on the production and design of bilingual publications will be available for the staff and contractors involved.

4.7 The price to the public of a Welsh version of a document will not be greater than that of the English version. Likewise the selling price of a bilingual publication will not be greater than that of a single-language version of the same publication.

4.8 Material which does not fall into the remit of this Scheme includes technical documents, legislation and Parliamentary papers, documents aimed at a specific group where the demand for a Welsh language version is expected to be very low, and large documents which although available to the general public are not specifically related to Welsh issues and are unlikely to elicit widespread interest and response.

4.9 Where publications do not warrant full translation into Welsh, consideration will be given to translating the document in part, or in summary form, taking into account the likely breadth of public interest for the material concerned.

4.10 The MOD will incorporate a Welsh page as part of its internet Web site. This page will include translations of those documents on the main site which are available in Welsh versions in hard copy. The address of the MOD Web site is <http://www.mod.uk> .

Press notices

4.11. Press notices relating to Welsh issues, whose subject matter is of interest to the Welsh-language media, will be provided in Welsh. Where the timescale prevents the simultaneous release of a press notice in English and Welsh, a summary will where possible be provided in Welsh, with the full translated text following at the earliest opportunity.

Publicity and advertising

4.12 When conducting advertising and publicity campaigns in Wales, the MOD will treat the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality and cater for the needs of the Welsh-speaking public. This will include media campaigns recruiting for the Armed Forces; posters, hoardings and other forms of public display; television advertising; exhibitions, school visits, careers fairs and recruitment shows in Wales; surveys; and publicity and recruitment literature. Museums in Wales for which the MOD provides financial assistance will also be encouraged to cater for Welsh speakers.

4.13 All public and official MOD notices and advertisements specifically placed in Wales, whether in newspapers, in the Welsh broadcast media or displayed on public notice boards or elsewhere, will appear either bilingually or with Welsh and English versions shown together. This principle also applies to recruitment advertising. Consideration will also be given to use of the local Welsh language media where appropriate.

4.14 Where separate Welsh and English notices or advertisements are provided, they will be equal in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence. All comparable Welsh and English text in notices or advertisements will be equal in terms of size, quality, legibility and prominence.

4.15 Publicity and advertising in Wales will where possible make it clear that the public are welcome to correspond with the MOD in Welsh. This will include publicising the telephone number for the MOD's Welsh helpline.

4.16 A statement outlining these requirements will be included in the MOD Personnel Manual (Recruitment) when it is next updated.

5. IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE SCHEME

Administrative arrangements

5.1 The Ministry of Defence Welsh Language Scheme has received Ministerial approval. The Permanent Under-Secretary will be responsible for ensuring that the MOD meets its commitments under the Welsh Language Act as set out in this Scheme. The Scheme will be implemented consistently across the Services, the Department and its agencies. Line managers will be responsible for the Scheme's implementation and operation within their spheres of command.

5.2 All staff within the MOD have been made aware of the Scheme and how it affects their area of work. Instructions and guidance on the implementation of the measures detailed in the scheme have been disseminated throughout the Department and will be circulated annually.

5.3 Translation services are available to MOD staff. The MOD will ensure that any translator contracted by the Department will be suitably qualified and able to provide a high quality and objective service.

Staffing

5.4 Divisions affected by the Scheme, either by direct contact with the public in Wales or by their provision of a relevant service such as translation or training, will assess to what extent they may require access to appropriately skilled Welsh speakers in order to implement the Scheme. Similarly, managers will seek to identify whether for any posts in their own division an ability to speak Welsh is either essential or desirable.

5.5 Where any such posts are identified, the level of proficiency in Welsh required or desirable will be specified in job descriptions and recruitment advertisements. A programme of how to make good any shortfall in a requirement to speak Welsh will be actioned as the opportunity arises. This could be achieved by recruiting Welsh speakers either externally or from within the Department, or by training existing or new staff in the language, but would not be intended to have any adverse implications for existing staff. The programme will be used to identify priorities and longer-term action, inform training needs, and monitor progress towards having the capacity fully to deliver the measures in the Scheme.

Language training

5.6 Training courses for the Welsh language will be available through the Department in the future. Staff will be made aware of these courses in the guidance accompanying the Scheme, by the encouragement of their line managers where relevant, and through the brochures of the training organisations concerned.

5.7 Where current staff express a wish to undertake training to learn or improve their standard of Welsh, line managers will take into account the benefits of their staff acquiring this skill to the Department's overall needs, to the Department's need to comply with the Welsh Language Act and to the Welsh-speaking public, in considering whether funds should be provided from their training budget. Where a post is filled by an employee who does not have the level of proficiency in Welsh required by the post, their training will be undertaken within a reasonable agreed period with the support of the Department.

Services delivered on behalf of the MOD by third parties

5.8 It is the objective of the MOD that any new agreements or arrangements made with third parties which relate to the provision of services to the public in Wales should be consistent with the terms of this Scheme. This will include services which are contracted out.

5.9 Where relevant, requirements as to the use of the Welsh language in the provision of services to the public in Wales will be specified in tendering documents and subsequent contracts. Reports will then be required from third parties on their performance against this scheme for monitoring purposes.

5.10 Instructions have been issued to all staff to raise awareness of the need when drawing up contract specifications to ensure that services to the public delivered on behalf of the MOD meet the commitments in this Scheme. The MOD Contracts Manual will be amended when it is next updated.

Monitoring the Scheme

5.11 The operation and implementation of the Scheme will be monitored and reviewed centrally by the Regional Policy Unit. This will be a structured and continuing activity, to include:

- monitoring the MOD's performance against the ongoing targets set out in the Scheme, such as the response times for correspondence and the arrangements for publicity campaigns;
- monitoring the implementation of specific measures against the timescale in section 6, such as the translation of signs and notices and the Internet page;
- agreeing and monitoring the rolling programme of translating publications;
- monitoring the compliance of the Department's delivery of services to the public, its new policies and procedures, and its implementation of staffing and training measures, with the commitments set out in the Scheme;
- investigating complaints and carrying forward suggestions made to the Department.

5.12 An annual review of the MOD's performance against the Scheme will be conducted by the Regional Policy Unit. Divisions will be required to report on their adherence to the commitments detailed in the scheme and the principle of language equality as laid down in the Welsh Language Act. The review will assess the MOD's achievements against the timescale for individual measures set out in the Scheme and against ongoing targets. It

will also examine the nature and number of any complaints or suggestions received relating to the MOD's services to the public in Wales.

5.13 The results of this review will be collated and a published annual report submitted to the Welsh Language Board. The report will include information on the MOD's performance against the standards and targets set out in this Scheme, and will provide explanations and detail any remedial action where these standards are not met.

Complaints and suggestions

5.14 The MOD is committed to providing a high quality of service to the public in Wales. Any complaints will be treated seriously and in confidence, so that the Department's performance can be continually improved.

Complaints about the provision of services to the public in Wales will be handled and monitored in accordance with the Department's standard complaints procedures. Initial complaints should be made to the relevant MOD unit or establishment. Any further or more general complaints relating to this Scheme should be sent to the following address:

Correspondence Unit
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HB

The MOD welcomes suggestions for improvements in this Scheme. All suggestions will be recorded and considered positively. The originator of the suggestion will receive a written reply in their preferred language. This reply will state what action has been or will be taken, or an explanation of why any action would not be appropriate in the circumstances or reasonably practicable. Suggestions regarding the Scheme should be addressed to the Correspondence Unit at the address above.

Publicising the Scheme and our Welsh language services

This Scheme will be publicised by means of a press release, information placed on the Internet and by other media as appropriate. Other methods may also be used to ensure that members of the public are aware that they are welcome to use Welsh. These include:

- stating in any leaflets or posters advertising MOD services to the public that these services are available in Welsh and English;
- using "Working Welsh" badges by Welsh-speaking staff in direct contact with the public, or similar window stickers or desk signs for receptions and careers offices;
- including on standard stationery the by-line "MOD welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English / Mae MOD yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg";
- advertising and giving out the number for MOD's Welsh telephone helpline.

Copies of the Scheme will be available on request from CSE Llangennech, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, SA14 8YP (01554) 822533/400. Members of the public should write to the Correspondence Unit at the address above for a copy.

6. TIMETABLE AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Unless otherwise stated below, the commitments in the Scheme will be implemented from the date the Scheme is approved.

MEASURE		TARGET / TIMESCALE
Service planning and delivery		
2.1-2	New policies and initiatives	Immediately
2.3-4	Guidance on Scheme to all staff	Within 2 months of Scheme's approval
2.4	Appropriate computer systems	Immediately
2.5	Delivery to same standards regardless of language	Immediately
Dealing with the Welsh speaking public		
3.1-4	Written correspondence	Immediately. Service First target of 20 working days for reply to be met in 100% of cases
3.5	Electronic mail	From when an MOD e-mail address set up. Service First target of 20 working days to reply to be met in 100% of cases
3.6	Telephone communication	Helpline to be set up by 31 December 1999.
3.7-9	Public meetings	Immediately. 100% of public meetings to comply with 3.7(a) or (b)
3.10-11	Other dealings with the public	Immediately. 100% of requests to be met
The Department's public face		
4.1	Corporate identity	Stationery to comply within 3 months of Scheme's approval; other goods within 6 months. Both targets 100%
4.2-4	Signs and notices	New and replacement signs, and all signs at entrance of sites, to conform by 30 June 99. All other signs to conform by 30 June 00.
4.5-6	Published material	Rolling programme. High priority publications by 30 September 99. New publications as issued
4.7	Equal price of translated documents	Immediately
4.10	Internet page	by 31 July 99
4.11	Press notices	Immediately
4.12	Publicity campaigns	Immediately. Rolling programme for recruitment literature
4.13-4	Notices and advertisements	Within 3 months of Scheme's approval, 100% to comply

4.15	Publicising Welsh welcome	Within 3 months of Scheme's approval, 100% to comply
4.16	Statement in Recruitment manual	Announcement of amendment within 2 months of Scheme's approval
5.1-2	Administrative arrangements	Immediately. Guidance to staff within 2 months of Scheme's approval
5.3	Translation services available	Immediately
5.4-5	Assessment of staffing needs	Completed within 6 months of Scheme's approval, and revised every 2 years.
5.5	Job descriptions	Immediately
5.6	Training courses available	Tuition available through Defence School of Languages immediately; DMT courses to be available from 31 July 99
5.9-10	Contracted-out services	All new tenders and contracts to conform from 30 June 99
5.11	Statement in Contracts manual	When manual next amended
5.13-14	Reviewing the Scheme	Review and report annually
5.15-18	Complaints and suggestions	Immediately. 100% of complaints and suggestions to be answered within 20 days
5.17	Internet complaints guide in Welsh	31 July 99
5.19	Scheme on Internet site	Within 1 month of Scheme's approval