



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Part 1 Section 6

The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty – Welsh Language Commissioner's Report 2022



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Background

The principal aim of the Welsh Language Commissioner, an independent body established under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, is to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh. This is done by raising awareness of the official status of the Welsh language in Wales and by imposing standards on organisations. This, in turn, will lead to the establishment of rights for Welsh speakers.

Four principles underpin the Commissioner's work, namely:

- The official status of the Welsh language in Wales
- The duties to use Welsh which have been (or may be) imposed by law, and the rights which arise from the enforceability of those duties
- In Wales, the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language
- Persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of Welsh if they choose to do so

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1 Introduction and background

Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

- 1.1 The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 gives the Welsh language official status in Wales. It also specifies that the principal aim of the Welsh Language Commissioner (the Commissioner) in the exercise of his functions is to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh. In exercising his functions in accordance with this principal aim, the Commissioner must have regard to:
- The official status of the Welsh language in Wales
 - The duties to use Welsh which are imposed by law, and the rights arising from the enforceability of those duties.
 - The principle that the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language in Wales, and
 - The principle that persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of Welsh if they choose to do so.

Environment (Wales) Act 2016

- 1.2 As a public authority under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the Welsh Language Commissioner has a duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems in Wales. Under the Act, the Commissioner must publish a plan setting out the actions that will be taken to comply with this duty.
- 1.3 In relation to biodiversity the Commissioner occupies four offices in Wales. The Commissioner's functions are not directly related to biodiversity and/or land management.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 1.4 The Welsh Language Commissioner is not a public body named in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. However, the Sustainable Development Principle is set out in Section 5 of the Act. Considering the Commissioner's functions, this fits with the Sustainable Development Principle, as the Commissioner acts in a way that seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs in relation to the Welsh language. In order to fulfil this commitment to sustainable development, the Commissioner has published a series of 'well-being and sustainability objectives' through the Sustainability Policy Statement. These objectives will help to complement the 'Well-being Objectives' outlined in Section 4 of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

2 The Commissioner's Environmental policy

- 2.1 On 1 April 2022, the Welsh Language Commissioner employed 47 people. The Commissioner is committed to protecting the environment, continuously improving environmental management and performance, meeting environmental compliance and obligation (both regulatory and voluntary) and preventing pollution.
- 2.2 The Commissioner has noted that his main impacts on the environment are due to energy use, transport, waste generation and the use of office materials.
- 2.3 The Commissioner's Sustainability Policy is based on the following principles:
- Compliance with statutory duties.
 - Integrating sustainability considerations into business decisions where possible.
 - Ensuring all officers are fully aware of the Sustainability Policy and are committed to implementing and improving it.
 - Reducing the impact of all office activities and travel on sustainability.
 - Ensuring suppliers are aware of the Commissioner's Sustainability Policy, and encouraging them to adopt sound sustainable management practices.
 - Review, report annually, and continually strive to improve sustainability performance.

3 The Commissioner's environmental performance

- 3.1 In accordance with the requirements under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 the Commissioner has developed a Sustainability Policy Action Plan. The Plan has been in place since 2019. The Commissioner's offices were closed between March 2020 and September 2022 due to Covid-19. As a result, the Commissioner's ability to deliver the Sustainability Policy Action Plan and to report on environmental matters is limited.
- 3.2 Despite the above, here are examples of how the Commissioner has worked towards achieving his objectives during the reporting period:
- Vehicle use – the office does not own any vehicles, but encourages the hire of vehicles for long journeys to achieve greater efficiency. Officers are encouraged to share vehicles for official journeys where practicable. Where appropriate, use of public transport is encouraged. Due to the fact that the offices were closed for a long period of time during the reporting period, officers

were not travelling, which in turn has contributed to reducing the Commissioner's carbon footprint.

- Meetings – As the Commissioner's offices were closed for the majority of the reporting period, most of the meetings were held virtually. This has again reduced the need to travel. The Commissioner has introduced a policy which requires meetings to be held virtually where the same is appropriate and there is no business need identified for the meeting to be held in person.
- Paper management - all officers have access to e-mail and the internet, and therefore printing is not normally necessary. When officers print, the printer is programmed to print on both sides of each page to reduce waste.
- Products – suppliers are encouraged to use environmentally friendly products where possible. The Commissioner uses environmentally friendly paper products. Cleaning of the office is carried out using environmentally friendly products. This was a requirement in tender documents for the recent appointment of cleaners to some of our offices.
- Waste Disposal – procedures are used for recycling materials, including paper, cardboard and some plastics. Paper containing sensitive information is disposed of using confidential waste recycling facilities.
- Reducing electricity usage - the lights in some of the Commissioner's offices turn off automatically if there is no movement within the room. This ensures that lights are not left on unnecessarily.

4 Reporting on action

- 4.1 The Welsh Language Commissioner reports on environmental issues in his annual reports.
- 4.2 During the last quarter of 2022-2023 the Welsh Language Commissioner will review the plan which sets out the steps that will be taken in order to comply with the duty under Section 6 of the Act. The Commissioner will also consider methods of reporting on success and progress against the Plan. The implementation of this plan will be included within the operational plan for 2023-2025.
- 4.3 The following issues will be addressed when reviewing the Plan:
 - NRAP Objective 1: To encourage and support participation and understanding so that biodiversity becomes embedded in decision making at all levels.
 - To include commitments in corporate plans
 - To include biodiversity and the section 6 duty in the area of performance management, through Environmental Statements, business planning

- and budget monitoring, performance management systems, and internal audits or consultations
- To value biodiversity more effectively and longer term in decision making
- To ensure that functions across the body provide implement biodiversity actions on a business-as-usual basis
- NRAP Objective 4: To tackle key pressures on species and habitats
 - To reduce, reuse and recycle resources
 - To mitigate climate change/carbonisation
- NRAP Objective 6: To implement a governance and support framework to achieve the objectives
 - To ensure that someone is responsible for ensuring that actions in favour of biodiversity are implemented – ultimately, the Commissioner himself should be responsible for this.
 - To ensure that the section 6 duty is monitored and reviewed