

**January 2005**

**Postcomm Welsh Language Scheme**

**Prepared under the Welsh Language Act 1993**

This Scheme received the approval of the Welsh Language Board under  
Section 14(1) of the Welsh Language Act 1993 on 14 January 2005

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Postal Services Commission (Postcomm) is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Welsh Language Act 1993.

The key features of Postcomm's scheme involve committing to translating major documents such as its Annual Report to Welsh, and producing bilingual or Welsh versions of all documents with special interest to people in Wales. In addition, Welsh speakers will be able to select a Welsh language version of parts of the Postcomm website.

Postcomm already provides a simultaneous translation service at any public meetings that it holds in Wales, and these are advertised in both Welsh and English in the Welsh media. This service will continue.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## *Purpose of this document*

- 1.1 The Postal Services Commission (Postcomm) is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Welsh Language Act 1993.
- 1.2 Postcomm has adopted the principle that, in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will treat English and Welsh languages equally. The Scheme sets out how Postcomm will give effect to that principle.
- 1.3 This Scheme covers Postcomm, a regulatory office headed by a panel of seven Commissioners. The duties and functions of the Commissioners are set out in the Postal Services Act 2000.
- 1.4 Postcomm operates from a single office in London. It deals primarily with policy matters which promote and protect the interests of postal customers, regulate prices and promote competition.
- 1.5 To disseminate news about its activities and to collect feedback of public opinion, Postcomm periodically organises public meetings at various locations throughout the United Kingdom.
- 1.6 Day to day administration of the Scheme will be as delegated below and any enquiries about this Scheme should be addressed to:

The Operations Director

Postal Services Commission

Hercules House

6 Hercules Road

London SE1 7DB

Telephone: 020 7593 2100

Fax: 020 7593 2142

### ***Service planning and delivery***

- 1.7 Major aspects of the Scheme will be implemented according to the timetable in the text.

### ***New policies and initiatives***

- 1.8 In formulating new policies and initiatives, Postcomm will:
- assess the linguistic consequences of new policies and initiatives;
  - ensure that new policies and initiatives are consistent with, and do not undermine the Scheme;
  - consult the Welsh Language Board in advance of any proposals which will affect the Scheme or that of any other organisation and not amend the Scheme without the agreement of the Board;
  - ensure all staff involved in formulating new policies and initiatives are aware of the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme;
  - promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language; and
  - continue to implement the principle of equality at every opportunity.

### ***Delivery of service***

- 1.9 Postcomm is committed to providing services in both English and Welsh to postal users in Wales according to the contents of the Scheme. In delivering services, Postcomm will give priority where contact with the general public is greatest. At present this is primarily when public meetings are held in Wales.
- 1.10 Postcomm will ensure all staff are aware of the Scheme and Postcomm's responsibilities under the Act by briefing staff and circulating office notices when the Scheme is implemented and periodically thereafter.
- 1.11 At present Postcomm has no Welsh speaking staff, although one Commissioner speaks Welsh. In the absence of a Welsh speaker, Postcomm will use professional external translators to provide translations.

### ***Standard of service in Welsh***

- 1.12 Postcomm aims to ensure that Welsh speaking customers receive the same high standard of service as English speaking customers. This principle will be stated in relevant publications such as Postcomm's annual report.
- 1.13 Postcomm will have the same targets for responding to letters and telephone calls in English and in Welsh. The principles of the Citizen's Charter will be applied equally to the provision of services in Welsh and English.

## 2. DEALING WITH THE WELSH SPEAKING PUBLIC

### *Correspondence*

- 2.1 Postcomm welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English. Letters received in Welsh will receive a signed reply in Welsh. Correspondence initiated by Postcomm following face-to-face or telephone communication in Welsh will be in Welsh unless requested otherwise. **Target: immediate.**
- 2.2 When Postcomm writes a letter to an individual, group, or organisation which it knows works mainly in Welsh, or prefers to receive letters in Welsh, it will write in Welsh. Where the preferred language is not known, it will write initially in English, offering a choice of language. **Target: immediate.**
- 2.3 All email communications received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh. The same policies will be applied to email communications as to any other written communication. **Target: immediate.**
- 2.4 Postcomm will enlist the help of suitably qualified translation services when corresponding with customers in Welsh. **Already implemented.**

### *Telephone communication*

- 2.5 Telephone calls to Postcomm's London office are answered in English, but callers who wish to receive a response in Welsh will be offered the choice of a bi-lingual person returning the call as soon as possible, writing to Postcomm in Welsh, or continuing the call in English. **Already implemented.**

### *Public meetings*

- 2.6 Postcomm will ensure that anyone wishing to attend its public meetings in Wales is able to contribute to proceedings in Welsh or English. Public notices, letters, invitations, posters and advertisements setting out arrangements for these meetings will be bilingual. They will state that those proposing to attend or contribute should indicate in advance the language they wish to use so the necessary interpretation arrangements can be made. **Already implemented.**

### ***Face-to-face meetings***

- 2.7 Postcomm will ensure that any member of the public who wishes, or is required to have face-to-face dealings with the Commission, is welcome to do so in Welsh and English. Organisations and individuals from Wales will be asked in advance to indicate the language they wish to use to enable translation arrangements to be made. **Already implemented.**
- 2.8 Any person visiting Postcomm's offices who has indicated a preference in advance to communicate in Welsh will be offered the opportunity to speak through an interpreter provided by Postcomm **Target: immediate**

### ***Internet communications***

- 2.9 Postcomm's website will contain all relevant information of interest to the public in Wales in Welsh and English, unless they are of a technical or a specialist nature aimed at a limited audience. The following are examples of information that Postcomm will translate and include on the website:

- Press notices of interest to the Welsh language media
- Public advice
- Information
- Notes of public meetings in Wales
- Where there is Welsh language material available.

The relevant web pages will include an icon for selecting Welsh text. **Target: 2005.**

Technical documents – such as those dealing with detailed economic matters – will be in English unless the content is likely to be of particular interest in Wales. Documents where the paper version has been printed in English will appear on the website in English

### 3. WRITTEN MATERIAL

#### *Publications*

- 3.1 Postcomm will produce bilingual or Welsh versions of all general leaflets and brochures prepared for distribution throughout Wales. Wherever possible, the Commission will ensure that bilingual or Welsh versions of these are published on the same day as English versions. In exceptional circumstances, it will issue the English version and then make the bilingual or Welsh versions available as soon as possible afterwards. Postcomm's annual report to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will be in English, but a Welsh language version will be published on the Postcomm website. Postcomm's consultation documents intended for UK-wide distribution will be in English. Where a consultation topic will have a particular interest to people in Wales, Welsh or bilingual versions will be produced. **Target: immediate.**
- 3.2 Where a charge is made for a publication, then the price of a Welsh version will not be more than that of an English version. Similarly, the price of a bilingual version will not be more than a single language version. **Target: immediate.**
- 3.3 Publications of a technical or legal nature and/or not intended for the general public will be issued in English only, but where documents will have a particular interest to people in Wales, bilingual or Welsh versions will be produced. **Target: immediate.**
- 3.4 Staff, consultants, designers and printers involved in any Postcomm work in Wales will be given written guidance on dealing with bilingual publications. **Target: immediate.**

#### *Press notices and other publicity material*

- 3.5 Postcomm issues a number of press notices to the media each year, often at short notice. These are normally issued in English but will be bilingual where of particular interest to the public in Wales. **Target: immediate.**

- 3.6 Display and information material used at exhibitions and promotional events in Wales will be bilingual, with equal prominence given to both languages. **Target: immediate.**

### ***Official notices and advertising***

- 3.7 Postcomm will publish all official notices and advertisements in newspapers and magazines principally circulating in Wales bilingually, treating the two languages equally in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence. In Welsh language publications, Postcomm will advertise in Welsh only. Advertisements in the UK or specialist press will be in English only. Where public surveys are carried out in Wales, bilingual questionnaires will be used, and where interviews are held, a language choice will be offered. **Target: immediate.**
- 3.8 Staff recruitment and other advertising in Wales will be in Welsh only in Welsh language publications, bilingually in other publications, for example in *The Western Mail* and *The Daily Post*; and in English only in the UK specialist press. **Target: immediate.**

Currently Postcomm does not advertise or make public service announcements through radio and television. However, should these media be used in future, any such advertisements and/or announcements on Welsh radio or television will be in Welsh. **Target: immediate.**

### ***Corporate identity***

- 3.9 Postcomm will adopt a bilingual identity towards its operations in Wales to the extent that a bilingual letterhead will be adopted for use in correspondence to people in Wales. The information on compliments slips, business cards, bilingual or Welsh publications, fax headers and similar items used by Postcomm where recipients will be in Wales will also be bilingual. However the title Postcomm will not be translated. Where documents are published

bilingually or in Welsh, the corporate logo will not be translated, although when 'The Postal Services Commission' is used with the logo, this will be in Welsh.

## 4. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

### *Staff awareness*

- 4.1 The commitments and arrangements set out in this Scheme have been approved by the Chief Executive of Postcomm.
- 4.2 Postcomm will ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the Scheme and of Postcomm's responsibilities under the Act by holding staff briefing sessions and providing staff with guidance notes.
- 4.3 Postcomm will keep a register of suitably qualified translators whose services are available to staff in dealing with responses to customers and preparing published material.

### *Contracted and licensed services*

- 4.4 Whenever Postcomm employs contractors or consultants to act on its behalf in Wales, it will ensure that they are provided with a copy of this Scheme and that they agree to operate in accordance with the principles and undertakings it sets out in any tendering documents or contracts. Postcomm will require contractors and consultants to provide it with regular reports about their performance in relation to the Scheme.
- 4.5 With regard to postal suppliers, licensed by Postcomm, who currently do or are to supply customers in Wales, we will discuss with those companies the need for them to develop appropriate measures to provide Welsh language services e.g. the need for them to provide a bilingual service to customers including bills, correspondence, telephone services, information leaflets and contracts.

## 5. MONITORING THE SCHEME

- 5.1 It is extremely rare for Postcomm to receive a communication in Welsh. To monitor the effect of the Scheme, staff at Postcomm will list each contact in Welsh and submit a report to its executive board every six months.
- 5.2 In addition, the executive board will receive an annual compliance report that will:
- Report the number of instances of communication in Welsh
  - Measure whether Postcomm is conforming to the Scheme
  - Measure if its management of the Scheme is sufficient
  - Analyse its performance in comparison with similar regulators to ensure consistency and
  - Recognise any fundamental weaknesses, and set up an action plan which will include a timetable to deal with them.
- 5.3 A copy of the official report that went before and was approved by Postcomm's executive board will be sent to the Welsh Language Board in electronic format. At the end of the third year of operation Postcomm will:
- i) Provide an overview and analysis of compliance and performance over the first three years of the Scheme from the perspectives of service delivery and Scheme management;
  - ii) outline priorities for the next three years of the Scheme, along with a revised timetable for implementing the measures in the Scheme. The report should also outline any amendments/additions Postcomm believes will need to be included in the updated Scheme.

## ***Targets***

- 5.4 Postcomm has set itself a range of targets and standards to ensure effective delivery of its aims and objectives. These targets will be applied equally to the provision of services in Welsh and English.
- 5.5 Postcomm's own standards of service include:

### **Customer complaints and related correspondence**

- respond to initial customer contact within two working days;
- respond to further correspondence within 10 working days
- resolve telephone enquiries immediately where possible. Where this cannot be done, reply in writing, or by returning the call, within two working days. If the enquiry is complex and requires further investigation, reply in writing within 10 working days.
- see visitors with an appointment within 10 minutes of the agreed time;
- provide clear and straightforward information about Postcomm's services and a telephone enquiry number;
- consult stakeholders regularly about Postcomm's services and report the results;
- operate procedures for complaints against Postcomm, and send information about the procedures to members of the public on request;
- do everything reasonably possible to make Postcomm's services available to everyone, including those with special needs.

### ***Publicising the bilingual service***

- 5.6 Relevant Postcomm publications will make it clear that a bilingual service is available to customers in Wales.

### ***Complaints and comments about the Scheme***

- 5.7 Any member of the public who has concerns or comments about Postcomm's services in Welsh should, in the first instance, contact Postcomm's Director of Operations.
- 5.8 If any member of the public considers Postcomm's response to be unsatisfactory, they should take the matter up with the Welsh Language Board.