

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE OPERATION OF DTI'S WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME 2000/2001

Introduction

This report is the first annual report produced by the DTI on the operation of its Welsh Language Scheme covering the year ended 31 August 2001. The Scheme applies to all DTI headquarters functions.

As the headquarters of DTI are located in London, not all aspects of the Welsh Language Board's guidelines on drawing up Welsh Language Schemes proved appropriate to the DTI Scheme thus not all aspects of the Board's reporting guidance are applicable. The report therefore focuses on the commitments as regards monitoring set out in paragraphs 55-59 of the Scheme.

DTI underwent some machinery of Government changes during the course of the year. More significantly, following an extensive review of the department, DTI is currently undergoing a refocus of its activities which will lead to a restructuring to be undertaken during the coming year. While this will have an impact on arrangements for administering the Scheme, it is not envisaged that the refocusing of DTI's activities will necessitate any amendment of the current Welsh Language commitments. However, when the changes become clear, some aspects of the DTI Scheme will need revising – such as the description of the department in the introduction to the Scheme – to reflect the new structure of the Department.

Responsibility for the administration of the Welsh Language Scheme rests with Graham Rowlinson, Head of the (recently renamed and expanded) Open Government and Data Protection Unit.

Internal publicity and guidance on Scheme

The DTI Welsh Language Scheme was given a high profile launch by Sir Michael Scholar, then DTI Permanent Secretary, with prominent publicity in DTI's internal newsletter. Following the launch, the Department's Director General for Resources and Services circulated a minute to all Departmental Heads of Management Units (HMUs), for onward cascading to staff, alerting them to the introduction of the Scheme and to the implications it would have for the work of their Management Units. Further guidance on the Scheme has been circulated to staff by the OG and DP Unit. The full text of the Scheme and guidance on the Scheme is available to staff on a DTI intranet site. All staff have been alerted to the commitments in the Scheme and are aware of where further guidance is available.

External publicity

Following the launch of the Scheme, press advertisements were placed in Welsh newspapers. The Departmental website has a prominent link to the Welsh pages on the site. The link is visible on the home page of the site and is highlighted to draw attention to it.

The monitoring process

The main thrust of the monitoring process is an annual trawl of all DTI Management Units complemented by specific returns on Welsh language activity, for example from DTI's Translation Service and the DTI Publications Unit. During the year, we undertook an interim monitoring exercise and, more specifically, we have monitored during the year the volume and nature of Welsh language material produced in hard copy and published on the DTI website.

Delivery of Services

The Welsh Language Scheme covers DTI HQ only. The National Assembly for Wales provides support for industry and industrial development in Wales, which includes Business Connect, the small firms advice and support network for Wales. Welsh speakers in Wales thus generally approach the National Assembly for Wales or Business Connect rather than DTI for advice in such areas.

The commitments in our Welsh Language Scheme thus reflect the twin focus of matters related to Wales and matters of interest to the general public.

New policies and initiatives

As part of the internal publicity and guidance on the Scheme mentioned above, all staff have been made aware that of the Department's Welsh language commitments.

Having been alerted to the WLS, it is for each MU to ensure that its policies and initiatives take the WLS into account. We have no reported cases where it has been necessary to amend proposed policies or initiatives to meet the needs of the Welsh speaking public in Wales.

Publications and publicity

DTI's Welsh Language Scheme recognises that it is not practicable for DTI to produce all its publications in Welsh.

DTI hard copy publications are listed on the Departmental publications catalogue (Publications@dti) available on the DTI website at www2.dti.gov.uk. Those publications available in whole or in part Welsh can be identified through the catalogue's free-text search engine. 55 items are currently available in whole or in part in Welsh. The prime focus of hard copy material published in Welsh has been that directed at the general public, particularly in the areas of consumer protection and employment relations, and publications related to the energy sector insofar as developments would affect Wales. For example, DTI has produced Welsh language versions of a leaflet giving advice to consumers on distance selling regulations; firework safety material; a leaflet and poster giving guidance for employees about their right to time off work to deal with emergencies involving a person dependent on them for care; a paper relating to maternity pay and parental leave; and of a publication setting out a proposed streamlined consents process for offshore wind and water driven generating stations.

We are committed under the Welsh Language Scheme to place on the DTI website Welsh language versions of material appearing on the Internet where Welsh language versions have been produced of the hard copy equivalent. In line with this commitment, certain Welsh language publications can be accessed directly through the DTI home page. This material includes the DTI complaints procedure, a foreword to DTI's Expenditure Plans for 2001-02 to 2003-04, and consumer and employment relations related guidance and advice.

Staff with responsibility for producing publications are required to complete a form which *inter alia* requires them to consider Welsh language commitments related to publications. This has been useful in helping DTI make a sound start in providing published material in Welsh. We are, however, aware of the Board's preference that, where Welsh and English versions of publications are produced separately, they should be published simultaneously. This did not always prove possible during this first year and is an aspect on which we aim to improve our performance.

Awareness of the needs of Welsh speakers

Guidance issued to staff makes clear that the Department is committed to promoting awareness of the needs of Welsh speakers in Wales both directly and through our partners. The Department is aware that the Welsh Language Board have expressed a particular interest in ensuring that utility operators are encouraged to meet the needs of the Welsh speaking public. We have thus been particularly active on this front both through direct approaches at the level of the regulator and by ensuring that the draft Social and Environmental Guidance to the Gas and Electricity Market Authority includes the requirement for the Authority to have regard to the Government's encouragement of gas and electricity companies to be mindful of the Welsh Language Act when operating in Wales so that the needs of Welsh-speaking consumers are met.

Correspondence

We have proactively instigated correspondence in Welsh on a number of occasions, particularly where matters are of interest to people in Wales and in consumer affairs matters. For example, we issued letters in Welsh to utility operators setting out the Secretary of State's decisions on whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is needed under the Electricity Works Regulations and issued letters in Welsh promoting a new funding scheme for rural subpost offices which were sent to all parish Councils.

We have received about twenty incoming letters in Welsh which have almost exclusively been in response to consultation documents produced in Welsh.

Complaints and suggestions about operation of Scheme

Staff are instructed that any complaints about the operation of the Scheme should be drawn to the attention of the Open Government and Data Protection Unit. We received one complaint during the reporting period. This concerned the Welsh translation of the DTI Press Notice announcing the Board's agreement to the Scheme. The complainant appeared to have been satisfied with our response to the points made.

The DTI Welsh Language Scheme and Welsh language section of the DTI website, accessible through the DTI home page, make clear that suggestions on the operation of the Scheme and our website Welsh pages would be welcome. We have received no suggestions during the reporting period as to how implementation of the Welsh Language commitments in the Scheme might be improved.

Conclusions

We believe this first year of operation of the Scheme has set a solid framework for fulfilling our Welsh language commitments. We note that there has been no significant feedback from the Welsh speaking public on the operation of the DTI Welsh Language Scheme nor any marked desire on the part of the Welsh speaking public to do business with DTI headquarters in Welsh. To an extent, further development of our Welsh language commitments would need to be commensurate with the response they receive in Wales.

Nonetheless, we recognise that more can be done. We are pleased that we have made a good start in producing, where appropriate, DTI publications in whole or in part in Welsh; and we are confident that our Welsh website presence will continue to expand. The principle need as regards publications is to ensure staff build in sufficient time in the planning process for Welsh versions of publications to be published at the same time as the English versions.

Our aim for the 2001-2002 reporting period is to ensure that we are fully active across the full breadth of the Welsh language commitments. To this end, we intend to undertake a full promotion of the Welsh Language Scheme in the New Year. This will be conducted through written material to be circulated to all staff and by promoting the Scheme in a series of seminars to be arranged by the Open Government and Data Protection Unit. As part of this promotional activity, we will take on board any suggestions put to us by the Welsh Language Board.

In administering other aspects of the Scheme, we will also consider whether we can draw on our approach to producing publications of requiring staff to complete in writing whether they have considered the needs of the Welsh speaking public.