Snowdonia National Park Authority's Welsh Language Standards: 2020/21 Monitoring Report

1.   Introduction

1.1   On the 30th of September 2015, the Welsh Language Commissioner issued the Authority with a Compliance Notice in accordance with section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, which confirmed the Welsh Language Standards that the Authority is subject to.

1.2   As in required on an annual basis, this Monitoring Report looks back over the financial year 2020-21, and reports on how the Authority has complied with, and performed against each of the 162 Standards given to it.

1.3   This Annual Report is presented for approval to the Annual General Meeting of the Authority in June each year, before being published on the Authority's website. Publicity id given to the Annual Report via the Authority's social media channels.

1.4   The Head of Administration and Customer Care has the day to day responsibility over implementing the standards, and contact should be made by sending an e-mail to Bethan.Hughes@eryri.llyw.cymru or by telephoning 01766 772530 to discuss any matter relating to this report.

2.   Executive Summary

2.1.   The start of 2020-21 saw us enter the unknown territory of a national lockdown, as the Covid-19 pandemic took hold across the globe. The first few weeks of lockdown was a period of swift adjustment, as most staff adapted to working from home, with the remainder out on the ground advising the public on the stay-at-home regulations. Having a highly skilled bilingual workforce has been invaluable during this time, ensuring that we could adapt and react quickly to all the challenges that faced us.

2.2   Over the last year, the Authority's social media accounts have been one of the main communications and engagement channels with the public, ensuring that messages are communicated quickly and efficiently in both Welsh and English.

2.3   From the start, the Authority worked in close partnership with other public authorities across north west Wales to deliver consistent clear messages which reinforced the Covid-19 regulations. This has continued throughout

the year, with each change to the Covid-19 regulations brining its own challenges. Having fully bilingual staff ensured that there was no delay in reacting to the demands of the various fast paced social media platforms. Likewise, having bilingual staff ensured that we could produce signage on path and car park closures quickly in-house, as well as 'welcome back' messages when restrictions eased. Staff were also able to immediately respond to queries and questions sent via e-mail and received over the telephone throughout this time, in the language of choice of the requestor.

2.4   The unprecedented numbers of people who came to the area during the summer, in particular around Yr Wyddfa, placed huge pressures on local communities and caused public safety problems. The pilot pre-booking parking scheme introduced at Pen y Pass (as one of the key elements to address the issue), forced staff to quickly develop a bespoke in-house system using Eventbrite, as we were unable to source an off-the-shelf parking system that was fully bilingual. Although from the public perspective, the pilot was a success, the round the clock human resources required to implement the system made it unsustainable for the future. Going forward, this is one of the two barriers towards the Authority being able to operate all our services in Welsh for the future – that is getting suppliers to develop bilingual IT systems and the cost of doing so.

2.5   After an initial delay, the Authority's democratic functions were fully restored by May 2020. It was vital for the Authority to be able to have a fully operational virtual platform that could accommodate simultaneous translation, and this was achieved using Zoom.

2.6   Whilst our committees were operational, staff did experience issues with conducting virtual meetings with some other public authorities during the year, as the use of Zoom was barred by many organisations. This issue was challenging, as using other platforms meant that translation was not possible. By and large this has been avoided, and staff have continued to hold partnership meetings through Zoom with simultaneous translation present when required.

2.7   A total of 33 new or vacant posts were advertised during the year, with most being interviewed virtually, whilst some external posts had field interviews. A new Welsh language assessment framework was introduced, which meant that all new or vacant posts are assessed and rated from 0 to 5+ on the level of Welsh language skills required for each post, in the 4 categories of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

2.8   Additionally, during the year, the Welsh Language Commissioner raised the fact that the application process did not offer an option for applicants to request an interview in Welsh, contrary to the requirements of the standards. The Authority has not included this option, as all interviews are conducted in Welsh, as has always been our practice.

2.9   We came to an agreement to place a statement at the start of the application process, confirming that interviews will be conducted in Welsh. We also

asked for each applicant to rate their Welsh language skills against each of the 4 categories as the first question on the job application. This has led to many incomplete applications on our recruiting system, which has left in many instances very few suitable candidates from which to shortlist.

2.10   Going forward, this is the second barrier towards the Authority being able to operate all our services in Welsh for the future – that is appointing staff who have the required Welsh language skills.

2.11   In conclusion, apart from the issues identified above, out of all the upheaval and accompanying challenges that the pandemic has given us over the last year, we have not identified any negative impact on our use of the Welsh language either internally or externally with the public. In fact, the high percentage of staff (95% on 31/03/2021) that can work fully bilingually has been the most valuable asset for the Authority during this remarkable year.

3.   **Service Delivery Standards**

3.1   Correspondence (Standards 1-7): The Authority sends out correspondence in the language of choice of the recipient, or in cases when this is not known a bilingual version of the correspondence is sent.

3.2   When bilingual correspondence is sent out, the Welsh and English language is treated equally by appearing side by side (where this is possible), with the same font and size used in both languages. On rare occasions when separate Welsh and English correspondence is produced, both versions are identical in terms of font and size, including contact details, signatures etc.

3.3   Telephone Calls (Standards 8-22): All staff who work at the Authority's main receptions and Information Centres are fully bilingual and accordingly are able to deal with all enquiries through the medium of Welsh at the first point of contact.

3.4   The Authority did not have an automated telephone system during the year, although one has been installed in April 2021. Ordinarily, a pre-recorded message for calls received out of hours or for callers who experience a busy line is in place. The pre-recorded message is bilingual with the message in Welsh being transmitted first.

3.5   During the first lockdown, all the Authority's public buildings were completely closed, and it was not practically possible with the then telephone system to transfer main reception calls to staff to answer from home. A bilingual pre-recorded message was set on the system during this time.

3.6   Telephone calls to the Information Centres were transferred to a bilingual member of staff who answered these calls from home during the same period.

3.7   When contact is made through a direct line telephone number, staff are instructed to greet the caller with a bilingual greeting (with the Welsh first) or with a neutral greeting, ensuring that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably that the English language.

3.8   When contact is made through a direct line telephone number, staff are instructed to set a bilingual message on their voice mail, with the Welsh message playing first.

3.9   As the majority of the Authority staff are bilingual, any calls from Welsh speakers are dealt with at the first point of contact. For the staff that are not fully able to carry out a conversation in Welsh, they will transfer the call to a colleague without any delay.

3.10   During the year, almost all office staff have been working from home. Direct line telephone numbers were either redirected to the staff member's mobile or home phone or alternatively set to voice mail, with messages sent to the staff member's laptop. Staff were able to either answer or return external calls from home.

3.11   <u>Meetings (Standards 23-38)</u>: All meetings arranged with an individual have and will continue to be conducted in the language of choice of the individual. For meetings that have been arranged for a group of individuals, they will be conducted in Welsh with simultaneous translation being arranged for any non-Welsh speakers in attendance (unless none of the invited individuals are able to communicate in Welsh, in which case the meeting will be conducted in English).

3.12   All public meetings of the Authority have and will continue to be conducted in Welsh with simultaneous translation available for those who cannot communicate through the Welsh language.

3.13   During the year, all public meetings were held virtually using Zoom, as this was the only software that was able to successfully accommodate simultaneous translation services. However, the Authority's Committees which are usually open for the public to observe were neither broadcasted live nor available for the public to join the meeting virtually. This was because technical and security issues experienced early on in the pandemic by other public authorities, showed that members of the public can disrupt meetings if they are allowed access as observers.

3.14   However, it is hoped that during 2021-22 the public will be able to access Committee meetings live as observers, by setting up the public meetings as webinars. Members of the public can then register in advance to attend as observers, and as the webinar function is used, then cannot be seen or be able to contribute to the meetings.

3.15   Another issue experienced when conducting meetings with staff from other public authorities especially; is that to enable the two channel simultaneous translation service to work, users must access each meeting via the Zoom

app and not through the website. This has been problematic to the Authority, as some partnership members from other organisations have been unable to attend meetings, as their respective organisations have barred them from accessing Zoom or downloading the app on their systems.

3.16   All publicity, written materials and any documentation produced by the Authority and handed out at public events or meetings are fully bilingual, with the Welsh and English languages treated equally.

3.17   Public Documentation (Standards 40-51): All the Authority's public documents, including forms are bilingual with the Welsh appearing first or on the left hand side of the document. The Welsh and English languages are treated equally, with the same font and size of text used for both languages. On rare occasions when the Welsh and English language versions are in a separate document, a sentence is included on the English version, stating that a Welsh version is available.

3.18   Website, Apps and Social Media (Standards 52-59): The Authority's website and apps are fully bilingual with the user being able to choose their preferred language on the home page. Every single page of the website has a toggle button which can be used to access the other language. All pages correspond fully between both languages.

3.19   The Authority has corresponding Welsh and English versions of twitter accounts and a bilingual version of Facebook. All messages from the Authority are replicated identically on the Welsh and English versions of the various social media sites, or bilingually in some instances. Any messages received in Welsh through social media are always answered in Welsh.

3.20   During the year extensive use was made of the various social media accounts held by the Authority, as a means of communicating key messages around public safety and Covid-19 regulations along with how these affected National Park facilities and services, both quickly and effectively.

3.21   Understandably, the Authority received many responses to these messages (both negative and positive) along with many questions and queries. All public queries received this way were dealt with quickly and efficiently, with a response given in the same language as the messages were received, without exception.

3.22   Self Service Machines (Standard 60): All electronic information touch screens are available in Welsh and English, with the ability to choose the language on the home screen and to change language via a toggle button on each of the pages.

3.23   All the Authority's pay and display machines in the car parks are able to provide the service in Welsh and English. On newer machine the initial home screen has a choice of whether to proceed in Welsh or English, and on the older machines (where this is not possible), the initial language has been defaulted to Welsh.

3.24   During the summer of 2020, Eryri (Snowdonia) received unprecedented numbers of visitors, which caused public safety problems around irresponsible parking experienced around Yr Wyddfa. As part of the solution, the Authority had to close the car park and a weekend parking pre-booking system was piloted over 3 weekends in August 2020 at Pen y Pass. This was widely publicised along with the availability of park and ride facilities. At the time, it was discovered that there was no 'off-the-shelf' parking ticket pre-order system that could operate fully bilingually. Due to the time constraint to set up some sort of system, Authority officers had to create a temporary system using Eventbrite to pre-book parking tickets.

3.25   Although the Authority received very positive feedback about the system from the public, it was clear from the outset that the system would not be sustainable for the future. This pre-booking software was inflexible and required significant human resources that had to extend over 24 hours a day to manage the parking. Further work will be required to find a long-term sustainable and cost effective solution.

3.26   Signs (Standards 61-63): All signs erected by the Authority are fully bilingual, with the Welsh appearing first or on the left hand side. The Welsh and English languages are treated equally, with the same font and size of text used for both languages.

3.27   At the start of the first lockdown, numerous paths had to be closed in Eryri, which necessitated the quick production of signs to erect on the access points of these paths. All signs were completely bilingual and conformed to the usual standards set by the Authority.

3.28   Reception Services (Standards 64-68): As previously stated all staff who work at the main reception areas or at Information Centres are fully bilingual. Each reception has the 'Iaith Gwaith' logo on display to indicate that a Welsh service is available and all reception staff have been given 'Iaith Gwaith' badges.

3.29   Official Notices (Standards 69-70): When the Authority publishes or displays an Official Notice they are always fully bilingual, with the Welsh appearing first or on the left hand side. The Welsh and English languages are treated equally, with the same font and size of text used for both languages.

3.30   Grant Schemes (Standards 71-75): The Authority has several grant schemes, namely
• Snowdonia Partnership Fund;
• Grants for the repair of listed buildings at risk in Snowdonia;
• Building grants in Dolgellau through the Dolgellau Townscape Heritage Initiative;
• Cronfa Cymunedol y Carneddau which is funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund; and
• Celtic Rainforest Fund which is funded by the EU LIFE.

3.31   For each of the grant schemes, all documentation including application forms and guidance notes are fully bilingual, and correspondence is carried out in the language of choice of the applicant or bilingually.

3.32   In addition, for those grants which are for community based projects, events and activities, conditions are set upon the grant to ensure that all activities and documentation funded by the grants are fully bilingual.

3.33   Contract Tenders (Safonau 76-80): All Public Notices for Invitations to Tender or to Express an Interest are produced bilingually and usually published on the Authority's website. They are also published on the Sell2Wales website bilingually, with the exception of OJEU notices which are published in English only. OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) is the publication in which all tenders from the public sector which are valued above a certain financial threshold according to EU legislation, must be published. The Welsh Language Commissioner is aware of the situation, and has confirmed with Sell2Wales that this does not go against any of the Welsh Language Standards.

3.34   All submissions received in Welsh have been processed and treated in the same way as submission in English, and correspondence is carried out in the language of choice of the applicant or bilingually.

3.35   Corporate Identity and Promoting Services (Standards 81-83): The Authority's corporate identity has been fully bilingual since its inception, with the Welsh and English language being treated on the basis of equality. Any future changes or rebranding of the corporate identity will always adhere to this founding principle.

3.36   The Authority does not provide the same services separately in Welsh and English, but rather offers a bilingual service with one point of contact. The promotion of any services is therefore done bilingually in line with the Authority's corporate identity, ensuring that the Welsh and English language is treated on the basis of equality.

3.37   Education Courses (Standards 84-86): Until March 2020, Plas Tan y Bwlch the Authority's Study Centre, offered public education courses, which were subject to an assessment of the need for the courses to be offered through the medium of Welsh.

3.38   Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all day and residential courses for the financial year 2020-21 were cancelled, along with all other commercial activity at the Centre; with the exception of a few weeks in the autumn in which the Centre offered Bed & Breakfast accommodation only.

3.39   During 2020-21, the Authority has made the difficult decision to cease operating Plas Tan y Bwlch as a Study Centre, as running public education courses is no longer financially sustainable.

3.40   Public Address System (Standard 87): Any announcements made over a public address system are made bilingually, with the Welsh announcement being made first.

3.41   Complaints relating to Complying with the Service Delivery Standards
During the year no complaints were received relating to the way in which the Authority complied with the Service Delivery Standards.

4.   Policy Making Standards

4.1   Policy Formulation and Associated Consultation (Standards 88-93): With every new policy* that is developed (or if a present policy is revised and updated) an Equality Impact Assessment screening process is undertaken as part of the process. Although the Welsh language is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, the Authority has included the Welsh language as part of the assessment.
Policy is defined in its wider context to include plans and strategies

4.2   The screening process will determine if the proposed policy will or is likely to have a negative effect on the Welsh language or the ability of people to use the Welsh language. The assessment will also identify the potential for the proposed policy to have a positive effect on the language either through its use or through its promotion.

4.3   If the proposed policy goes out to public consultation, the responses received through the consultation will be taken into account in full when undertaking the impact assessment. Members of the Authority will also have an opportunity to scrutinise the proposed policy at various points through the process. If a negative impact were to be identified, a fully equality impact assessment would take place to identify mitigation measures required and to decide whether to proceed with the policy.

4.4   Awarding Grants and Commissioning Research and Projects (Standards 94-97): The requirement to take into consideration the effect (both positive or negative) on the Welsh language has been fully integrated into Cronfa Eryri, the new commissioning fund. Additional conditions on the use and the promotion of Welsh, and to ensure equality for the Welsh language will continue to be part of the fund's requirements.

4.5   During the year, the following research was commissioned, either with funds from Cronfa Eryri or from specific grants received from other sources such as Welsh Government or in partnership with other bodies:

Visitor and Residents Survey 2021;
Biodiversity Survey; and
Research into Yr Wyddfa as a Plastic Free Zone.

4.6   Complaints relating to Complying with the Policy Making Standards
During the year no complaints were received relating to the way in which the Authority complied with the Policy Making Standards

5.   Operational Standards

5.1   On the 31st of March 2021, the Authority employed 136 staff of which 130 are fully bilingual, representing 95%.

5.2   Using Welsh internally (Standard 98): Since its inception, the Authority has established through custom and practice that the main language of internal communications is Welsh, with English being used as required. Staff are aware that any general written communication directed at all staff (such as e-mails) are to be produced bilingually.

5.3   During the last year, the majority of staff have worked continuously from home. In addition to the usual way of communicating via e-mail and telephone calls, the Authority has introduced MS Teams. This has enabled virtual face to face informal chats as well as informal and formal meetings. The Authority staff have therefore been able to carry out the usual business of the Authority as normal, although under new circumstances. This has not affected the use of the Welsh language internally.

5.4   Staff Documentation (Standards 99-104): The Authority has a fully bilingual policy in place for all personnel matters. This means that all documentation relating to the employment of an individual is produced bilingually as standard and given to all staff members. Any correspondence that is sent out periodically from the personnel service to individual staff members is also produced bilingually.

5.5   Personnel Policies (Standards 105-111): All personnel policies are produced bilingually as standard.

5.6   Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures (Standards 112-119): Staff are welcome to correspond in the language of their choice. Both Welsh and English are treated equally and there would be no delay in responding to correspondence received in either language. Disciplinary or appeal hearings are all conducted in the language of choice of the staff member, as well as all related documentation and correspondence.

5.7   Computer Software (Standard 120): Every staff computer and laptop has Cysgliad installed for checking spelling and grammar in Welsh, as standard.

5.8   Staff and Members Intranet (Standards 121-126): The intranet is accessed through the Authority's website and is also fully bilingual. The toggle button at the top of the page allows the user to change from English to Welsh or vice versa.

5.9   Skills Assessment (Standard 127): Data from the staff skills assessment is set out in Appendix 1.

5.10   Training (Standards 128-133): General training courses are always provided in Welsh where possible. During 2021-22, no members of staff attended a course entirely through Welsh.

5.11   Employees who cannot fully communicate in Welsh are encouraged to attend Welsh language courses and training, which can be undertaken in work time. Two members of staff attended Welsh / Improving Welsh courses during the year.

5.12   E-mail Signatures and Contact Details (Standards 134-135): The Authority uses the 'Iaith Gwaith' badge for Welsh language speakers and learners to place within their e-mail signature. All contact details provided as part of an e-mail signature are fully bilingual, as required in the Authority's 'Clear Communications' booklet, the guide for staff on customer service standards and house style.

5.13   Vacant Posts and Recruitment (Standards 136-140): During 2020-21, 33 vacant posts were advertised. Of these, all 33 were classed as Welsh essential.

5.14   A Welsh language skills framework was developed at the start of 2020, which classifies the required skill level for each post from 0 to 5+ in for categories, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each Head of Service now scores each vacant post, with the scoring being moderated by the Head of Administration and Customer Care, before receiving final approval from the Management Team. Applicants are now aware before applying, the exact skill level required for the position.

5.15   All recruitment advertisements are advertised in Welsh. The Authority uses Webrecruits to accept and process applications, which allows applicants to submit their applications online. All documentation is available bilingually e.g. application form, job description, person specification and equality monitoring form. Job interviews are conducted in Welsh.

5.16   During the year, officers from the Welsh Language Commissioner's office noted that the Authority was not implementing Standard 138 - "*You must ensure that your application forms for posts provide a space for individuals to indicate that they wish an interview or other method of assessment in Welsh.*"

5.17   It was explained that every interview was conducted in Welsh regardless and that is why option isn't given, as it would imply conversely that there would be an option to have the interview through English only. With the agreement of the Welsh Language Commissioner's office, the Authority has added a note at the start of the online application process that states that the interview will be conducted in Welsh.

5.18   Due to the restrictions in place during the year, the Authority conducted job interviews virtually over MS Teams with applicants. Depending on the posts, some externally based jobs were also given field interviews during those periods which were outside full lockdown. The change in method for job interviews had no impact on the Welsh language.

5.19   As with all other correspondence, letters or e-mails sent to job applicants informing them of the outcome of their application are sent in the language that the application was submitted.

5.20   Internal Signage and Announcements (Standards 141-144): All signs erected by the Authority are fully bilingual, with the Welsh appearing first or on the left hand side. The Welsh and English languages are treated equally, with the same font and size of text used for both languages. Any announcements made over the internal address system are made bilingually, with the Welsh announcement being made first.

5.21   Complaints relating to Complying with the Operational Standards
During the year no complaints were received relating to the way in which the Authority complied with the Operational Standards.

6.   **Promotion Standards**

6.1   Promoting the Welsh Language (Standards 145-146): During 2016/17 a Strategy for Promoting the Welsh Language was adopted by the Authority. The strategy includes a target of 'an increase of 2% of Snowdonia National Park's population which can speak Welsh by 2021'.

6.2   In addition, the Authority continues to work in partnership with other public sector organisations in Gwynedd to promote the Welsh language, mainly through membership of the Gwynedd & Môn Public Services Board.

7.   **Record Keeping and Supplementary Standards**

7.1   Keeping Records of Compliance with the Standards (Standards 147-176): A document titled 'Snowdonia National Park Authority Welsh Language Standards' has been produced, which is available in the Authority's offices and on the website. The document outlines all the Standards that the Authority is subject to and sets out how members of the public can make a complaint about the Authority's compliance with the Standards or any aspect of the Welsh language service offered by the Authority.

7.2   The Authority has kept records of how it complies with the Standards in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language Commissioner.

APPENDIX 1

1. Staff Skill Levels - Overview

The number and % of staff within the Authority's services which are able to speak Welsh according to directorate			
	No. of Staff	**No. of Welsh Speakers**	**%**
Chief Executive	1	1	100%
Corporate	93	91	98%
Planning and Land Management	42	38	90%

The number and % of staff within the Authority's services which are able to speak Welsh according to post grade			
	No. of Staff	**No. of Welsh Speakers**	**%**
Management Team	3	3	100%
Heads of Service	10	9	90%
Grade 7+	55	51	93%
Up to Grade 6	68	67	98%

The number and % of staff within the Authority's services which are able to speak Welsh according to workplace			
	No. of Staff	**No. of Welsh Speakers**	**%**
Head Office	85	80	94%
Information Centres	10	10	100%
External Staff	25	25	100%
Plas Tan y Bwlch	16	15	93%

2. Staff Skill Levels by Service

Corporate Directorate

The number and % of staff within the service which are able to speak Welsh			
Section	**No. of Staff**	**No. of Welsh Speakers**	**%**
Management Team	3	3	100%
Finance	4	4	100%
Personnel	2	2	100%
Administration	10	10	100%
Information Systems	5	4	80%
Property	4	4	100%
Legal	1	1	100%
Engagement	25	25	100%
Plas Tan y Bwlch	16	15	93%
Wardens	24	24	100%

Number and % of staff within the service, by post grades, which are able to speak Welsh			
Section	**No. of Staff**	**No. of Welsh Speakers**	**%**
Chief Executive	1	1	100%
Director	1	1	100%
Heads of Service	7	7	100%
Grade 7+	30	29	97%
Up to Grade 6	55	54	98%

Planning and Land Management

The number and % of staff within the service which are able to speak Welsh			
Section	**No. of Staff**	**No. of Welsh Speakers**	**%**
Director	1	1	100%
Planning	15	12	80%
Cultural Heritage	9	9	100%
Conservation, Trees and Agriculture	17	16	94%

Number and % of staff within the service, by post grades, which are able to speak Welsh			
Section	**No. of Staff**	**No. of Welsh Speakers**	**%**
Director	1	1	100%
Heads of Service	3	2	67%
Grade 7+	25	22	88%
Up to Grade 6	13	13	100%
		23	

3. **Staff Skill Levels – Reception**

The number and % of posts in the main reception areas that have been designated 'Welsh essential' and that were filled by bilingual staff.			
Section	**No. of Staff**	**No. of Welsh Speakers**	**%**
Head Office	6	6	100%
Plas Tan y Bwlch	4	4	100%
Information Centres	10	10	100%

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg /
This document is available in Welsh