

Introduction

This Scheme received the approval of the Welsh Language Board under section 14(1) of the Welsh Language Act 1993 on 18 September 1998.

1. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is a Next Steps Agency of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. The Agency provides a wide range of services to the motoring public, the motor industry, the Police, the Courts, the Department of Transport and other Government Departments. Its primary responsibilities are:

- to maintain records of drivers and vehicles to meet the needs of the enforcement agencies and others with a legitimate right of access to the information
- to issue licences to drivers in Great Britain
- to issue registration documents to vehicle keepers in the United Kingdom and
- to collect and enforce vehicle licence duty in the United Kingdom

2. Although DVLA has its headquarters in Wales, it is an integrated operation providing a service across Britain, rather than a service to the Welsh public. Only some four per cent of its transactions relate to services within Wales.

3. The Agency has 3,985 staff. Of these, 2,647 are based at its Headquarters office in Swansea and 1,338 are based in a network that includes 40 DVLA local offices throughout England, Scotland and Wales, three DVLA Local Office in Wales and a further two of those based in England serve the Welsh public. The Agency is run by the Chief Executive. One of his Executive Board is a Welsh speaker.

4. DVLA has already done a great deal to treat the Welsh language on the basis of equality. For example, driving licences, vehicle licence discs, vehicle licence reminders and driving licence renewal reminders issued within Wales are bilingual.

5. It is DVLA's intention that, in the conduct of its public business in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages on a basis of equality. The scheme sets out what the Agency considers appropriate and reasonably practicable in this regard.

6. This document shows how the Agency will give effect to the guidelines issued by the Welsh Language Board.

The Welsh Language Scheme in the DVLA

7. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency has adopted the principle that, in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages on a basis of equality. This scheme sets out how the Agency will give effect to that principle when providing services to the public in Wales. The scheme will:

- take account of the guidelines of the Welsh Language Board, and will be reviewed to take account of any future legislation
- be built into the Agency's Business Plan
- be designed to deliver the Agency's service in a positive and effective way to the people of Wales
- be publicised to both staff and public and
- be managed and monitored by the director of external and corporate services in the Agency, as part of the general programme of quality control

8. Welsh services to the Welsh public are already extensively provided by the Agency:

- bilingual vehicle licence discs
- bilingual driving licences

- replies to all correspondence in Welsh in the same language
- telephone calls received by Customer Enquiries Unit in Welsh passed to a Welsh speaking operator and
- external and internal signs in public areas bilingual in public offices in Wales

DVLA already provides bilingual facilities for the public for 70 per cent of its business.

Service planning and delivery

New policies and initiatives

9. All Agency staff, including staff involved in policy implementation and new projects, will be aware of the scheme and the Agency's responsibilities under the Act.

10. The linguistic consequences of any new policies and initiatives will be assessed when they are being formulated.

11. New policies and initiatives will promote and facilitate the use of Welsh wherever possible and every opportunity will be taken to move the Agency closer to implementing the principle of equality.

12. Where new policies and initiatives are imposed by its parent Department, or other area of Government, DVLA undertakes to provide input and advice consistent with the Agency's scheme in relation to its services to the public in Wales.

13. The Agency's objective is that the measures contained in this scheme will be applied to all new policies and initiatives, which impact customers in Wales, when they are implemented. The Agency's project management guidelines include a specific reference to the requirement for all projects to include Welsh language provision from the start, in accordance with the Agency's Welsh Language Scheme.

14. New policies and initiatives will be consistent with the Agency's scheme, which the Agency will not alter without prior consultation with the Welsh Language Board. The Agency will consult with the Board in advance regarding any proposals that affect the scheme.

Delivery of service

15. In the administration of driver and vehicle licensing services to the public, customers in Wales will be able to receive a service through the medium of Welsh.

16. The Agency's practice is to respond in Welsh to all customers who choose to correspond in Welsh.

17. Bilingual vehicle licence discs are issued to vehicle keepers at Post Offices and DVLA local offices throughout Wales.

18. Bilingual driving licences are issued to all drivers with post codes in Wales.

19. DVLA has developed a service allowing customers who telephone the Agency's Customer Enquiry Unit to conduct their business in Welsh.

20. The Agency has three DVLA local offices in Wales plus a further two offices based in England serving the Welsh public. A bilingual service is available at the Bangor DVLA Local Office. The remaining offices are not fully staffed with Welsh speakers, but we will ensure that a Welsh language service is available. If a Welsh speaker is not available, the customer will be offered the option of conversing in Welsh with a DVLA official over the telephone. Whilst it may not be possible, especially in the early stages, to provide a fully consistent service through the medium of Welsh in all areas, in particular those in a highly technical or specialist field, the Agency will always aim to provide the best possible service.

21. DVLA undertakes to indicate in each office serving the Welsh public that customers may transact their business in the language of their choice. In the offices not staffed with sufficient Welsh speakers to guarantee a face to face Welsh language service, the demand for Welsh language services will be

monitored, and appropriate action will be taken under the Agency's staffing measures to address any significant shortfall in the provision of Welsh language services.

The standard of service

22. The Agency wants to deliver an equally high standard of service in Welsh and English and this will be stated in the Business Plan.

23. The principles of the Citizen's Charter will apply to the provision of services in Welsh as in English.

24. DVLA's service standards, which are the same for English and Welsh, are to endeavour:

- to deliver a driving licence within three weeks of receipt of the application
- where a medical investigation is required, to deliver a driving licence within five weeks of receipt of the application, or seven weeks for a large goods vehicle or passenger carrying vehicle driving licence
- to deliver a vehicle registration document within four weeks of receipt of the application
- where the vehicle is involved in a cherished transfer, or where the applicant is not shown on the vehicle record as the registered keeper and an application is made for a duplicate registration document, to deliver a registration document within six weeks
- to process an application for a refund of vehicle licence duty within three weeks, or within six weeks for special cases
- to reply to written correspondence within 12 working days
- to answer all calls to our Customer Enquiry Unit within 30 seconds

DVLA will monitor these standards.

25. Where internal processes mean that there is no differentiation between English and Welsh language transaction processing, separate Welsh language service monitoring will not be undertaken, and the universal performance achieved will be reported.

Dealing with the Welsh speaking public

Written communication

26. Customers within Wales are welcome to correspond with the Agency in Welsh as well as English.

27. The target performance is that all correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and that corresponding in Welsh should not of itself lead to delay. Correspondence following a telephone or face to face communication conducted in Welsh will also be in Welsh. The Agency has a procedure in place to deal with correspondence in Welsh. Where external translation is necessary, this is arranged through a professional translation service.

28. It is the Agency's intention that any circular or standard letters sent to the public in Wales will be bilingual.

29. The Agency's bilingual letterheaded paper will include a statement in both languages indicating that correspondence in both languages is welcome.

30. Dependent upon available funding and technical ability, it is the Agency's aim that correspondence with members of the driving public in Wales will be initiated in the preferred language of the individual, if this is known. Otherwise it will be bilingual.

Telephone communication

31. The Agency welcomes telephone calls in Welsh as well as English.

32. The Agency's interactive automated telephone system, which initially answers customers ringing the Agency's Customer Enquiry Unit (CEU), will ask callers, who are identified as from within Wales, whether they would like to transact their business in the English or Welsh language. Those who choose to use the Welsh language will be diverted to a Welsh speaking operator who will deal with their enquiry. This service is available to those customers whose telephones are linked to a digital telephone exchange and to those who have not withheld their call line identity. Once customers from any part of Wales are through to a CEU operator and they wish to conduct their enquiry through the medium of Welsh, they will be transferred to a Welsh speaking operator.

33. The Agency's local offices based in Wales will offer a bilingual greeting and service. If a Welsh speaker is not immediately available, the customer will be offered the option of conversing with a Welsh speaker in another office by telephone.

34. For calls to other DVLA departments, the Agency will provide a Welsh telephone service to its customers in Wales. An internal directory will be developed detailing those with Welsh language skills and to whom calls can be transferred. The target performance is that where a Welsh speaker is not immediately available to take the call, the Agency will offer a call back service in the Welsh language within one working day or the opportunity to continue the call in English. In situations where a query is of a particularly complex or specialised nature and no Welsh speaker is available to deal adequately with it, the caller will be free to continue the conversation in English or outline the query in full in writing in Welsh. A written reply in Welsh will then be provided.

35. DVLA staff will be provided with guidance on handling telephone calls from customers who wish to use the Welsh language.

Public meetings

36. The Agency does not organise public meetings. But, should any be arranged in the future in Wales, members of the public will be able and welcome to contribute in Welsh.

Court cases

37. The Agency will inform the public, by means of a message on the original documentation, that a court case may be held in Welsh or English. For those who wish to have their case heard in the Welsh language, the Agency will arrange for a Welsh speaking prosecutor and provide all the necessary documentation in Welsh.

Face to face interviews

38. Interviews and other discussions with the public will be welcomed in either Welsh or English, and will be conducted in Welsh if that is the wish of the customer.

39. If a customer wishes to speak Welsh at an interview, and there is no Welsh speaker available from the operational area concerned, every effort will be made to find a Welsh speaker from another area who can handle the interview.

40. DVLA's local offices serving Wales deal predominantly with the motor trade. They have different levels of demand for Welsh services but our intention is to provide a service at each. Where a Welsh speaker is not available, the customer will be able to converse in Welsh with a DVLA official over the telephone.

41. In DVLA's public areas serving Wales, the presence of bilingual signs and documents will make it clear that the Agency welcomes business in Welsh as in English.

42. Welsh speakers who have direct contact with the public will be supplied with badges and desks signs, encouraging people to deal with them in Welsh.

43. Identity documents used by inquiry officers and enforcement staff to identify themselves to the public in Wales will be bilingual.

Other dealings with the public

44. The Agency's Internet facility, providing general information, has recently been reviewed and adapted. Welsh text is being developed progressively, with the aim of providing a full version within 12 months. The Agency does not currently use facilities such as televideo links and computerised communication. However, should it do so in future, the Agency will also ensure that their use is in compliance with its Welsh Language Scheme.

The organisation's public face

Corporate identity and image

45. The Agency will adopt a bilingual corporate identity to its customers in Wales. The acronym for the Agency, "DVLA", is well understood and will remain unchanged as will DVLA's logo incorporating the letters "DVLA". Where the Agency's title appears in full, it will also be in Welsh for use in Wales.

46. DVLA's address and other standard information will be fully bilingual on items such as signs, vehicles, buildings, fax papers, business cards, identification cards, compliment slips, envelopes and other goods and materials for use in Wales.

Documents

47. The three main documents DVLA issues to the public are the vehicle licence disc, the driving licence and the vehicle registration document. The position is:

- a. vehicle licence disc, bilingual version issued from all outlets in Wales;
- b. driving licence, bilingual version issued to drivers with post codes in Wales; and,
- c. vehicle registration document, the March 1998 Budget included proposals for graduated payment of vehicle licence duty, to be introduced autumn 1999. As a result, a revised vehicle registration document (V5) will need to be in place to reflect the relevant changes. A bilingual version (V5W) will also be introduced at that time.

The public may provide a Welsh language address for use on their driving licence and vehicle registration document.

Letterheads

48. Two different kinds of letters are sent out from DVLA:

- a. normal, one off letters, bilingual letterhead facilities for letters produced on personal computers are now available and used for customers living in Wales; and,
- b. computer generated letters, initial investigations indicate that changing these to incorporate bilingual headers will be an expensive process. Computer systems changes will be necessary both to change the letters and to identify Welsh addresses. However, the Agency will aim to introduce bilingual letterheaded stationery progressively from mid 1999 over a period of twelve months.

Signs

49. In the Agency's offices in Wales, external and internal signs in public areas are bilingual. If separate Welsh and English signs are provided, they will be equal in terms of format, size and quality, legibility and prominence.

Forms and associated explanatory material

50. The Agency's principle is that bilingual or Welsh versions of forms and leaflets giving information and advice will be produced, unless there is an overriding reason why this cannot be done e.g. very low annual volumes, technical, physical or financial impracticalities, or forms which do not generally affect the public.

51. The criteria to be adopted for determining whether a form or explanatory leaflet will be made available in the Welsh language will be:

- an expectation that there will be more than 2000 issued in Wales per year
- the document must be aimed at the general public
- it must be physically, technically and financially practicable to achieve

52. Each document which is presently only available in the English language will be identified and given a priority rating, based on perceived importance to the general public and the level of change required to DVLA's systems. This priority rating will determine the timetable for introducing a bilingual or Welsh language version.

53. It is the intention to produce bilingual documents. Where this is not possible, for example where the constraints of the overall dimensions of a form result in text too small to read clearly, separate versions will be developed. These will be issued simultaneously and distributed together. It will be as easy to obtain a copy of the document in the one language as in the other. The practice of issuing material in the one language and offering to issue the other on request will not be encouraged.

54. The Agency already provides Welsh or bilingual version forms for all major licensing transactions including driver licensing application and renewal forms, vehicle licence application and renewal forms, and refund of vehicle excise duty forms.

55. The Agency's key Driver and Vehicle Information leaflets and Customer Service Guide are currently available in separate English and Welsh version.

56. The Agency occasionally distributes information leaflets on behalf of other organisations. In these circumstances the provision of Welsh language leaflets is outside DVLA's control. However, where those organisations provide bilingual leaflets, the Agency undertakes to distribute them to addresses in Wales. If separate versions are provided, the Agency will ensure that both versions are distributed to the public in Wales where the capacity of our despatch machinery permits.

Publishing and printing material

57. The Agency will publish and print bilingually any material directed exclusively at the public in Wales, favouring Welsh and English together in one document. If it is necessary to publish separate versions, it will be as easy to obtain a copy of the document in the one language as in the other. They will be issued simultaneously and distributed together. The practice of issuing material in the one language and offering to issue the other on request will not be encouraged.

58. The Agency issues only a limited number of published documents such as its Annual Report and Accounts and its Business Plan. These are generally low volume publications. However, where materials are directed at the British public, DVLA undertakes that the material will be published in English and Welsh if the number needed by the public in Wales exceeds 10,000.

59. Where any document published by the Agency is sold, the price of a bilingual document will not be greater than that of the single language version. The price of a Welsh only version of a document will be the same as that for the English version.

60. A DVLA design standards manual is being created as a product of a special forms review exercise. This document will set out standards for producing bilingual, as well as single language, documents. This will be made available for reference for anybody, including consultants and designers, involved in the design of DVLA documentation.

61. Other types of printed material, not specifically referred to so far in this scheme, will be printed in bilingual or separate English and Welsh version. The criteria and commitments given in the section on "Forms and Associated Explanatory Material" above will apply to other printed materials.

Media relations

62. The Agency provides Welsh speaking staff for interviews requested by the Welsh language media.

63. Any media campaigns initiated by the Agency on Welsh language television and radio will be in Welsh. They will not, however, be bilingual on GB wide television and radio.

64. From the date of its scheme, the Agency will provide bilingual press releases, on issues directed exclusively to the public in Wales, to media outlets based in Wales. Press releases and notices directed at the British public, provided to GB media outlets, will normally be in English only.

Staff recruitment advertising, official and public notices

65. Since October 1997, official notices, public notices and recruitment advertisements when published in newspapers based in Wales have been bilingual with Welsh and English versions shown together. Each version is equal in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence.

Publicity and advertising

66. All publicity and advertising in newspapers based in Wales will be bilingual with Welsh and English versions shown together.

67. In the promotion of Sale of Marks auctions held in Wales, DVLA will issue advertising material bilingually or in separate Welsh and English version. Where separate versions are used, the advertising material will be distributed together. Auctions will be conducted in English only.

68. We aim to publish publicity posters and other visual promotional materials bilingually in Wales. If this is not possible, separate Welsh and English versions will be equal in size, format and quality and will be distributed and exhibited in a manner which respects the principle of equality between the Welsh and English languages.

69. Should publicity material such as literature, films, video tapes and audio tapes be developed to promote, publicise or explain schemes, policies, procedures, legislation or services, these will be produced bilingually, or in separate Welsh and English version. Where separate versions are produced, it will be as easy to obtain the item in the one language as in the other.

70. Display materials at any conference, seminar or exhibition for the public held in Wales will be bilingual or in separate English and Welsh version. However, it should be noted that these events may contain material which is not available in Welsh or which have not been produced bilingually.

71. Any public survey or market research conducted in Wales will be bilingual.

Implementing and monitoring the scheme

72. When finalised following consultation, this Welsh language scheme will be issued with the approval of the Agency's Executive Board and Advisory Board.

Staffing

73. The Agency will ensure that workplaces that have contact with the public in Wales seek access to sufficient and appropriately skilled Welsh speakers to enable those workplaces to deliver a service through the medium of Welsh.

74. The Agency will identify those workplaces and posts where the ability to speak Welsh is essential and those where it is desirable and the level of proficiency required in each case. In drawing up team and job descriptions, careful consideration will have to be given to any potential need for written or spoken capabilities in Welsh. This will depend on the demand for Welsh language services and the extent to which the services offered are taken up, although we are aware that demand may increase as this scheme is publicised and implemented.

75. The Agency will conduct a skills audit of its staff regarding their proficiency in the Welsh language and maintain a database recording this information.

76. The result of the skills audit will be compared to the identified need for Welsh speakers in posts in order to identify any area which displays a shortfall in staff with Welsh language skills.

77. The Agency will identify priorities for action and set up and implement a long term programme to ensure that staff with the appropriate skills are deployed in the appropriate posts. The options of recruitment, transfer and training will underpin the programme.

78. The implementation of the programme will be monitored and any decrease in the number of appropriately skilled staff in scheme related posts will be addressed.

Learning Welsh

79. DVLA will provide suitable on site accommodation for Welsh language classes for staff. These are organised through the Workers Education Association, and are held subject to demand.

80. Staff wishing to learn Welsh are able to apply for financial assistance under further education provisions in the Agency, which may include study time for those under 18 years of age.

81. Welsh language audio training packages are available on loan from the Agency's Open Resource Centre.

82. The Agency is equipping its Open Resource Centre with a CD ROM Welsh language training package. This will be available to staff, either in their own time, or in work time at the discretion of managers responsible for staff in scheme related posts.

83. In addition, DVLA may organise courses in Welsh for staff dealing directly with the public.

Recruitment

84. Where linguistic ability is considered to be essential or is desirable for any post, this is specified when recruiting to that post.

85. Where the ability to speak Welsh is desirable but not essential to a particular post, the ability to speak Welsh will be considered an additional skill.

86. Where the ability to write or speak Welsh is essential, we will either endeavour to recruit a suitable Welsh speaker or make an appointment dependent on a person's willingness to learn Welsh, with our full support, to a required standard within a stated period of time.

87. Publicity will be given to the fact that Welsh speakers are welcome to join the workforce by ensuring that appropriate recruitment advertising will be bilingual.

Vocational training

88. As part of its training programme, the Agency will assess the need for specific training in communication and word processing in the medium of Welsh.

Administrative arrangements

89. Responsibility for implementing specific aspects of the scheme will be delegated to the relevant managers within the Agency.

90. Staff and managers within the Agency will be made aware of the Agency's Welsh Language Scheme through the use of internal communication mechanisms such as the Agency's newsletter, circulars and special meetings with managers and staff. Following the introduction of the Agency's scheme new staff will be made aware of their responsibilities under the scheme via their managers.

91. The Agency has put in place arrangements with an external professional translation service ensuring that the Agency has access to a high quality translation service when required.

92. Specifications for new, replacement or adapting computer programmes will assist the organisation to implement the commitments in the scheme.

Services delivered on behalf of the Agency by other parties

93. A major part of the Agency's dealings with the public currently takes place through an agent, Post Office Counters Ltd, which is itself a public body and has its own Welsh language scheme. The Agency relies on Post Office Counters Ltd to conform with legislation affecting services to the public. There is a requirement to have Welsh versions of DVLA forms available in Post Offices in Wales. Vehicle Excise Duty discs issued from Post Offices in Wales are in bilingual format.

94. Any agreement or arrangement entered into with a third party and relating to the provision of services to the public in Wales will be consistent with the scheme.

95. The Agency will seek to ensure through contracting arrangements that the agent or contractor is aware of and complies with the requirements of the scheme when providing services to the public in Wales on behalf of DVLA. To this end, the Agency will be responsible for ensuring that relevant tendering documents and contracts are drawn up with provisions reflecting the commitments given in this scheme.

96. Contractors' performance will be monitored as part of the normal contract management procedures. Performance reports by contractors or agents will be required.

Monitoring the scheme

97. Responsibility for monitoring DVLA's Welsh Language Scheme will lie with the external and corporate services director. This will include:

- a. Forward planning and procurement, to ensure new policies and initiatives and new publications and computer programmes are taken forward with regard to the commitments made in this scheme;
- b. Organising and delivering services, to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of arrangements to deliver the organisation's services in Welsh;
- c. Dealing with the Welsh speaking public to monitor response times for Welsh correspondence, the quality of the translation service, and the arrangements for meetings;
- d. The organisation's public face, to monitor the Agency's corporate image, the introduction of bilingual publications, forms, signs, notices and other documents;
- e. Staffing; to monitor the implementation of staffing and training measures set out in the scheme;
- f. Agents and contractors, to monitor the provision and administration of services by the organisation's agents and contractors to ensure compliance with the Welsh language terms of their agreements or arrangements;
- g. Timetable, to monitor achievements against the timetable; and,
- h. Grievances, to monitor the incidence and nature of complaints relating to our Welsh language service, as part of the Agency's current complaints procedure.

98. The Agency aims to conduct periodic opinion surveys to test the views of Welsh speaking service users about the range and quality of services in Welsh.

99. The Agency will welcome, record and acknowledge suggestions for improvements in its Welsh language scheme. The contact for suggestions is the Welsh Language Scheme manager.

100. The Agency will provide to the Board an annual report describing progress in implementing the measures in the scheme against the approved timetable and standards, and an analysis of the number and nature of any complaints and suggestions for improvements received from the public.

Publishing information

101. The Agency's performance against the targets detailed in the scheme will be reported annually in the Agency's Annual Report and Accounts.

The aspects reported on will include:

- performance against DVLA's service standards. Universal performance achieved will be reported where DVLA's internal processes allow no distinction between transactions conducted in Welsh or English.
- the percentage of publications issued bilingually compared against the criteria in the scheme
- the percentage of Welsh speakers in posts where the ability to speak Welsh is desirable

102. The Agency will provide explanations regarding any failure to achieve targets and explain what steps will be taken to remedy the situation.

Publicising the scheme

103. The Agency's Welsh Language Scheme will be publicised initially through newspaper advertisements.

104. Continuing publicity will be through our Customer Service Guide. This leaflet will be available at our DVLA local offices and through our Customer Enquiry Unit. It is also distributed with each vehicle registration document, mailed directly to the registered vehicle keeper.

105. Additional continuing publicity of the fact that the Agency welcomes the use of the Welsh language will be achieved through the use of a bilingual message on bilingual letterheaded stationery.

106. Normal sources of public information in Wales will display a poster advertising that a bilingual service is available.