

MEETING:	LANGUAGE SUB-COMMITTEE
DATE:	11 OCTOBER 2012
TITLE:	LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS
AUTHOR:	EQUALITY AND LANGUAGE OFFICER
PURPOSE OF REPORT	PRESENT RECENT COMPLAINTS AND UPDATE THE COMMITTEE

1. COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE COUNCIL

DATE	COMPLAINT	RESPONSE
July 2012	Complaint by Councillor regarding English-only instructions on a new pedestrian crossing on the Porthmadog bypass	The Trunk Roads Agency has confirmed that this is the responsibility of the Welsh Government and has sent on the complaint. If we do not receive a satisfactory response, then it will be drawn to the attention of the Welsh Language Commissioner
July 2012	Complaint by Councillor regarding the use of the Welsh form of the term "dog waste" (as opposed to "dog mess" on Council bins	Response from Highways and Municipal Department that this is the standard terminology
July 2012	Complaint from Llandwrog Community Council regarding the word "Stop" on road markings	The Regulatory Department confirming that that the current regulations and dictionary accept "Stop" as being a Welsh term
August 2012	Complaint by Councillor about an English-only Events Licensing Form (Home Office document with no approved Welsh Version)	Public Protection Unit has translated the form and accepts applications through the medium of Welsh. However, the Home Office have not formally approved this version and so the matter has been raised with the Welsh Language Commissioner. In the meantime, the Committee is asked to provide guidance on default usage of this (unofficial) Welsh version

DATE	COMPLAINT	RESPONSE
August 2012	Complaint from member of staff that the internal e-mail filtering system is in English only	Customer Care Department have raised the matter with the company and are currently trying to solve the problem
August 2012	Complaint from member of the public that the landlord accreditation course is not available through the medium of Welsh	The Council pays for this service, and although the need to provide through the medium of Welsh is noted as part of the brief, no-one has before now requested that it be available in Welsh. The Housing Service has received confirmation that Welsh trainers are available, and will make it clear from now on that the training can be provided through the medium of Welsh
August 2012	Complaint about the use of English street names in a standard letter regarding road resurfacing	Response from Highways and Municipal Department, apologising and confirming that the expectation would be the use the Welsh form. See also report presented on place, street and house names.
September 2012	Complaint from the Welsh Language Commissioner on behalf of a member of the public not having an interview conducted through the medium of Welsh according to his wishes. The Commissioner also questioning our compliance with our recruitment arrangements in view of this failure	The Department have responded that the person has been given the choice of Welsh language provision at every level (meetings, correspondence) and have confirmed the staffing arrangements: Interim appointment filled by Welsh learner, but the Council have and continue to address the needs in terms of language improvement training. Following further discussion with the Commissioner's Office, the Department is now drawing up an improvement plan.

2. COMPLAINTS ABOUT OTHER ORGANISATIONS

DATE	COMPLAINT	RESPONSE
August 2012	The Economy and Community Department writing to the Welsh Government's Rural Programmes Team regarding the quality of a Welsh-language letter sent to them by the team	Awaiting response from the Welsh Government
August 2012	Complaint by member of staff regarding an English-only letter from the Care Council for Wales	The staff member received an apology and a Welsh version of the letter

3. UPDATE:

a) WC sign on the A487 at Porthmadog

Following the Welsh Government's assertion that they had no choice but use this form under the requirements of the Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals 1968, the matter was referred to the Welsh Language Commissioner. The Commissioner's office confirmed that they believed that the standard symbol would be most appropriate, as "WC" has no meaning in Welsh. The Commissioner will be sending a note of this opinion to the Welsh Government.

b) Welsh Signage

It was decided at the last meeting to send a letter to the Welsh Government pressing for a review of national planning policies so that they give more consideration to the need for Welsh-language signage on retail developments. A draft letter was sent to the Senior Planning Manager for comment. A response was received that it would be more appropriate and practical to confirm the Welsh Language Commissioner's role in this context and to ensure these powers. The Committee is asked to comment on this.

c) Padarn Buses

This meeting will be arranged shortly following confirmation of the relevant staff member to attend.