

**Mae'n cof yma'n y caeau – a hanes  
yr hen genedlaethau,  
A swyn y pridd sy'n parhau  
O roi anadl i'r enwau.  
(Anhysbys)**

**Subject:** Research Paper looking at Place Name Policy

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Street names and geographical features have been the subject of several complaints over recent years and the Language Committee has held several discussions on how to safeguard Welsh names.

1.2 The Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 and the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 are new legislations which this matter relates to.

1.3 This document provides an outline of the relevant considerations and attempts to clarify the functions and procedures of the services which are responsible for aspects of naming and recording place names within this authority.

1.4 The document also sets out the statutory duties of other relevant Welsh bodies who are responsible for naming and recording place names and their relationship with the authority.

1.5 The aim of this document is therefore to ensure members have a better understanding of the functions and procedures associated with this matter.

## **2.0 Name and Name Change Statistics for Gwynedd in 2017**

The Building Control unit will provide detailed statistics by the end of May but last year's general statistics are as follows:

<b>Language</b>	<b>New Name</b>	<b>Rename</b>
Welsh	98	2 (from English to Welsh)
English	14	Historical connection with the area for each. (1 naming a company and 1 renaming from a previous English name to and English name).

### 3. What is needed?

3.1 Confirmation that members have an improved understanding of duties and procedures in relation to naming and recording names within the provisions of the relevant legislation.

3.2 Confirmation that members are of the opinion that relevant services promote to the best of their ability the use of Welsh names that are characteristic of the inherent heritage of Gwynedd.

3.3 Committee guidance in relation to the development of the said work within the authority, further investigation or the need to introduce and adopt a new official policy.

### 4. Legislative Context

4.1 This paper should be considered in the following legislative context:

- a) Section 17 and 18 of the Public Health Act 1925
- b) Town Improvement Clauses Act 1847
- c) Welsh Language Act 1967
- d) Welsh Language Act 1993
- d) Welsh Language Measure (Wales) Order 2011
- f) The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- e) The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016

### 5. Policy Context

- a) Naming Draft Policy; Building Control, Consultancy
- b) The Authority's Welsh Language Scheme; Language Services, Corporate Support
- c) Welsh Names Policy; Welsh Language Name Policy in the Ordnance Survey database
- d) Standardization of Welsh Place-names Guidelines; Welsh Language Commissioner
- d) Statutory Guidance on how Local Authorities, National Park Authorities and Natural Resources Wales should use the Historic Environment Records and contribute to development.

### 6.0 Outline of Gwynedd Council's Duties and Rights in relation to naming and renaming housing, new developments and streets

Department	Duties	Type of Organization
Building Control	Administer applications from individuals and developers to name and rename property and developments.  Promote and prioritize Welsh names and where possible, prioritize historical names.	Right to recommend a Welsh name and ask a candidate to reconsider if it is not in order to safeguard and protect the local heritage (housing and new developments).  Right to send a Welsh name only to the OS and Post Office

<p>Language Services</p>	<p>Send the names to OS and Post Office to avoid duplication before allowing name and allocation of postcode.</p> <p>Ensure that Building Control policy gives sufficient consideration to the safeguarding and promotion of the Welsh language.</p>	<p>and to indicate that only a Welsh name will be registered.</p> <p>The authority has the right to refuse non-welsh names on streets.</p> <p>The authority has the right to name Welsh streets and rename following a legal process.</p>
<p>Translation Unit</p>	<p>Advise on Welsh names</p>	<p>Right to reject names when there are cases of duplication in Welsh or otherwise.</p>
<p>Information Technology</p>	<p>Record the permitted and adopted names in a digital register that feeds into a digital national directory.</p>	<p>If street names have been recorded bilingually, then the sign must be bilingual for the benefit of the emergency services.</p>
<p>Highways</p>	<p>Numbering and re-numbering houses</p>	<p>Gwynedd Council administers the process of naming and renaming housing, new developments and streets.</p> <p>The authority has the right to name and rename streets and the right to refuse an application from an individual to do this.</p> <p>Gwynedd Council promotes and gives priority to Welsh names and historical names.</p> <p>The Council can name, influence and consult on names and send them to the OS, the Post Office and the national names register.</p>

## 7.0 Outline of the duties and rights of other relevant bodies in Wales in relation to naming and renaming housing, new developments and streets

	Name	Duties	Type of Organization
	Developers / builders and homeowners	<p>Submit new names for new developments and housing.</p> <p>Contact the Council and offer a name or three names in relation to developments.</p>	Body or person submitting a name.
	Community and Town councils	<p>Protect and influence the names, historic features, developments and streets of their communities.</p> <p>Influence the names, historic features, developments and streets of their communities.</p>	A consultative and influential body that can recommend Welsh names that are characteristic of the heritage of the local area.
	The Welsh Place Name Society	<p>Standardization, naming and renaming of place names in Wales.</p> <p>Authority on place names in Wales.</p>	<p>Recommend, influence and promote natural Welsh names.</p> <p>A consultative and influential body that can recommend Welsh names that are characteristic of the area's heritage but also safeguard non-Welsh names if they are part of the area's history (e.g. Latin).</p>
	Ordnance Survey	<p>Record place names on official maps.</p> <p>Maps updated every six months.</p> <p>Recording, naming and renaming body in consultation with bodies that are recognized authorities on place names and local communities.</p>	<p>Records names and change names based on local evidence of locally-known names and bodies that are recognized authorities on place names.</p> <p>AO places emphasis on creating modern maps rather than historical ones according to the policy officer.</p>

	<p>Welsh Language Commissioner</p>	<p>National Welsh Place Names Panel.</p> <p>Standardization, promotion and safeguarding of Welsh place names.</p>	<p>Standardization of Welsh Names and Welsh Names Guide.</p> <p>Standardization, promotion and consultative body that can recommend Welsh or historical names.</p> <p>The Commissioner can also safeguard non-Welsh historical names if they are considered a significant part of an area's history (English, Latin, etc.) names.</p>
	<p>Royal Mail</p>	<p>Records addresses and place names that it is informed of by the local authority.</p> <p>Allocation of Postcode.</p> <p>An administrative body that allocates a postcode and ensures that there are no duplication of addresses.</p>	<p>Its aim is to facilitate mail delivery to correct addresses, ensuring that addresses are correct for the emergency services and ensuring that there are no duplication of addresses.</p>
	<p>Departments of Advanced Welsh Language, Celtic Studies, Language Technologies, Archeology and History of Welsh Universities -  University of Wales, Bangor in Gwynedd</p>	<p>Academic authority on place names in Wales.</p> <p>Investigates, interprets, explains and influences the place names of Wales.</p>	<p>Advisory and consultative organization that recommends and promotes names based on linguistic, historical, geographical and archaeological knowledge.</p>
	<p>Welsh Government</p>	<p>Holds and maintains a national statutory record of historic environment names under the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016.</p>	<p>Recording and consultation on place names in Wales.</p> <p>Provides a Government guide for safeguarding the historic environment.</p> <p>Holds a register and provides guidelines that</p>

			Local Authorities, National Park Authority and Natural Resources Wales should consult with and contribute to its development.
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## 8. Current Practices

8.1 Following initial investigation it appears that the Building Control service has a draft policy in place that sets out the statutory duty of the authority and its procedures.

8.2 The draft policy was drawn up in 2014 and the Equality and Language Officer was then consulted in order to advise on the promotion of the Welsh language within the policy. The responsibility for the policy is delegated to the Building Control service as it holds the statutory duty to name and number houses, developments and streets and the policy falls under the provisions of the Public Health Act 1925. It must be remembered that the unambiguous recording of addresses, housing and estates is important in relation to public health and safety and the ability of the emergency services to reach any destination safely and so that mail can be delivered to the correct addresses.

8.3 It was decided at the time that the procedures would be piloted before moving forward to adoption of a policy. In the meantime, the officers responsible for this area of work have moved to other posts and therefore the work has not been developed as planned.

8.4 As mentioned above, new laws have come into existence since the drafting of this policy namely the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

8.5 The draft policy on naming and renaming provides that priority is given to Welsh names. The relevant clause is:

"Gwynedd Council requires that proposed names ...

- where possible, derive from the historical, geographical or local connections of the area
- and will give priority to Welsh names".

8.6 Guidelines on the Council's corporate website provide advice and guidance to developers and property owners on the naming and renaming policy and procedures in Gwynedd.

8.7 The public (individual applicants such as homeowners and developers who develop new estates) have the right to submit non-welsh names but a procedure is in place where the Council asks them to reconsider non-Welsh and they are allowed 28 days to do so.

8.8 Currently, the Council's Building Control officers suggest a translation of non-Welsh names, in consultation with the translation unit. However, these will be direct translations of the names and does not necessarily take into consideration or reflect the history or heritage of the area in any way.

8.9 In relation to the names of new developments, developers submit three names and again, Council officers will prioritize Welsh names and encourage developers to consider the linguistic, historical and cultural nature of the area.

8.10 It is not known to which extent a consultation on historical names of the local area currently takes place and what procedure is in place to do this.

8.11 The current draft policy stipulates that each application will be considered based on its own merits and the legal advice received was that policies should not be too rigid so each application can be considered according to its own merit and that decisions should be justified based on individual cases.

## **9. Some of the questions we were trying to answer**

### **9.1 Is it possible to insist on Welsh names in order to safeguard the natural heritage of the area or is it the intention to promote Welsh names to the best of our ability so that non-Welsh speakers can learn about the heritage of the area and come to love, appreciate and respect it?**

There is no provision in the Public Protection Act 1925 in relation to the authority's statutory right to name or rename new housing and developments but there is in relation to streets. The administration of naming or renaming housing and new developments is the authority's duty under the provisions of this act but the law provides that street names can be named or renamed by means of a legal process.

However, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 provides for the promotion of the Welsh language in all aspects of local administration and the draft naming policy stipulates that Gwynedd Council's policy is to give priority to Welsh names within its communities. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 also commits local authorities to safeguard their local heritage and this is one area where this can be done.

### **9.2 Are Welsh names only permitted on streets or are bilingual names a must?**

The Council has the right, by way of an Order, to name or rename a street (or part of a street) where a name had not previously been given (Section 18, Public Health Act 1925).

Gwynedd Council has the right to oppose an application from a candidate who suggests a new name for a street (or part of a street) (Section 17, Public Health Act 1925).

See full provision in Sections 17 and 18, Public Health Act 1925.

Following legal advice, these are the principles that the Council should use when making a decision under Section 17 and Section 18 of the Public Health Act 1925:

When making a decision to name or rename a street (or part of a street), or to object an application to name or rename a street (or part of a street), as appropriate, the Council will consider each application according to his own merit. However, the Council will follow the principle of giving priority to naming a street (or part of a street) in Welsh only, and for this purpose the Council will act in the interests of good administration and for the benefit of the local community.

Before deciding, the Council will have the right, if appropriate, to consult the local community and can then consider the responses received. Exceptional circumstances, such as for local historical or cultural reasons, can lead the Council to divert from the policy of giving priority to the Welsh language, and therefore, as an exception, a street or part of a street can be named bilingually or in another language.

The Council has the right to change street names to Welsh only but the name would have to be formally recorded as such with the relevant agencies and the sign could only be changed following this procedure so as to ensure that the emergency services can easily reach any destination. Each case would be considered as an individual case and the extent of the human and financial resources needed to follow this process would need to be considered. There would be a legal process to follow in each case.

### **9.3 Is there any reason why Welsh signs only cannot be used when an English version of the same address exists. If the Council is responsible for a sign, why can it not have Welsh signs only?**

If the name is registered bilingually then the name on the sign must be bilingual for the benefit of the emergency services.

A legal process would have to be followed to change the name and the registered name would have to be checked before any sign can be changed.

The Ordnance Survey, the Post Office and Emergency Services would need to be consulted to check how the name is registered and then a process would have to be adhered to to change the name to a Welsh name.

It would be necessary to ensure that the sign corresponds to that registered by the relevant agencies. The Council would be at risk of being called to an inquest should a member of the public suffer due to ambiguous place names.

Again, we would have to take into account the resources needed to rename streets before proceeding to do so.

It must be remembered that it has been the practice, since the Welsh Language Act 1993, to name and rename Welsh street names, according to the Building Control service and that every effort has been made to persuade homeowners and developers to name houses and developments in Welsh only in order to safeguard the heritage of the area.

## **10. Recommendations and Considerations for the future**

10.1 Greater clarity is needed regarding to which extent the authority consults about Welsh historical place names when naming and renaming and this will need to be incorporated into any



new policy or procedure.

10.2 Building Control officers who deal with the public will need to be aware of any new policy or procedure that exists in order to safeguard and preserve the historic and indigenous names of Wales.

10.3 Similar policies and good practice within other local authorities should be considered.

10.4 The Ordnance Survey's Welsh name policy will need to be revisited and possibly compared with the Gaelic names policy in order to share and adopt good practice.

10.5 It will be necessary to consider the extent to which the Council can influence the adoption and preservation of Welsh names when in discussions with the Ordnance Survey and the Post Office.

10.6 A robust system for consulting with relevant organizations regarding historical Welsh names will need to be established.

10.7 A comprehensive list of guidelines and consultation resources that the Council will use will need to be compiled and approved.

10.8 The consultation guidance and consultation resources will need to be made available to the public, staff, elected members and town and community councils.

10.9 Ordnance Survey should be consulted regarding examples of consultation with local authorities on naming and renaming which set a precedent for Wales.

10.10 Work was carried out on the standardization of the Council's place names database by the IT Unit circa 2004 and it was agreed at the time that pushing for giving priority to Welsh names would be the way forward. Clive James, Chief Policy Officer, presented the report of the Chief Executive's Department regarding the nature of the names that were kept in the Council's database and sent to the National Land Information Service and the National Land and Property Register. This register could be revisited and an update on the database could be requested.

10.11 Any new policy would have to specify the duty or function of each service, the names and contact details of all relevant authority officers and all relevant procedures relating to the matter.

10.12 The translation unit's policy is to use natural Welsh names within the body of any text except in circumstances where non-Welsh names are used for historical reasons. The translation unit utilizes a place name list and also utilizes the Gazetteer of Welsh Place Names which is recognized in academic circles. A digital database of Welsh place names is now available on the University of Wales Bangor website and its use should be promoted.

<http://www.e-gymraeg.org/enwaucymru/introduction.aspx>

Also, the Place Names Database, Dr Melville Richards Archive, Bangor University:

<http://www.e-gymraeg.co.uk/enwaulleoedd/amr/>

10.13 The use of Welsh Government's Statutory Welsh Historic Names Register should be promoted under the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The purpose of the list is to raise public awareness of the rich heritage of place names in Wales and to promote the safeguarding and continuation of this important feature of the nation's heritage.

The register is available free of charge online and is a record that continuously evolves based on authoritative academic information. The Government wants the register to be used to

- help the public learn about the history of their communities;
- support academic research a
- be the basis of decisions in managing the historic environment.