



**7 April 2022 -  
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE**

**The use of the Welsh  
Language within YGC**



## **Introduction**

### **The use of the Welsh Language within YGC**

Over the past six years, it has been both a challenge and a pleasure for me and the department's managers to take additional steps to promote the Welsh language, and to ensure that we contribute to the implementation of the Welsh Language Promotion Plan for Gwynedd 2018 - 2023.

We have many projects that address the promotion of the Welsh language mainly in the priority field of work and service language. We have also addressed the field of learning practice by means of our collaboration with the Institute of Chartered Engineers to ensure that young technicians can take on a recognised qualification in the field through the medium of Welsh.

The Department is collaborating externally in agreement with Bodies and Contractors that do not always operate bilingually; every effort is made to promote the Welsh language and to encourage them to use it.

As YGC works in a field that is deemed as an "English" industry in nature, we have faced a number of barriers not to be able to offer a full service in Welsh, mainly as a result of the collaboration with external bodies and agencies such as NMWTRA, Natural Resources Wales, the National Trust and national standard engineering contractors, that do not operate bilingually.

The issue of recruitment/shortage of staff with high linguistic skills has been a problematic matter for the Department and this situation continues.

We are continuing to work bilingually with Welsh Government, the Trunk Road Agent, Natural Resources Wales and the National Trust, by starting every conversation in Welsh.

The Department has worked on a number of projects and has trained staff through the medium of Welsh. See full details of the projects below.

### **Language Specifications Project**

- Gwynedd Consultancy participated in the initial Pilot of the Language Specifications Project.
- We collaborated closely with Siôn Elwyn Hughes and Llio Mai Hughes, Welsh Language Learning and Development Officers, to collect individual self-assessments and to provide training to support staff who did not meet the

language requirements. All of the Department's staff (100%) have now completed the self-assessment questionnaire.

- We conducted 115 current staff assessments, which included permanent, fixed term and casual staff.
- This research was a success for the department, with 92% reaching the language specifications of the post.
- By now, the work happens naturally between Llio Mai Hughes and YGC's Management Team.
- A number of YGC staff have also completed a self-assessment questionnaire as an integral part of their induction period. This means that the rate of the assessments remains consistently high. We are therefore able to identify staff that need support early, and offer them training immediately.

### **Buddy Scheme**

- The Buddy Scheme has been established to support one of this project's aims, which is to help the Council's staff to reach the language specifications of their posts.
- The purpose of the scheme is to provide staff who are either currently receiving training, or who have recently ended their training, with an opportunity to use the Welsh language informally, and to ask for assistance in a comfortable situation.
- Currently, three members of YGC's staff are participating in the Scheme.
- A recent example is Molly, who joined YGC during the lockdown period in March 2020, and has joined the Buddy Scheme. Molly has been partnered with Owain Griffith. This Scheme enables Molly to have conversations in Welsh with colleagues, and to be aware that she has someone who is willing to listen to her. With Owain's support, it appears that this arrangement is working very effectively.
- Molly has also attended the "Using Work Welsh at Intermediate level" course.

## **Welsh Lessons**

- ❖ Regular meetings are arranged jointly between Llio Mai Hughes and ourselves, where we review the courses on offer, and review which staff we have following the various courses.
- ❖ During the lockdown period, our Welsh lessons have continued, with staff receiving their lessons through various methods, for example:
- ❖ Abigail Caulfield is currently following a Foundation level community course until June 2022, and she also attended the "Using Work Welsh" course at Intermediate level in November 2021. After completing the Access level course last year, Abigail passed the Access level examination over the summer.
- ❖ Telor Williams has attended the Language Refresher course at Nant Gwrtheyrn, Llithfaen.
- ❖ Bob Humphreys is a very good example of someone who has regularly followed Welsh courses. Bob decided to complete Welsh Courses by using the Learn Welsh pathway offered by Bangor University. He started with a "Stori a Sgwrs" course, which included reading novels and then reviewing them, with the second course in the form of lectures, where he learnt about Welsh culture. Bob has enjoyed his learning, and has been exceptionally successful. Bob Humphreys followed a course on a Refresher level until April 2020. Following his training, he has now reached the language specifications of his post.
- ❖ Siôn Arwel Jones attended the 'Using Welsh at Refresher Level - Writing' course back in November 2021.

## **"Arfer" Scheme run by the University**

The Water and Environment Service agreed to collaborate on the Arfer Scheme run by Bangor University. The purpose of this project was to change language behaviours to enable colleagues who were able to speak Welsh (but had established a habit of using English) to use more Welsh in the workplace.

Arwel Tomos Williams, a researcher from the University, worked on this Scheme. He has attended the Water and Environment office on a weekly basis to meet the staff. His message of changing the language in the workplace and changing the culture within the Department is working. This scheme was immensely successful as they now conduct their conversations in the office through the medium of Welsh, and they also respond to telephone calls in Welsh.

There are 14 staff members in the Environment Unit, with 8 members who speak Welsh as their first language, and the other 6 learned Welsh from the start. This is a good example from a learning and development perspective.

### **Dafydd Orwig Award**

During recent years, five members of YGC staff have won the Dafydd Orwig Memorial Prize, namely:

- Alex Jones
- Nancy Wilkinson
- Jon Chapman
- Owen Angus Duncan
- Nia Jane Owen-Midwood

These awards were won for learning Welsh, or for using and promoting the Welsh language in the workplace.

### **Eng Tech Professional qualifications**

As many of YGC's services are in the field of Civil Engineering, we work closely with the "Institution of Civil Engineers" (ICE), and have forged a positive relationship with them.

Many of our young technicians are working towards a professional qualification known as "Eng Tech". This qualification is a level of professional registration for Engineering Technicians which is recognised world-wide. It is formal recognition of engineering skills and competency, and is an important step towards becoming a corporate or chartered engineer.

In 2014, we formalised the arrangements with ICE to enable the interviews to be held in Welsh, and for the written work to be submitted in Welsh. This assisted those individuals who were more confident in Welsh. The arrangements for the professional interviews in Wales were also changed to be held in Galeri, Caernarfon, which enabled staff to stay in their locality without having to travel to Manchester/London. Gwynfor Hedd Roberts, a Senior Project Engineer with YGC, was one of the first to follow these arrangements.

### **Language Forum**

During 2021, the Welsh Language Learning and Development Department established a "Language Forum" and a representative from every Department across the Council attends this Forum. Nia Jane Owen-Midwood is YGC's representative.

Nia will be giving a presentation to the Forum in June. (A copy of the presentation is appended)

### **Investors in People**

- Recently, we have succeeded in gaining quality accreditation - "Investors in People".
- This process was concurred by Menter Môn and YGC - through the medium of Welsh.
- The staff questionnaires were circulated bilingually.
- Interviews and meetings were held in Welsh.
- Also, the final Report will be bilingual.

### **Sharing Good Practice**

- We share news on Sharepoint regularly.
- Circulate e-mails for Staff in Welsh.
- The Department has a Staff Bulletin that is circulated every two months in Welsh.
- The Head holds meetings with every Unit, approximately every two months. These are known as "Ask Huw" sessions, to provide an opportunity to share news and events, and the staff have a chance to ask questions - through the medium of Welsh.

### **The Future**

In future, YGC will:

- Further extend the use of the Welsh Language within YGC with other bodies, including our contractors and consultants, by continuing to hold conversations in Welsh and responding to e-mails in Welsh.
- The minutes of our Management Team and Training Panel are already in Welsh of course.
- Continue to work closely with the Welsh Language Learning and Development Department.

- Share information about any training through the medium of Welsh for the whole Department.
- Organise Welsh training for the Department's staff.
- Share news and announcements on Sharepoint in Welsh.
- Speak Welsh with our Learners.

**To conclude** I am extremely pleased to report that 24 staff members from the Department have attended language training since 2018, in a very challenging period for everyone (includes external and internal courses either to learn the Welsh language or to develop their current skills).