

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Council, we would first like to extend our congratulations on your new role in the Government's Cabinet, and we look forward to working with you over the coming years.

It is regrettable that our initial correspondence with you is to express significant concern about the way in which the Welsh language has been treated as inferior by the Welsh Government in recent times in correspondence and meetings with Cyngor Gwynedd. Several examples of English-only communications from the Government have come to our attention, as well as meetings organised by the Government without the provision of simultaneous translation. We believe that this neither meets the Standards to which the Government is subject regarding the use of Welsh, nor is it in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Measure (2011) and your own Language Policy. It is greatly disappointing to have to contact the Government to complain about its lack of commitment to its own legislation – we would expect the Government to set an example for all public bodies in Wales, rather than relying on us to issue reminders about the importance of treating Welsh equally to English in all cases.

Time and again, we as officers and Elected Members join virtual and face-to-face meetings, only to find no simultaneous translation. In a similar vein, there are countless examples of English-only correspondence justified by the disparaging explanation that the subject is urgent and therefore officers, as well as Ministers, feel that the initial correspondence should be sent only in English for the time being, accompanied by the promise that a "Welsh version will follow". We do not accept this as reasonable and it is used far too often as a cheap and convenient excuse. More often than not, the Welsh version is never sent, throwing salt in the wound.

The Welsh language has not been treated equally with English in a considerable portion of the correspondence received from the Government, and since May 2023, we have received dozens of English-only official emails (over 30 between May and December 2023), where a Welsh version of the given correspondence was not available. Moreover, much of this correspondence included appendices, such as operational documents where the Council was required to provide a response, which were also available only in English. Below, we would like to draw your attention to some examples of this type of correspondence:

- 17/05/23: English-only grant letter – "Gwynedd - 20mph Grant – 2023-24".
- 18/05/23: English-only grant letter – "Award of Funding FY2023-34 – Local Transport Fund and Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle Transformation Fund".
- 18/05/23: Bilingual email but English-only grant letter – "Award of Active Travel Fund 2023-24".

- 15/06/23: English-only email requesting information on the housing stock of the social sector – "Urgent Request for Information on over 11m Housing Stock within the Social Sector in Wales".
- 20/06/23: English-only grant letter – "B-GWY-0004 –Correcting the disparity in the condition and suitability of schools Phase III & IV – grant award letter".
- 21/06/23: Metro Fund funding award documents – "Gwynedd - Metro fund FY2023-24".
- 05/07/23: English-only letters – "Letter to local authority partners: Closure of Afghan hotels".
- 19/12/23: English-only grant letter – "Final Grant Award Letter for 2023-24: Homelessness, 'No one left out' approach".
- 30/10/23: English-only grant letter – "Gwynedd: Award Letter Unadopted Roads 2023-24".
- 02/11/23: English monolingual letter – "Request for information: Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) Provision".
- 17/11/23: English-only letter – "WG Letter to Las: Annex A Report – Future of Day Services Mencap Cymru".
- 28/11/23: English-only grant letter – "REVISED Final Grant Award Letter for 2023-24 – Homelessness, 'No one left out' approach."

Examples of meetings without the provision of live translation are becoming increasingly common too. At the meeting of the Directors of Social Care with the Welsh Government on Thursday 7 December 2023, the provision of live translation had not been arranged. Several meetings with Ministers appear to be held only through the medium of English, especially virtual ones. Such meetings adversely impact the use of Welsh as a business language and deprive our officers of the choice to participate in the language of their choice, their first language, and the national language of our country!

In addition to receiving English-only correspondence accompanied by the comment that a Welsh version will follow (which, more often than not, fails to be sent), as well as meetings held solely in English, we are also aware of certain email addresses designated for Welsh correspondence to the Government that do not work. We draw your attention to following address as one example:

[GC.Gohebiaeth.Gweithlu@llyw.cymru](mailto:GC.Gohebiaeth.Gweithlu@llyw.cymru)

We ask that the Government investigates the reasons for this relaxation in Welsh-language use, which appears to be happening much too often. Has a deliberate decision been made by Ministers or officers to this effect?

Welsh is the administrative language of Cyngor Gwynedd, and across Wales, public bodies – including the Welsh Government – have expressed their intention to increase their internal use of the Welsh language. However, the pattern delineated above of Welsh being treated less favourably than English has a detrimental impact not only on the internal use of Welsh within the Council, but also on broader efforts to promote its use in workplaces across Wales. The use of Welsh as a business language is fundamental to the Welsh Language Standards to which we are subject, both to encourage and facilitate the use of Welsh by officers of public bodies. We trust that you share our concern and disappointment regarding the current situation, and we anticipate that you will carefully consider the content of this letter.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

Dafydd Gibbard,

Chief Executive Officer.

Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn

Council Leader

Cllr. Efed Wyn ap Elwyn

Chairman of the Language Committee