



TAI CANOLBARTH CYMRU  
MID-WALES HOUSING

Yn barod **amdani** Equal to the challenge

## **Mid-Wales Housing Association Group**

### **Welsh Language Scheme**

**Welsh Language Scheme prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations Registered in Wales.**

**This Scheme received the approval of the Welsh Language Commissioner on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2014.**



Gofal a Thrwsio ym Mhowys  
Care & Repair in Powys



Comisiynydd y  
Gymraeg  
Welsh Language  
Commissioner

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## **1. OPENING STATEMENT**

### **1.1. Aim of the Scheme:**

The Mid-Wales Housing Association Group<sup>1</sup> has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality, in line with the principles of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, specifically . . . *the principle that the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language.*

This scheme notes how we will operate that principle in providing services to the public in Wales.

### **1.2. Objectives:**

- to enable everyone who uses a service or is in discussion with the Group to do so through the medium of Welsh or English according to the personal choice of the individual;
- to ensure high quality services through the medium of Welsh;
- to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language in the workplace.

The Group acknowledges that members of the public can express their opinions and needs better in their chosen language. It also acknowledges that enabling the public to use their chosen language is a matter of good practice rather than a concession, and that denying them this right could place them in a disadvantaged position. The Group will therefore offer the public the right to choose which language to use when dealing with it, in accordance with the principle above.

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<sup>1</sup> MWHG

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1. Background and Corporate Values**

Mid-Wales Housing Association was set up by a group of interested local people who saw a need for additional housing, particularly in Newtown, to complement housing provided by the local authority and the then Development Board for Rural Wales.

The Association was registered with the Housing Corporation on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1975. The make-up of its Board comprises people from a wide range of backgrounds and locations (including tenants) with the principal aim of providing and managing housing throughout the Association's area of operation.

At 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2014 Mid-Wales Housing Association had **1500** units in management.

#### **2.1.1. Mission Statement**

"Making quality homes affordable to more people in Mid-Wales."

#### **2.1.2. Values**

**Equality** - we believe in equal access to quality homes for local people entitled to affordable housing.

**Excellence** - we believe in positively changing the attitude towards affordable housing.

**Community** - we believe in a local approach to community housing.

**Caring** - we believe in putting the welfare of our tenants before profit.

### **2.2. Group Structure**

The Association is managed by a Board comprising of no more than 15 Members of which up to four may be tenants.

Mid-Wales Housing Association is a charitable Industrial and Provident Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) under registration number MS21416R.

It is registered with the Welsh Government as a Registered Social Landlord under registration number LO13.

Mid-Wales Housing Association is a group of companies with currently one subsidiary – "Care & Repair in Powys".

Care and Repair in Powys is an Industrial and Provident Society with charitable objects registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) under registration number 29535R.

Care & Repair in Powys is also registered with the Welsh Government as a Registered Social Landlord under registration number J135.

Mid-Wales Housing Association maintains a controlling interest in Care & Repair in Powys. A majority of the membership of Care & Repair in Powys are nominees from the Board of Mid-Wales Housing Association. The Chief Executive or Company Secretary may be one of these nominees.

The Director of Finance (Deputy Chief Executive) of Mid-Wales Housing Association is the Company Secretary of Mid-Wales Housing Association and the Chief Executive of Mid-Wales Housing Association is the Company Secretary of Care & Repair in Powys.

### **2.3. Area of Operation**

Since its inception in 1974 the Association has grown tremendously from its beginnings in Newtown, its geographical area has widened to include the whole of Mid-Wales: Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire, Brecknock and Ceredigion, as well as a few properties in Shropshire and details of where these properties are located can be found on its web site:

WELSH - <http://www.mid-walesha.co.uk/cymraeg/our-properties>

ENGLISH - <http://www.mid-walesha.co.uk/english/our-properties>

The Association intends to concentrate primarily on its core function of developing and maintaining good quality, affordable housing for people in need whilst providing a high quality, cost effective, efficient, caring management service.

It also recognises the importance that housing plays in the wider community and feels that it is important to consider how it can use its economic strength to address some of those wider needs. Supporting local economic and social regeneration as well as tackling poverty on a range of fronts are increasing priorities for it.

The Association operates from its headquarters in Newtown and Care & Repair in Powys has an office in Llandrindod Wells.

Care & Repair in Powys operates exclusively within the County of Powys.

### **2.4. Service Users**

The Association's principal aim is to provide and maintain good quality, affordable housing. Therefore its principal customers are applicants who are not able to obtain

or sustain their own accommodation, and tenants who were previously so disadvantaged. This includes the following (which is not an exhaustive list):

- People on low incomes.
- People with a disability either mentally, physically or both.
- People who require additional support to maintain a tenancy by virtue of circumstance that makes them vulnerable in the eyes of society.
- People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Care & Repair in Powys's principle aim is to ensure that all older people or disabled people in Powys have access to high quality advice, support and practical services, to enable them to live as independently as possible in safe, warm and secure homes

## **2.5. The Welsh Language**

### **2.5.1. Corporate Strategy**

Mid-Wales Housing Group supports the principles outlined within the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy 2012-17, and accepts that it has a role in supporting many of the strategic areas identified within it. It hopes that this, its own Welsh Language Strategy, will help deliver those strategic objectives.

- **Strategic area 1: The family**

Welsh Government Aim: to encourage and support the use of the Welsh language within families.

MWHG: A Welsh Language Scheme which seeks to mainstream the use of Welsh.

- **Strategic area 2: Children and young people**

Welsh Government Aim: to increase the provision of Welsh-medium activities for children and young people and to increase their awareness of the value of the language.

MWHG: A Welsh Language Scheme which seeks to mainstream the use of Welsh in media targeted at younger people including an increasing presence on social media.

- **Strategic area 3: The community**

Welsh Government Aim: to strengthen the position of the Welsh language in the community.

MWHG: A Welsh Language Scheme which seeks to mainstream the use of Welsh and ensure a bilingual approach to public meetings within the communities the Group serves.

- Strategic area 4: The workplace

Welsh Government Aim: to increase opportunities for people to use Welsh in the workplace.

MWHG: A Welsh Language Scheme which encourages both the learning of and use of the Welsh language within the workplace.

- Strategic area 5: Welsh-language services

Welsh Government Aim: to increase and improve Welsh-language services to citizens.

MWHG: A Welsh Language Scheme which seeks to mainstream the use of Welsh, especially in the delivery of services to Welsh speaking clients.

- Strategic area 6: Infrastructure

Welsh Government Aim: to strengthen the infrastructure for the language.

MWHG: A Welsh Language Scheme which seeks to mainstream the use of Welsh in relation to digital media.

### **2.5.2. A Living Language in Mid-Wales**

The results of the 2011 Census showed a disappointing decline in the number of Welsh speakers. In Powys there was a decline from 21.1% of the population able to speak Welsh in 2001 to 18.6% in 2011. Ceredigion saw a decline from 52.0% to 47.3%. The reasons for this decline are probably complex, but may relate to issues of both inward and outward migration. Both counties have high proportions of older people, suggesting that younger people are leaving the region for employment, taking their linguistic abilities with them. This is further supported by the census data which shows a declining ability to speak Welsh amongst older groups, and a growing capacity amongst the young (reflecting the promotion of the language in schools).

The provision of housing within Welsh speaking communities should consider language as valid criteria in the allocation of social housing.

The statistics from the 2011 census show that across the Mid-Wales region communities in the east of Powys, bordering England (4-10%), have the lowest proportion of Welsh speakers, and this increases steadily across the region with those communities in West Ceredigion (50-70%) having a significantly higher proportion of Welsh speakers.

#### **2.5.2.1. Powys**

Census Data (2011) shows that there are some communities in Powys where the percentage of Welsh speakers is high, particularly in the North West. The highest percentage of Welsh speakers in a community where the Association has properties is in Machynlleth (51.6%).

There are other communities in which the Association has properties where the percentage of Welsh speakers is in excess of 30% - Carno (36%) and Llanfyllin (34.1%).

The community where the Association has properties with the lowest proportion of Welsh speakers is Churchstoke (4.3%).

#### 2.5.2.2. Ceredigion

The data for Ceredigion is markedly different with only one community with a Welsh speaking population lower than 30% (Llanbadarn Fawr – 29.1%). The community with the highest proportion of Welsh speakers, where the Association has properties is Aberaeron (59.9%).

The community where the Association has properties with the lowest proportion of Welsh speakers is Aberystwyth (30.9%). Aberystwyth is also the community in Ceredigion where the Association has most of its properties.

The Welsh Government published its Welsh Language Strategy *iaith fyw: iaith byw*<sup>2</sup> – in March 2012. The Group has worked with the Welsh Language Commissioner in the development of this scheme in accordance with the Welsh Government's Strategy. The Group is committed to act in accordance with the principles of *iaith fyw: iaith byw* and will not alter its scheme without liaising with the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Complaints related to this scheme, or suggestions for improvement.

Any complaints or suggestions for improvement, should be directed to:

Mr Shane Perkins  
Chief Executive  
Mid-Wales Housing Association  
Tŷ Canol House  
Ffordd Croesawdy  
Newtown, Powys  
Tel: 0300 111 3030  
Email: sperkins@mid-walesha.co.uk

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<sup>2</sup> "A living language: a language for living" – Welsh Language Strategy 2012-17

### **3. PLANNING AND DELIVERING SERVICES**

#### **3.1. Policies and Initiatives**

Mainstreaming is the term used to describe the work carried out under this measure. The Group operates in accordance with the Welsh Government's definition of mainstreaming the Welsh language, namely:

*"To consider the Welsh language in all aspects of your work and in everything you do, with the aim of ensuring that every opportunity is taken to promote and support the Welsh language; to contribute towards the Government's vision of a truly bilingual Wales; and to plan, provide and evaluate services in Welsh and in English".*

In formulating new policies and initiatives, or in amending policies, the Group will assess their linguistic impact and make sure they are consistent with this Language Scheme and will ensure that the measures in the Scheme are implemented when new policies and initiatives are implemented. The structure it will use to assess the impact of key policies on the Welsh Language will be the same as the Group does to meet its duties under the Single Equality Act. Any Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) undertaken will also consider the impact on the Welsh Language, and the responsibility for this assessment will rest with the Group's "Equality Review Group". The Group will consult the Commissioner beforehand regarding any proposal which would directly affect this Language Scheme. This Scheme will not be amended without the prior agreement of the Commissioner.

We will ensure that whoever is involved in the formulation of policies is aware of the Scheme and of the Group's responsibilities under the Regulatory Framework and the Welsh Language Measure.

Housing Associations can contribute towards the development of the Welsh language on a local or community level and we will aim to ensure that the Group's new policies and initiatives promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language whenever possible.

#### **3.2. Service Provision**

We will ensure that as many of our services as possible are available in Welsh and we will inform the public when they are available.

The Group will carry out the commitments noted in the Scheme by implementing the following arrangements:

- organise the service team so that staff who can speak Welsh can deal with the public who speak Welsh;
- enable officers who can speak Welsh to assist another officer when the need arises;

- adopt systems or procedures which facilitate the provision of service in the chosen language of the person receiving the service;
- employ professional translators;
- raise awareness among the Group's staff of the Language Scheme;
- increase the availability of Welsh language skills by means of training and recruitment where this will aid access to services.
- consider the language preferences of staff and Board Members in relation to the provision of "personnel" documentation and the provision of HR services, and other key internal documentations.

### **3.3. Services provided for the public by other organisations**

#### 3.3.1. Regulatory functions and third party services

Any contracts or arrangements made with a third party will be consistent with relevant sections of this Scheme. Our aim is to ensure that third party bodies understand the requirements and operate as necessary in order to meet the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme.

In letting a contract the relevant Director will be responsible for ensuring that the agency or company undertaking the work on behalf of the Group complies with the relevant sections of the Scheme.

This will be done by including relevant details about the requirements of the Scheme in the tendering documents, contracts and conditions sent to the relevant agency or company.

#### 3.3.2. Partnerships

The Group works in partnership with public bodies, organisations from the voluntary sector and other agencies. Whether or not another organisation has a Welsh Language Scheme will be a material consideration in the decision to form a partnership. The Group operates on many levels when working with others:

- when the Group is the strategic and financial leader within a partnership, it will ensure that the public service provision is compliant with the Welsh Language Scheme;
- when the Group joins a partnership led by another body, the Group's input to the partnership will comply with the Welsh Language Scheme and the Group will encourage other parties to comply;
- when the Group is a partner in a consortium, it will encourage the consortium to adopt a Welsh Language Policy. When acting publicly in the name of the consortium, the Group will act in accordance with the consortiums Welsh Language Scheme, or in the absence of one, its own Welsh Language Scheme.
- When the Group is working with SMEs it will encourage them to meet the principles of this Welsh language scheme, in so far as is practicable.

3.3.3. Quality Standards

Services provided in Welsh and in English will be equal in quality and they will be provided within the same timetable.

The Group will highlight this central principle in key documents such as corporate plans and annual reports. It should be outlined also in other situations where statements are made regarding equal opportunity and standard of service.

## **4. DEALING WITH THE WELSH SPEAKING PUBLIC**

### **4.1. Correspondence**

The Group welcomes correspondence in Welsh. When someone writes to us in Welsh, we will provide a reply in Welsh (if a reply is needed).

All correspondence will be dealt with promptly and correspondence through the medium of Welsh should not in itself lead to delay. Our targets for replying to correspondence in Welsh will be the same as our targets for replying to correspondence in English.

When we commence correspondence with an individual, group or organisation, we will do so bilingually unless we know that they would prefer to correspond in Welsh or in English only.

When we send out standard correspondence or a circular to a wide audience, it will be bilingual unless we know that every recipient would prefer to receive it in Welsh or in English only.

Automated email messages, such as out of office notifications, will be bilingual.

If a separate Welsh and English language version of any correspondence must be published, our standard practice will be to ensure that both versions are available at the same time (or are equally accessible) and for the same price (if relevant).

Materials enclosed with Welsh letters will be in Welsh or bilingual.

Materials enclosed with bilingual correspondence will be bilingual.

We will keep a record of those persons who wish to deal with the Group in Welsh, and use this information to tailor our services to their needs.

We will agree arrangements for correspondence and for arranging translation.

### **4.2. Communication over the telephone**

The Group welcomes telephone calls in Welsh and will try to ensure that the public can speak in Welsh or in English when dealing with us over the telephone.

Our switchboard staff will answer telephone calls with a bilingual greeting.

There will be a bilingual message on answering machines in the reception areas and on the switchboard. Welsh speaking staff with mobile phones and/or direct line telephone numbers will leave bilingual voicemail messages on both.

If a caller desires to speak Welsh, the switchboard will transfer the call to a Welsh speaker who is able to deal with the inquiry.

There may be times, however when a Welsh speaker is not available or there is not a Welsh speaker who can answer the query in full. If a Welsh speaker is not available, the caller will be given a choice, either.

- to wait for a Welsh speaker to phone back as soon as possible;

- to submit the inquiry in Welsh by letter or e-mail; or
- to continue with the call in English.

In order to achieve the aim of treating the Welsh and English languages on an equal basis, we will take the following steps to enable Welsh speakers to deal with the Group in Welsh over the telephone:

- ensure that we have bilingual switchboard/reception staff, by means of training/recruitment;
- provide an internal directory of Welsh speakers to whom calls can be transferred;
- provide staff with guidelines on how to deal with telephone calls from Welsh speakers and ensure that they are familiar with the arrangements.

#### **4.3. Public Meetings**

When public meetings are held by the Group, including conferences and other similar events, we will explain to those present that they will be welcome to contribute through the medium of Welsh or English. There will be circumstances in which it will be appropriate on the basis of information, to hold all the activities bilingually, in Welsh only or in English only.

We will adopt a method of establishing the language of choice in making the arrangements for public meetings. We will follow the following procedure:

- Public advertisements, invitations and other papers noting the arrangements for these events will make clear that the public will be welcome to contribute in Welsh or in English.
- We will invite attendees to inform the organisers whether they wish to use Welsh or English.
- The organiser will assess whether translation facilities are needed. As well as considering whether the Group has been informed of the chosen language of the attendees, he/she will consider the location of the event, who is likely to be present, and the subject in question.
- When there are Welsh speakers among those invited to attend, or if it is known that Welsh speakers intend to be present, meetings should be held bilingually.
- Our staff will make their language abilities evident at meetings, for example, by greeting people bilingually and using the Welsh Language Commissioner's "Iaith Gwaith" (Working Welsh) badges.

#### **4.4. Other Meetings**

The Group welcomes meetings with the public in Welsh or in English, but due to the shortage of Welsh speakers in some fields; we cannot guarantee a face-to-face meeting in Welsh on all occasions.

Our training and recruitment policy will aim to increase the Welsh Language capabilities of staff in all parts of the organisation.

When we arrange or attend a face-to-face meeting with the public, we will find out their chosen language at the first opportunity and, wherever possible, we will ensure that a qualified member of staff who speaks Welsh deals with those who note that their chosen language is Welsh.

If no suitable Welsh speaker is available, we will offer them the option of continuing with the meeting in English or dealing with the matter by correspondence in Welsh. If it is obvious that there is a consistent demand for face to face meetings through the medium of Welsh, and that we do not always meet that demand, we will take action such as training or appointing bilingual staff or locating Welsh speaking staff in workplaces where Welsh speaking members of the public often desire to discuss matters with the Group.

#### **4.5. Social Media**

We will consider the requirements of this Scheme when providing or planning new information technology systems, or when providing interactive media.

##### **4.5.1. Web Site.**

The Group is committed to having a fully bilingual web site, designed to ensure that the same information is available “on-line” to both Welsh and English speakers.

The Group will ensure that information posted to the web site will be included at the same time on both the Welsh language and English version of the site. This will apply to any updates to the main text of the site and to any supporting downloads on the site.

Where the site contains a copy of bilingual public documents the bilingual version may be posted to both the Welsh and English version of the site. These principles will be extended to the development of any related “apps” for use in relation to the web site or as an adjunct to it.

##### **4.5.2. Social Media**

The Group has only recently started to develop a presence on social media, and its Social Media Strategy has not yet been clearly defined. However, in developing its Social Media Strategy it will seek to comply with its Welsh Language Scheme.

Corporate Social Media pages such as Facebook will be designed to encourage both Welsh and English posts from individuals.

4.5.2.1. Face Book

- When someone posts in Welsh, we will provide a reply in Welsh (if a reply is needed).
- Corporate uploads such as guidance leaflets, notifications, video, etc. will be bilingual if possible. Where separate Welsh and English media is used, both versions will be uploaded.
- Where such uploads are from a third party, the Group will endeavour to secure both a Welsh and English version, and upload to the social media site at the same time.

4.5.2.2. Twitter

- Official posts from the corporate twitter account(s) will be in both Welsh and English.
- Many individual staff will have a “twitter account” which they use both socially and professionally, to disseminate information. Staff with individual “twitter accounts” will be asked to consider posting in both Welsh and English where they are “tweeting” in relation to a Group matter.

4.5.2.3. Other Social Media

Social Media is a rapidly changing medium. The Group will aim to adopt the principles of this Scheme in developing its use of any new social media it adopts.

**4.6. Communicating with the public in other ways**

We will consider the best ways of meeting the needs of Welsh speakers in whichever way we deal with the public.

## **5. THE PUBLIC FACE OF THE GROUP**

### **5.1. Corporate Identity**

The Group has a bilingual corporate identity and has adopted a bilingual public image. Detailed guidance of the use of its corporate identity is issued to any third party (e.g. printers etc.) to ensure its correct use. Printed stationery such as letter heads, business cards etc. will all be bilingual.

### **5.2. Signs**

When we renew or re-erect any signs we will ensure that the new versions are totally bilingual. Signs erected for the first time will be totally bilingual. The size, standard of clarity and prominence of the words on the signs will respect the principle of language equality.

It will be the Group's standard practice to provide bilingual signs, but on occasions when Welsh and English signs are provided separately, they will be equal in terms of form, size, quality, clarity and prominence.

All signs within the offices of the Mid-Wales Housing Association Group will be bilingual.

### **5.3. Publishing and Printing Materials**

The documents that are to be published bilingually will include those which are published or available to the public in general and:

- provide information about the Group's services;
- explain and provide guidance on new developments or services;
- consult in general on matters upon which the Group wishes to obtain the opinions of the public;
- announce specific information to the public on aspects of the services provided to the public;
- are annual or periodical publications;
- collect and collate data on the use and opinion of services provided;
- marketing and public relations materials including electronic "e-briefings".

Our standard practice will be to provide bilingual publications but on some occasions, for practical reasons, we will publish separate Welsh and English versions. In such cases, we will distribute the versions at the same time as each other. They will also be equally as readily available and both versions will include a message noting that a version is available in the other language.

When a document is published which has a price, the price of a Welsh version of the document will be no higher than the price of the English version.

The Group will not use the unacceptable method of publishing in one language and offering to send a copy in the other language when a request is received.

We will ensure that staff and those with responsibility for printing are aware of the policy and procedures for publication.

The Group will explore opportunities to co-operate with other bodies in producing work for publication which is similar or the same.

We will ensure that Welsh text in our publications is of a high standard and that the tone is appropriate for the target audience. It will use the services of professional translators and avoid the use of shortcuts such as on-line translators both in relation to published and electronic media.

#### **5.4. Forms and explanatory material**

We will prepare a programme, to be agreed with the Welsh Language Commissioner, to increase the number of forms which are available bilingually, aiming to ensure that all the Group's public forms are bilingual by the end of the lifetime of this Scheme in April 2017.

Our standard practice will be to produce bilingual forms with both languages appearing together in the same document. Both languages will normally appear side by side to make the questions easier to understand/complete especially for Welsh learners. A "tilt and turn" layout will be avoided.

In some cases (perhaps due to the complexity of a form) production of a bilingual version will not be practical, and separate Welsh and English versions may be more appropriate. In such cases, the Welsh and English versions should:

- be published at the same time;
- be equally as easy to obtain in offices and other distribution centres;
- be distributed together; and
- include a message which confirms that the form is also available in the other language.

The Group aims to establish the chosen language of members of the public and its tenants (and Care & Repair in Powys clients) by including a "language choice" question as a standard question in correspondence. This will extend to on line correspondence where the language choice will be included as a standard "drop down" option.

Once the chosen language of an individual is known, we will distribute material in Welsh, English, or bilingually from then on, as appropriate. The language preference of individuals will be routinely checked to ensure the information held by the Group remains accurate.

We will ensure that consistency of terms is a regular practice in the preparation of forms.

### **5.5. Press Releases**

Press releases are a prominent part of the Group's public face and we will therefore produce and distribute them bilingually.

### **5.6. Marketing and Publicity Campaigns**

In implementing advertising and publicity activities, including production of pamphlets, audio materials, organising exhibitions and seminars, advertising campaigns and market research, we will implement the following objectives:

- produce all publicity materials in Welsh and in English;
- conduct public surveys bilingually, whether through the post or face to face.

Some of the activities above will be conducted only in Welsh in specific Welsh medium events such as an Eisteddfod.

### **5.7. Official Notifications, Public Notifications and Staff Recruitment Advertisements**

Our standard practice will be to ensure that our official notifications, public notifications and staff recruitment advertisements appear bilingually with the Welsh and English versions together. They will be equal as regards form, size, quality, clarity and prominence.

Information packs, such as job descriptions and person specifications will be prepared in Welsh and in English for every post.

Advertisements for posts for which Welsh language skills are essential will appear in Welsh in all publications, with an explanatory note in English for English or bilingual publications.

## **6. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF THE SCHEME**

### **6.1. Staffing**

The Group will make arrangements to ensure, to the extent that it is reasonably practical, that workplaces which have contact with the public have access to staff with appropriate Welsh language skills to enable those workplaces to provide a service in Welsh. The degree to which this is necessary or possible will vary, depending on the service and on the area.

In order to ensure that we have appropriate Welsh language skills in the correct places, we will follow the following process:

- We will note those workplaces and posts where the ability to speak Welsh is desirable or essential (see 6.1.5);
- We will conduct an annual audit to establish the number of staff who have Welsh language skills, as well as their level of ability and location.
- The results of these two exercises will be compared in order to identify workplaces where there is a shortage of staff with appropriate skills in the Welsh language.
- We will respond to any lack of skills by means of our recruitment and training, or by considering the possibility of relocating staff internally.
- We will adopt an action plan to achieve this and will ensure that managers and others responsible for recruitment are familiar with the arrangements;
- We will set Welsh language requirements (desirable or essential) on some posts, by considering the following factors:
  - The amount and frequency of contact with the public;
  - The current ability of the service team to deliver a face-to-face service though the medium of Welsh;
  - The expertise of the post, i.e. skills in the Welsh language could be vital in some specific fields;
  - If it is a post in a specific area, then an assessment of the number/percentage of Welsh speakers in the area.

In assessing our staffing needs, we will provide for a possible increase in the demand for services through the medium of Welsh as schemes are implemented and as Welsh speakers respond to the offer of service in Welsh.

We will endeavour to increase resources for implementing the Language Scheme in a sensitive way by encouraging and supporting all staff members to take part. We will develop skills in the language as well as a supportive attitude towards providing bilingual services. Non-Welsh speaking staff should not feel under threat, and those wishing to learn Welsh should be encouraged to practise it.

We will treat language skills in a similar way to any other skills which need to be developed in the workplace.

We will encourage staff to strengthen their Welsh language skills by taking every opportunity to use the Welsh language in the workplace.

## **6.2. Recruitment**

When it is desirable or essential that an applicant should possess skills in the Welsh language, this will be noted clearly in the other requirements section of the post and in advertisements. We will also note the level of competence necessary for the post, for example “to be a fluent Welsh speaker”. This will be defined by reference to the ALTE<sup>3</sup> standard.

Where a suitable candidate with skills in the Welsh language is not appointed to a post where Welsh is desirable, the person appointed will be encouraged to learn Welsh.

If there has been difficulty in recruiting an individual who speaks Welsh to a post where Welsh is essential, perhaps it will be necessary to consider appointing someone who does not speak Welsh. In this case, the practice will be to do one of the following:

- to advertise again, stating that non-Welsh speaking applicants will be considered on condition that they commit themselves to learning Welsh to a particular standard within a specific time, with the level of competence to be tested;
- to advertise a temporary appointment and to review it in order to meet the need in another way; or
- to re-advertise after a specific period of time.

If an applicant who cannot speak Welsh is appointed to a post where the ability to speak Welsh is considered essential then the ability to learn the language up to a specific level of skill, within a reasonable period of time to be agreed, will be one of the conditions of appointment. Progress towards the target will be monitored regularly.

## **6.3. Welsh language Training**

We will support this Language Scheme by encouraging and supporting members of staff to learn Welsh or to improve their skills in Welsh.

We will plan our training programme carefully and concentrate resources on those parts of our service where there is frequent communication with Welsh speakers, or where there are linguistic requirements to the post.

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<sup>3</sup> Association of Language Testers in Europe

It is useful that learners know of colleagues who can speak Welsh and we will encourage staff to try to help those who are learning. The linguistic abilities of staff will be assessed annually, and published widely within the organisation. This will enable staff to be able to ask the most appropriate colleague to assist them with a Welsh Language request from a customer.

Staff will be encouraged to use the Welsh Language on a day to day basis within the office. Dictionaries and electronic material will be available to help members of staff who are learning Welsh. G:\Public Folders\Training Documentation Library\Welsh Language.

The Group will also provide awareness training for all staff with regard to the requirements of this Scheme, and the importance of the Welsh Language. Our standard practice will be to include such training in the induction of new staff, and to hold routine “refresher” training to remind staff of the obligations of this scheme.

#### **6.4. Vocational Training**

Human resources managers and staff who have responsibility for training will assess the need for specific Welsh language vocational training for staff.

We will develop the ability of our staff who can speak Welsh to offer service through the medium of Welsh by providing vocational training in Welsh, whenever practical.

If there are currently no courses available in Welsh in a specific field, we will consider arranging seminars and working groups ourselves, or network with other establishments.

#### **6.5. Administrative Arrangements**

This Scheme has the full authority, support and approval of the Group. The Chief Executive has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the Language Scheme and all the Group’s members of staff have a responsibility to know how to implement the Scheme effectively.

All staff will have responsibility for implementing those aspects of the Scheme which are relevant to their work.

We will nominate an existing member of staff to be responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring the work of the Scheme from day-to-day.

The Group’s usual internal business language is English. We will look for opportunities to enable members of staff to use Welsh in the workplace. We will establish the language preferences of individual staff, and will consider how we can accommodate that preference within the day-to-day operations of the Group. (For

instance issuing contracts of employment and/or other personnel materials in Welsh).

In order to promote the use of Welsh in the workplace we will provide resources such as dictionaries, Welsh terminology software and other Welsh medium software for staff.

When necessary we will ask for advice from the Welsh Language Commissioner regarding use of the Welsh language in the workplace.

## **6.6. Reviewing the Implementation of the Scheme**

The following senior officer has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing this Scheme: Shane Perkins, Chief Executive.

Monitoring this Scheme will be a continuous and structured activity. This will include monitoring the following fields:

- compliance with the Scheme;
- quality of service – to look at complaints and at the front line service;
- management and administration;
- adequacy of linguistic skills – based on commitments 6.1-6.4;
- mainstreaming.

We will use the Group's standard complaints procedure to record and deal with complaints about this Scheme and will ensure that it will be possible to monitor specific complaints about the Scheme.

The Group welcomes and records recommendations on how to improve the service. The Chief Executive will report to the Board annually and will send a copy of the report to the Welsh Language Commissioner. The report will follow a format agreed with the Board and will include information about the nature of any complaints and improvement suggestions received from the public in respect of the Scheme.

## **6.7. Publication of Information**

We will include a statement in our annual performance report noting where members of the public can obtain a copy of our annual monitoring report to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

We will publish specific information on the following fields, based on the standards and targets in the Scheme (this information will also appear in our report to the Welsh Language Commissioner):

- Number and percentage of posts in the main reception/contact centre designated as being "Welsh essential" posts, and filled by bilingual staff.
- Number and percentage of staff who have received training in Welsh to a specific level of competence.

- Number and percentage of staff who have received language awareness training.
- Number and percentage of the Group's staff who can speak Welsh, by department and workplace or office.
- Number of complaints received regarding the implementation of the Language Scheme and percentage of complaints dealt with in accordance with the Group's corporate standards.

### **6.8. Publicity**

We will ensure that members of the public who deal with the Group know about this Scheme and its contents, and how they can conduct their dealings with the Group in Welsh.

Our methods of publicising the Scheme and its contents will follow our usual corporate publicity arrangements, and will include ensuring that the Scheme is published in a prominent location on our website.

We will ensure that the Group's staff and agencies are familiar with the measures included in the Scheme in order to ensure that attention is paid to the measures whenever appropriate.

**Appendix 1 – M.W.H.A. Action Plan**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Action Date</b>
Publicise the Welsh Language Scheme to all Staff, Board Members.	Increase awareness of Staff and Board Members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Arrange Welsh Language “awareness” training for all staff.</li> <li>ii. Provide Group wide training on the implications and responsibilities to all staff</li> <li>iii. Introduce as standard element of induction training for new staff.</li> </ul>	HR Manager.	Annually
Utilise the Welsh language capabilities of staff	<p>Improve the level of service to Welsh speaking customers</p> <p>All staff are aware of which colleagues they can ask for assistance in dealing with Welsh language enquiries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Profile the Welsh speaking abilities of all staff as part of the Annual staff appraisal.</li> <li>ii. Produce a list of staff linguistic abilities for circulation and reference internally</li> </ul>	HR Manager.	Annually
Identify service areas where the current Welsh language skills of existing staff might disadvantage Welsh speakers	To ensure that so far as is practicable Welsh Speaking customers are able to discuss their enquiries in the medium of choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The Association will use the Welsh language profiling collected, to identify any service areas where specifying Welsh speaking as “essential” to one or</li> </ul>	Executive Group	Annually

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		<p>more posts would over time improve access to Welsh speakers.</p> <p>ii. The Association will clearly identify these “posts” so that should the post fall vacant, the matter is addressed during recruitment.</p>		
<p>An appropriate sum for Welsh Language training courses will be included within the budget each year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To encourage non-speaking staff to learn Welsh.</li> <li>To promote the learning of Welsh by existing post holders where an ability to speak Welsh has been assessed as “essential”.</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that the Welsh language needs of the organisation are included within the “Training Strategy”</p>	<p>HR Manager and Director of Finance</p>	<p>Annually</p>
<p>An appropriate sum for the promotion of the Welsh Language will be included within the budget each year.</p>	<p>To promote the use of Welsh on a day-to-day basis</p>	<p>i. Appropriate stationary, books etc. are purchased.</p> <p>ii. Internal office notices are bilingual</p>	<p>HR Manager and Director of Finance</p>	<p>Annually</p>
<p>Welsh speakers will be able to deal with the Association in Welsh over the telephone.</p>	<p>Welsh speakers will receive the same service as non-Welsh speakers.</p>	<p>i. Customer Service Staff will be able to answer the phone bilingually and transfer calls to a relevant Welsh speaker.</p> <p>ii. All staff are aware of the Welsh language</p>	<p>Team Leader – Customer Services.</p> <p>HR Manager</p>	<p>Immediately</p> <p>Annually</p>

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		capabilities of colleagues iii. Over time every section of the Association will include at least one Welsh speaker	Executive Group / HR Manager	
Develop a Social Media Strategy which considers the principles of the Welsh Language Scheme as a key issue	Welsh speaking customers are better able to communicate with the Association across social Media.	i. Web site amended to include drop down option to select Welsh language choice. ii. Facebook redesigned to encourage Welsh language “posts” iii. Mid-Wales Housing Association “twitter” account official posts to be in both Welsh and English (if and when launched)	IT Manager	2014/15
Review existing arrangements for Welsh translation	To ensure the provision of services to Welsh speakers are not unduly delayed whilst translation is awaited.  To ensure existing services provide value for money	Review use of translation services and compare with other services used in the area, taking into account the prevalence in the area of operation of the use of the south or north dialect.	Governance Officer	2014/15
Consider the language preferences of staff, and Board Members.	To encourage greater use of the Welsh language	i. Include within the staff (and Member) survey a question on the Welsh language	HR Manager	2014/15

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		<p>preferences of staff.</p> <p>ii. Consider how the Welsh language preferences of staff (and Members) might be accommodated in future.</p>	Executive Group	
Consider the language preferences of job applicants	<p>To encourage greater use of the Welsh language</p> <p>To facilitate recruitment</p>	<p>i. Amend standard application form (including on-line) to ask if the applicant would prefer to be interviewed through the medium of Welsh</p>	HR Manager	2014/15
Introduce “Welsh days” where the whole organisation is encouraged to use the Welsh Language regardless of ability.	To encourage greater use of the Welsh language, especially by Welsh learners in a friendly atmosphere.	<p>ii. 4 days during the year will be used to trail the idea.</p> <p>iii. Review outcomes following each “day” to consider lessons learned.</p>	<p>i. HR Manager</p> <p>ii. Executive Group</p>	2014/15
Delivery of the Welsh Language Scheme is reviewed regularly	To ensure agreed actions are delivered during the year.	<p>i. Progress against the action plan will be monitored by the Association’s Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>ii. The Board will receive an annual report.</p> <p>iii. The Board will receive a report on the implications for meeting the Welsh Language Standards,</p>	<p>i. Performance Officer</p> <p>ii. Chief Executive.</p> <p>iii. Chief Executive</p>	<p>Quarterly</p> <p>April 2015</p> <p>2014/15</p>

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		once finalised. iv. An annual submission reporting progress will be forwarded to the Welsh Language Commissioner.	iv. Chief Executive	April 2015
Routinely review language profile of tenants and applicants	Improved understanding of the service needs of Welsh speaking tenants/ applicants /clients	i. Review data collected. ii. Broaden questions on language abilities in line with current data (see SIEA)	Performance Officer	

**Appendix 2 – Care & Repair in Powys Action Plan**

Recommendation	Outcome	Action	By Whom	Action Date
Publicise the Welsh Language Scheme to all Staff and Board Members.	Increase awareness of Staff and Board Members.	i. Arrange “awareness” training for all staff. ii. Provide Group wide training on the implications and responsibilities to all staff iii. Introduce as a standard element of induction training for new staff.	HR Manager	Annually
Utilise the Welsh language capabilities of existing staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the level of service to Welsh speaking customers.</li> <li>• All staff are aware of which colleagues they can ask for assistance in dealing with Welsh language enquiries.</li> </ul>	i. Profile the Welsh speaking abilities of all staff as part of the Annual staff appraisal. ii. Produce a list of staff linguistic abilities for circulation and reference internally iii. Welsh speaking staff will be asked to wear ‘Cymraeg’ badges when visiting clients (available free from the Welsh Language Commissioner’s office)	i. HR Manager, Operations Manager and Director  ii. HR Manager  iii. Operations Manager	Annually
Identify service areas where the current Welsh language skills of existing staff might	To ensure that so far as is practicable Welsh speaking clients are able to discuss their	i. The Agency will use the Welsh language profiling collected to identify service areas	HR Manager and Director	Annually

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disadvantage Welsh speakers	enquiries in the medium of their choice.	<p>where specifying Welsh speaking as “essential” or “desirable” to one or more posts would over time improve access to Welsh speakers.</p> <p>ii. Training will be offered to existing staff members in those identified posts.</p> <p>iii. Should the identified post fall vacant, the “essential” or “desirable” criteria should be addressed during the recruitment process.</p>		
Encourage representation of Welsh speakers on the Board.	To encourage equitable consideration and use of the Welsh language	Profile the Welsh speaking abilities of Board members. The Board may decide to prioritise the recruitment or co-option of new Members with Welsh language skills.	Director	Annually
An appropriate sum for Welsh Language training courses will be available within the training budget each year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To encourage non-speaking staff to learn Welsh.</li> <li>• To promote the learning of Welsh by existing post holders where an ability to</li> </ul>	<p>i. Ensure that the Welsh language needs of the organisational re included within the “Training Strategy”.</p> <p>ii. Welsh language</p>	<p>i. HR Manager and Director</p> <p>ii. Director and</p>	Annually

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	<p>speak Welsh has been assessed as “essential” or “desirable”.</p>	<p>training needs to be reviewed during annual appraisals.</p>	<p>Operations Manager</p>	
<p>Welsh speakers will be able to deal with the Agency in Welsh over the telephone.</p>	<p>Welsh speakers will receive the same service as non-Welsh speakers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Staff will be able to answer the phone with a bilingual greeting and transfer calls to a relevant Welsh speaker where available, or follow procedure if not available.</li> <li>ii. All staff are aware of the Welsh language capabilities of colleagues</li> </ul>	<p>Operations Manager</p>	
<p>Develop a Social Media Strategy within the new Marketing Strategy which considers the principles of the Welsh Language Scheme as a key issue</p>	<p>Welsh speakers will receive the same service as non-Welsh speakers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. New website will be designed to include an option to select language choice.</li> <li>ii. Twitter account initial posts to be tweeted in both Welsh and English (if appropriate in timeframe). Responses will be made in the language of the original tweet.</li> <li>iii. Separate English and Welsh Twitter accounts to be used (as recommended by the Welsh Language</li> </ul>	<p>Director’s PA and Director</p>	<p>2014</p> <p>2015 (or sooner if a fluent Welsh speaker joins the team).</p>

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		Commissioner).		
All standard forms for clients will be available in both Welsh and English.	Welsh speakers will receive the same service as non-Welsh speakers.	Review and arrange translation (where not already produced) of all standard forms. Our aim is to produce as many of our forms as possible in bilingual format. When a single document would be too lengthy or bulky then separate Welsh and English versions of the form will be issued at the same time and be made equally accessible.	Operations Manager	2014
Review existing arrangements for Welsh translation	To ensure the provision of services to Welsh speakers are not unduly delayed whilst translation is awaited.  To ensure existing services provide value for money.	Review use of translation services and compare with other services used in the area, taking into account the prevalence in the area of operation of the use of the south or north dialect.	Governance Officer	2014/15
Consider the language preferences of staff, and Board Members.	To encourage greater use of the Welsh language.	iii. Include within the staff (and Member) survey a question on the Welsh language preferences of staff. iv. Consider how the Welsh language preferences of staff (and Members) might	HR Manager  Director and Operations Manager	2014/15

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		be accommodated in future.		
Consider the language preferences of job applicants.	To encourage greater use of the Welsh language.  To facilitate recruitment.	iv. Amend standard application form (including on-line) to ask if the applicant would prefer to be interviewed through the medium of Welsh.	HR Manager	2014/15
Delivery of the Welsh Language Scheme is reviewed regularly.	To ensure agreed actions are delivered during the year.	i. Progress against the action plan will be monitored by the Board. ii. The Board will receive an annual report. iii. An annual submission reporting progress will be included in the Group's submission forwarded to the Welsh Language Commissioner.	i. Director  ii. Director  iii. Chief Executive of MWA	Quarterly  2014/15  April 2015
Introduce data collection of language profile of clients.	Improved understanding of the service needs of Welsh speaking clients.	Develop data collection process.	Operations Manager	2014/15