

The Consumer Focus

Welsh Language Scheme

Prepared Under the Welsh Language Act 1993

This scheme was developed by Consumer Focus to give full effect to the principle of equality to consumers and to offer real language choice as we provide services to the public in Wales. This has been done in accordance with Section 14 (1) of the Welsh Language Act 1993. Our scheme was developed in consultation with and in preparation for approval by the Welsh Language Board.

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 This scheme describes how Consumer Focus will give effect to the principle established by the Welsh Language Act that, in the conduct of public business and the administration of justice in Wales, the Welsh and English languages should be treated on a basis of equality.

1.2 The scheme covers the services that Consumer Focus provides to the public in Wales.

1.3 In this scheme, the term public means individuals, legal persons and corporate bodies. It includes the public as a whole, and a section of the public, as well as individual members of the public. The term covers voluntary organisations and charities, the directors and others representing limited companies. It does not, however, include persons who are acting in a capacity which is representative of the Crown, Government or the State. Consequently, persons who fulfil official functions of a public nature, even though they are legal persons, do not come within the meaning of the word *public* when they are fulfilling those official functions.

1.4 Further information about the scope and purpose of Welsh language schemes can be found in the Welsh Language Board's guidelines (www.welsh-language-board.org.uk).

Section 2: Background to the new organisation

2.1 Consumer Focus is a new consumer body for Britain. Through a merger of three sister organisations - energywatch, existing National Consumer Council (including the Scottish and Welsh Consumer Councils) and Postwatch – Consumer Focus launches on 1st October 2008 to champion the interests of consumers across England, Wales, Scotland and, for post, Northern Ireland from 1st October 2008. In Wales we will be led by Consumer Focus Wales.

2.2 The work of the new organisation over time is likely to touch the lives of everyone. Through campaigning, advocacy and research, we champion consumers' interests in private and public sectors by working to secure fairer markets, greater value for money, and improved customer service. Building on work and foundations of energywatch, Postwatch and the existing National Consumer Council, Consumer Focus will develop a stronger, more coherent advocacy body, able to address consumer issues across different industries and undertake cross-sectoral work in a cost-effective way. Consumer Focus has specific responsibilities for the designated markets of energy and postal services, but also powers for issues of general interest.

2.3 In particular, the new organisation will have a clear commitment to people who are vulnerable, reflecting the particular needs of those who are exposed to multiple deprivation and vulnerable at a time of food and fuel price rises, economic uncertainty and social change. Part of our work helping vulnerable consumers involves taking up their complaints on energy and post on their behalf, through our Extra Help Unit, based in Glasgow. Working with the Government helpline Consumer Direct, Consumer Focus ensures vulnerable consumers' complaints are fast-tracked and addressed by energy and postal companies as a priority. In this regard we are a referral pathway from Consumer Direct and a consumer facing service.

2.4 Consumer Focus also has a welcome duty to work on issues of sustainable development. This reflects the key role that the shift to more sustainable lifestyles is likely to play in a future, low-carbon economy and opening up the opportunity for us to contribute to this agenda both a consumer focus and an interest in solutions that work, in distributional terms, for vulnerable consumers.

2.5 Consumer Focus is a statutory organisation established by the Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007 as part of a wider body of change under the 'Consumer Voice' programme by the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR). It is an executive Non-Departmental Public Body of BERR. Consumer Focus is the trading name for the new National Consumer Council. In Wales it will be known as Consumer Focus Wales.

2.6 Consumer Focus board members are appointed by the Secretary of State for BERR in accordance with the OCPA Code of Practice for Public Appointments Procedures. Consumer Focus Wales Board is a committee of the Consumer Focus Board.

2.7 Consumer Focus shall receive funding through:

- Grant-in-aid from BERR;
- Contributions from designated markets in energy and postal services;
- Remits from regional governments and other government departments for particular projects;
- Other sources of funding (e.g. charitable trusts); and
- Sales of publications.

2.8 We have set a vision and mission for the new organisation in a 3 year High-Level Strategic Framework for our work from 2008-2011. These are:

Vision – more power to the people

We believe that people are the best judge of their own needs and that Britain will be more successful if consumers, particularly those that are currently more vulnerable, have more of a voice in relation to the goods and services they receive.

We believe that it is not just the economy but society that benefits if consumers have stronger rights. If given the right chance, consumers will play their part in response to the claims of fairness and sustainability.

Mission – fair deals and fair chances

We will make a difference to people's lives as consumers, particularly those that are more vulnerable, by championing policy changes through advocacy that can help to make people across the country as powerful as the institutions that serve them.

We will engage, inform and support consumers to act and take action ourselves where they cannot.

2.9 We have also set four **strategic goals** for our work over the period up to 2011. These are:

1. **Value.** Help people get better value by raising the influence they have over the goods and services they receive.
2. **Service.** Improve customer service and cut the high level of unnecessary problems that generate complaints from consumers.
3. **Access.** Create an economy in which everyone can access the essential services they need and the poor no longer pay more or get less for their money as consumers.
4. **Sustainability.** Harness the appetite of consumers to move to more sustainable lifestyles.

2.10 Our Forward Work Programme (FWP) details our priorities for work the immediate 18 months from vesting. This includes activities that are both GB relevant and Wales specific, recognising general and unique national needs. The FWP was finalised following a 12 week consultation with stakeholders.

2.11 Between October 2008 and January 2009, we are putting in place the groundwork for our future advocacy and campaign work, as well as addressing immediate issues of concern to consumers. We will launch our first major programme of work in early 2009.

2.12 There are things that we will not do, that fall out of these strategic objectives. We will not set ourselves up as an advice service for the public at large. We will not engage in business services to consumers. We will not duplicate work that is better done elsewhere. We see ourselves as a critical friend of business and public service providers, not as an opponent. We want providers to innovate to compete and to flourish where they serve consumers well. We will work in partnership within an appropriate ethical framework, where we believe this is the right way to our strategic goals.

2.13 Consumer Focus Wales has permanent staff with an office located in Cardiff.

2.14 Enquiries about this Scheme or our Forward Work Plan should be addressed to:

<Name>
<Position>
Consumer Focus
<Postal address>
<Telephone>
<Fax>
<Website>

Section 3: Service planning and delivery

Policies, legislation and initiatives

3.1 Consumer Focus' policies, initiatives and services will be consistent with this scheme. They will support the use of Welsh and will, whenever possible, help the public in Wales use Welsh as part of their day-to-day lives.

3.2 When Consumer Focus contributes to the development or delivery of policies, initiatives, services or new legislation led by other organisations, we will do so in a way which is consistent with this scheme.

3.3 The introduction of new policies, initiatives and services can provide opportunities to promote the Welsh language. We will take advantage of these opportunities.

3.4 Whenever possible, our consultation documents relating to Wales will discuss the relationship between the Welsh language and the policies, initiatives and services under development.

Delivering services

3.5 Our normal practice will be to ensure that our services to the public in Wales are available in Welsh.

3.6 We will let the public know when services are available in Welsh.

Services undertaken on our behalf by third parties

3.7 Any agreements or arrangements which Consumer Focus makes with third parties will be consistent with the relevant parts of this scheme, when those agreements or arrangements relate to the provision of services to the public in Wales.

3.8 This will include services which are contracted out, granting licences and granting other permissions.

Standards of quality

3.9 Services provided in Welsh and English will be of equal quality.

Section 4: Dealing with the Welsh speaking public

Correspondence

4.1 Consumer Focus welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English and corresponding in Welsh will not, in itself, lead to delay. Letters received in Welsh will receive a signed reply in Welsh. Correspondence initiated by Consumer Focus following face-to-face or telephone communication in Welsh will be in Welsh unless requested otherwise.

4.2 Initial correspondence from Consumer Focus to an individual, a group or organisation in Wales will be in the preferred language of the recipient if it is known, or in both languages if it is not known.

4.3 Consumer Focus will use a issue standard and circular letters to the public in Wales bilingually.

4.4 Enclosures sent with bilingual letters will be bilingual, when available.

4.5 Enclosures sent with Welsh letters will be Welsh or bilingual, when available

4.6 All e-mail communications received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh. The same policies will be applied to e-mail communications as to other written correspondence.

4.7 If the Welsh and Welsh and English versions of any correspondence have to be published separately, our standard practice will be to ensure that both versions are available at the same time.

4.8 We will develop a system to record the language preference of those who wish to correspond with us in Welsh.

4.9 Consumer Focus will enlist the help of suitably qualified translation services as appropriate when corresponding with customers in Welsh.

Telephone Communication

4.10 Telephone calls will occur in two ways: calls to Consumer Focus Wales / Consumer Focus functions based in Wales; and calls for all vulnerable consumers across Great Britain on complaints to Consumer Focus through a centralised Extra Help Unit in the Glasgow office.

Calls to Consumer Focus Wales / Consumer Focus functions based in Wales:

4.11 Consumer Focus Wales welcomes telephone calls in Welsh. All telephone callers to Wales, as a minimum standard, will receive the initial greeting bilingually. Callers who wish to continue the call in Welsh will then be transferred to an appropriate member of staff. If a Welsh speaking member of staff is unavailable, callers will be given the choice of:

- the call being returned by a Welsh speaking member of staff within a specified period;
- continuing with the call in English; or
- submitting their enquiry in written form in Welsh from which they will receive a written response in Welsh.

4.12 All relevant Consumer Focus staff covering Wales will be provided with guidance on handling telephone calls from Welsh speakers. Every new member of staff is given induction training which will include a module on the Welsh Language Scheme and the bi-lingual greeting.

4.13 A bilingual message will be provided on reception voicemail in its office in Wales with individual staff members encouraged to record bilingual messages for their personal voicemail.

Calls to Consumer Focus on complaints:

4.14 Consumer Focus will not take calls on new cases directly from consumers. Calls from across Great Britain will be referred to the centralised Extra Help Unit in Glasgow mainly by Consumer Direct but also from a small number of other bodies, including Regulators and Redress Schemes. By the time that the case is referred to Consumer Focus, the consumer's preferred language will already be known and Consumer Focus has developed arrangements with Consumer Direct Wales that will use the in-house Welsh speaking capability within their Cardiff office to handle cases from Welsh speaking consumers. A mechanism for handling Welsh speaking complainants is detailed in Annex 1.

Meetings

Face-to-Face Meetings

4.15 Any person who wishes to conduct private or one-to-one meetings with Consumer Focus in Wales are welcome to do so in either Welsh or English. A language choice will be offered when arranging meetings, and if Welsh be the requested medium, appropriate arrangements will be made. By offering a language choice, Consumer Focus recognises:

- that individuals can express their views and needs better in their preferred language;

- that enabling individuals to use their preferred language is a matter of good practice, not a concession; and
- that denying them the right to use their preferred language could place individuals at a real disadvantage.

The above measures are applicable to all kinds of non-public meetings. But if no suitably qualified Welsh speaker is available, the attendee will be offered:

- the opportunity to discuss the matter in English;

to send in their query in written form in Welsh from which they will receive a written response in Welsh.

4.16 The above will also apply to meetings held using videoconferencing and similar equipment.

Public Meetings in Wales

4.17 As Consumer Focus will be conducting public meetings in Wales, contributions are welcomed in either Welsh or English. This will be stated clearly on all notices that inform or publicise the meeting and attendees will also be informed of this language choice at the beginning of the meeting. The only exception to the above provision will be meetings at which it is known beforehand that there will be no need for a translator, because it has been established that English only or Welsh only is the preferred language of everyone who will be present.

4.18 When publicising the meeting, all literature will include a footnote stating that Consumer Focus welcomes contributions in Welsh or English. But those proposing to attend will be asked to inform Consumer Focus beforehand in which language they wish to speak as simultaneous translation facilities will then be organised if necessary. If it is not known beforehand who will be attending the meeting and whether or not anyone will wish to speak Welsh, the organiser of the meeting will decide according to his/her discretion whether a simultaneous translation service should be provided or not. That decision will be based on the nature of the meeting, geographical location, likely attendees and previous experience of similar meetings. If there is still substantial uncertainty, then the decision will be in favour of providing a simultaneous translation service. All requests for information in relation to meetings will be responded to in the preferred language of the individual.

4.19 We will let those attending public meetings know when simultaneous translation facilities are available – and encourage contributions in Welsh.

4.20 Our standard practice will be to provide general papers and other associated information such as speakers details and agenda in Welsh and English for public meetings held in Wales and ensure that papers produced following public meetings are published in Welsh and English

4.21 When selecting staff to attend public meetings in Wales, our standard practice will be to ensure that, whenever possible, suitably qualified Welsh speakers attend, as necessary. Welsh speakers will wear the Welsh Language Board's Working Welsh badges to indicate that they are able to speak Welsh and English.

Other dealings with the public in Wales

4.22 When we undertake public surveys in Wales our standard practice will be to ensure that all aspects of communication with the public will be bilingual.

4.23 Respondents will be asked if they wish to respond to the survey in Welsh or English.

4.24 When we arrange seminars, focus groups or similar events for the public, we will assess the need to provide them in Welsh.

4.25 Our standard practice will be to ensure that announcements made over public address systems are made in Welsh and English.

Internet Communications

4.26 Consumer Focus is committed to providing bilingual Internet access. When accessing the Consumer Focus website customers will have the option of choosing an English or Welsh version. Publications will be available via the website. Where a Welsh version has been produced in printed form, this will also be available on the website.

When developing Consumer Focus websites:

4.27 We will prepare a programme, to ensure that any website aimed at, or of interest to the public or stakeholders in Wales is fully bilingual.

4.28 When designing new websites, or redeveloping our existing websites, we will take into account the Welsh Language Board's *Bilingual Software Guidelines and Standards* and any other guidance issued by the Board with regard to developing websites.

4.29 Consumer Focus will look to develop a fully operational Welsh language version of the Knowledge Base which allows consumers to use an interactive search facility to find answers to questions on energy and postal issues. Initially, Consumer Focus will provide on the Welsh language version of the Consumer Focus website:

- Translations of the most frequently asked Questions and Answers from the English language pages
- Telephone and web email contact facilities to provide consumers with answers in Welsh to other questions not covered within the Q&A
- Promotion of the Welsh language service on the English language pages

Consumer Focus will monitor the Welsh language calls to this service to identify further common problems raised and then add these Questions and Answers to the Welsh language Knowledge Base.

Telephone and web email contact facilities to provide consumers with answers in Welsh to other questions not covered within the Q&A

Promotion of the Welsh language service on the English language pages

Consumer Focus will monitor the Welsh language calls to this service to identify further common problems raised and then add these Questions and Answers to the Welsh language Knowledge Base.

4.30 Whenever we post English language publications on our websites which have direct relevance to Wales, the Welsh versions will be posted at the same time, if available.

Forms and associated explanatory material

4.31 Consumer Focus will ensure that all forms and associated explanatory material produced by Consumer Focus or in partnership with Consumer Focus for use by the public in Wales will be fully bilingual, with the Welsh and English versions together in one document.

4.32 If the Welsh and English versions must be published separately (for instance, where a single document would be too lengthy or bulky), both versions will be of equal size and quality. We will ensure that both versions are available at the same time and are equally accessible. Each version will note clearly that the material is available in the other language. When Consumer Focus staff enter information on Welsh versions of forms we send to the public, we will do so in Welsh.

4.33 When Consumer Focus staff enter information on bilingual forms that are sent to the public, we will do so bilingually unless we know that the recipients would prefer to receive the information in Welsh or English only.

4.34 When other organisations distribute forms on our behalf, we will ensure that they do so in accordance with the above.

Section 5: Our public face

Publicity campaigns, exhibitions and advertising

5.1 All of the publicity, public information, exhibition and advertising material used in Wales by Consumer Focus or Consumer Focus Wales will be produced bilingually, or as separate Welsh and English versions. If the Welsh and English versions have to be published separately, both versions will be equal with regard to size, prominence and quality. Both versions will be available simultaneously and will be equally accessible.

5.2 Any advertisements placed in English language newspapers (or similar material) distributed mainly or wholly in Wales, will be bilingual, or will appear as separate Welsh and English versions (with both versions appearing simultaneously, and being equal with regard to size, prominence and quality).

5.3 In Welsh language publications advertisements will be in Welsh only.

5.4 When Consumer Focus advertises on television or radio, where any such advertisements are broadcast within Welsh language programming, these will be broadcast in Welsh.

5.5 Telephone response lines and other ways of responding to campaigns in Wales will be bilingual or will include a separate Welsh response service.

5.6 When staffing exhibitions stands and displays in Wales, our standard practice will be to ensure that, whenever possible, suitably qualified Welsh speakers attend, as necessary. Welsh speakers will wear the Welsh Language Board's Working Welsh badges to indicate that they are able to speak Welsh and English.

Corporate Identity

5.7 We will adopt a fully bilingual corporate identity in Wales treating the two languages on a basis of equality. The name, address and other standard information on letterheads, publications, signs, business cards and identification badges will be bilingual.

5.8 A standard template for electronic communications for disclaimers, signatures and out of office replies will be available internally to all relevant staff

5.9 We may use Welsh only branding for some initiatives.

Signs

5.10 All signs in the Wales office, whether permanent or temporary, will be bilingual, with equal prominence given to English and Welsh in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence of text.

Publications

5.11 All Consumer Focus publications aimed at the public in Wales will be bilingual with both language versions forming one document. The versions will be printed side-by-side where possible to facilitate easy cross-reference, distribution and offer language choice. Although single version bilingual publications are the preferred option, when Welsh and

English versions are published separately (e.g. due to their voluminous nature), Consumer Focus will again ensure that they will be issued simultaneously, distributed together, and be equally accessible. Each separate version will carry a message that the publication is also available in the alternative language.

5.12 If not available free of charge, the price of a bilingual document will not be greater than that of a single language publication - and the price of separate, Welsh and English versions will be the same.

5.13 The above will also apply to material made available electronically on our website, on CD ROM or otherwise.

Press Notices and Other Publicity Activities

5.14 Consumer Focus will issue a large number of press notices to the media each year, often at short notice. They are normally issued in English only but may exceptionally be issued bilingually on request or if they bear specific relation to Wales. Press releases to the media and press in Wales will be issued in Welsh and English where deadlines permit – or according to the language preference of the recipient media organisation or publication.

5.15 Where possible, we will ensure that Welsh speakers are available to undertake interviews with the Welsh language press and broadcasting media for press releases that have a particular relevance to Wales.

5.16 Display and information material used at exhibitions and promotional events in Wales will be bilingual, with equal prominence given to both languages.

Official Notices and Recruitment Advertising

5.17 Consumer Focus will publish bilingual official notices, regarding matters of general interest to the public in Wales. It will publish bilingual public notices in English language newspapers in Wales and in Welsh only in Welsh language newspapers. The Welsh and English versions will be equal in terms of format, size, quality and prominence – whether produced as a single bilingual version, or as separate Welsh and English notices.

5.18 When preparing and publishing advertisements for staff recruitment in Wales, Consumer Focus will adhere to the following arrangements:

- (a) Advertisements for posts for which fluency in Welsh is an *essential* qualification will appear in;
 - Welsh only in Welsh language publications; and
 - bilingually in English language publications circulating within Wales.
- (b) Advertisements for posts for which fluency in Welsh is a *desirable* qualification shall be published:
 - bilingually in English language publications circulating within Wales;
 - in English only in publications circulating mainly through the UK; and
 - in Welsh only in Welsh language publications.
- (c) Advertisements for posts where no linguistic requirement has been identified by Consumer Focus, shall be published:
 - bilingually in English language publications circulating within Wales;
 - in Welsh only in Welsh language publications; and
 - in English only in English language publications circulating mainly outside Wales.

Section 6 : Implementing and monitoring the scheme

6.1 Further to the detailed narrative below, implementation review and development timetable is detailed in the Annex 2.

Staffing and Recruitment

6.2 In order to ensure over a period of time that Consumer Focus in Wales is able to deliver its services in Welsh to a high quality, both effectively and efficiently, it will adopt a linguistic skills strategy as part of its human resources planning process. This strategy will enable Consumer Focus to maintain an overview of its linguistic skill needs and resources, and co-ordinate training and recruitment activities to facilitate the Scheme's objectives. The measures that follow will form part of that strategy. In order to realise this commitment, Consumer Focus will undertake an audit of its services, provisions and staff in order to identify objectively:

- those workplaces and service situations where there is contact with the public in Wales and the nature of that contact; and
- the bilingual skills of existing staff and to what extent staff would be interested in learning Welsh or upgrading their skills.

6.3 Having conducted and analysed the above survey, Consumer Focus will identify those posts in Consumer Focus Wales or in Consumer Focus functions based in Wales where the ability to communicate in Welsh is *essential*, *desirable* or is not deemed required as a skill. Job descriptions will then be formulated accordingly as outlined in the section on 'Recruitment Advertising'.

6.4 All new posts and all existing posts which fall vacant will be considered in light of the linguistic skills strategy of this Scheme. In doing so Consumer Focus will be conscious of the need to take every opportunity to rectify any deficiencies in Welsh language skills which will affect the delivery of Consumer Focus Welsh language service provision.

Learning Welsh

6.5 The ability of Consumer Focus to communicate in Welsh according to various degrees of capability and in various service situations is essential to the success of this Scheme. Consumer Focus encourages the use of Welsh language in the workplace on a daily basis and recognises it as a valuable skill which can assist its staff in providing a comprehensive service for the Welsh speaking public.

6.6 Consumer Focus will support the implementation of this Scheme by encouraging and supporting members of Consumer Focus Wales staff / Consumer Focus staff based in Wales who wish to learn Welsh or improve their ability to speak Welsh.

6.7 Consumer Focus will arrange learning and training programmes that focus on workplaces and posts which are important to the implementation of the Scheme. Such courses will be available for beginners and for those who wish to improve their oral and written proficiency in the language and any costs will be borne by Consumer Focus.

Recruitment

6.8 When recruiting staff for Wales, Consumer Focus will publicise the fact that Welsh speakers will be welcomed to join its workforce.

6.9 Consumer Focus will welcome recruitment correspondence in Welsh and English for jobs in Consumer Focus Wales and jobs for Consumer Focus functions based in Wales and will make this known in recruitment advertisements

6.10 Consumer Focus will then seek access to sufficient and appropriately skilled Welsh speakers in order to facilitate the implementation of this Scheme.

6.11 All recruitment advertisements for any post requiring Welsh language skills, together with the relevant job descriptions or details, will be drafted in such a way as to identify clearly the linguistic requirements of each post, in accordance with 'Recruitment Advertising'. When fluency in Welsh is considered to be desirable or essential, this will be stated in job competencies and advertisements.

6.13 In all arrangements of this nature, Consumer Focus will provide the time and support necessary to enable the member of staff to meet the condition and will ensure that the member of staff is not disadvantaged in other ways as a result of meeting this condition. The learning programme will be structured and regularly monitored to ensure that both employer and employee are honouring the commitment. This will be part of ensuring that Consumer Focus has an adequate number of Welsh speakers in post to deliver the services outlined in this Scheme. As a result, Consumer Focus will treat linguistic skills in exactly the same manner as any other professional skill required to fulfil the responsibilities of a post and relevant postholders' ability to communicate in Welsh will be subject to review within an agreed period. The condition of employment must therefore be respected and implemented as strictly as any other condition of employment for the post, and Consumer Focus will review the standard of achievement at the end of the specified period following the appointment.

6.14 We will provide bilingual application forms and offer bilingual application packs for all Consumer Focus jobs that are based in Wales and Consumer Focus Wales jobs.

Vocational Training

6.15 Consumer Focus is committed to developing the ability of its staff to operate through the medium of Welsh so that they may become accustomed to dealing with their professional areas of activity with the public in Welsh. In order to realise this commitment, Consumer Focus will assess the need for vocational training through the medium of Welsh before providing vocational training to facilitate the implementation of the Scheme.

6.16 Given the nature of Consumer Focus work, it will implement these commitments by providing support to appropriate staff, in terms of finance and resource, to develop their ability to work through the medium of Welsh, e.g. the AS Vocational Welsh Course which addresses skills such as letter and memo writing and presentations.

Information and Communications Technology

6.17. The need to provide information and services in Welsh, and operate in accordance with this scheme, will be catered for as we develop, design and purchase information and communications technology products and services.

6.18 Whenever possible, we will modify our existing information and communications technology systems to ensure that they enable us to provide information and services in Welsh - and operate in accordance with this scheme.

Partnership working

6.19 Consumer Focus works with a variety of stakeholders on a range of issues. When we are the strategic and financial leader within a partnership with direct relevance to the public in Wales, we will ensure that any public service aspects comply with this scheme

6.20 When we join a partnership which another organisation is leading, our input to the partnership will comply with this scheme and we will encourage the other partners to comply.

6.21 When we are a partner in a consortium, we will encourage the consortium to comply with this scheme. When acting in the name of the consortium, we will operate in accordance with this scheme.

Administrative Arrangements

6.22 Consumer Focus will ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the Scheme and of Consumer Focus' responsibilities under the Act by holding staff briefing sessions and providing staff with guidance notes.

6.23 Consumer Focus will keep a register of suitably qualified translators whose services are available to staff in dealing with responses to customers and preparing published material.

6.24 The commitments and arrangements outlined in this Scheme have been approved at the highest level and will carry the full authority of the organisation in their implementation.

6.25 Consumer Focus's [insert role title] will be responsible for coordinating the Scheme with managers given the responsibility for implementing those aspects of the Scheme relevant to their own departments.

Other Contracted Services

6.26 Whenever Consumer Focus employs contractors or consultants to act on its behalf in Wales, it will ensure that they are provided with a copy of this Scheme and that they agree to operate in accordance with the principles and undertakings it sets out in any tendering documents or contracts. Consumer Focus will require contractors and consultants to provide it with regular reports about their performance in relation to the Scheme.

6.27 When any new supplier enters the energy market in Wales, Consumer Focus will meet with them to encourage them to offer a bi-lingual service. We will explain the unique nature of the Welsh bi-lingual community and the benefits companies can derive from offering a service through the medium of Welsh.

Monitoring

6.28 Consumer Focus [insert role title] will be primarily responsible for monitoring the Scheme and for constantly reviewing it.

6.29 Consumer Focus will structure the monitoring process and will prepare an internal progress report on the Scheme's implementation to be presented to the management team. This will be conducted annually.

6.30 The Boards of Consumer Focus and Consumer Focus Wales will receive an annual compliance report that will enable them to answer the two following basic questions:

- Is Consumer Focus complying with the Scheme?
- How well is it achieving this?

In doing this, the report will deal with:

- Consumer Focus's administrative Welsh medium services; and
- the sufficiency of Consumer Focus's linguistic skills capacity to deliver the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme.

6.31 The views of Welsh speakers will also be sought periodically about the range and quality of services provided by the organisation.

6.32 Monitoring of the Scheme will be a structured and continuing activity and if the report finds any weaknesses, Consumer Focus will prepare an action plan that will remedy the situation.

6.33 A copy of the above mentioned report will then be sent to the Welsh Language Board.

6.34 Consumer Focus will complete the Welsh Language Board's Self Assessment Questionnaire as needed.

6.34 In the third year of Scheme implementation, Consumer Focus will prepare a comprehensive evaluation report which will evaluate performance in implementing the Scheme over the first three years. In order to review and update its Scheme and thus receive approval for the second period of implementation, this report will:

- provide an overview and thematic analysis of performance and compliance with the Scheme over the three years, both in terms of service delivery and Scheme management;
- outline Consumer Focus's priorities for the following three years along with a revised timetable for the implementation of the measures in the Scheme; and
- as part of this evaluation, Consumer Focus will conduct a satisfaction survey with the general public to ascertain their views on the scope and quality of its bilingual services.

The annual report provided by Consumer Focus to the Welsh Language Board will be in a form approved by the Board, which describes progress in implementing the measures in the Scheme against the approved timetable and standards; it will also analyse the number and nature of any complaints and suggestions for improvements received from the public.

Publishing Information

6.35 Consumer Focus will regularly publish information comparing performance with the standards and targets set out in the Scheme. It will explain the action it intends to take if these standards are not being met.

6.36 Consumer Focus is committed to ensuring initial and continuing publicity for the Scheme. This will ensure that on the one hand, the public and all those who come into contact with Consumer Focus are aware of its Welsh language services and provisions, and that on the other hand, Consumer Focus employees, agents and contractors are also aware of the needs and requirements to operate in accordance with this Scheme. Consumer Focus will publicise its Welsh Language Scheme by making it clear in all its new literature, publications and website that a bilingual service is available to consumers in Wales. Copies of the Scheme will be available on request to any relevant organisations/ bodies, employees or member of the public.

Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations

6.37 When Consumer Focus releases inform under the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations, it will translate them into the applicants' preferred language provided that the number of words to be translated is less than 100.

Targets

6.38 Consumer Focus has set itself a range of targets and standards to ensure effective delivery of its aims and objectives. These targets will be applied equally to the provision of services in Welsh and English.

Complaints/Suggestions and Contact Point

6.39 Any enquiries about the Scheme should be directed to the named contact in 'Background to the organisation'. If any member of the public considers the Consumer Focus response to be unsatisfactory, they should take the matter up with the Welsh Language Board.

Annex 1: Mechanism for handling complaints from Welsh speakers

1. Initial Telephone Call

As Consumer Focus will not have a published telephone number for consumers, all new cases will be received from other organisations with the vast majority being referrals from Consumer Direct Northampton.

Consumer Direct are implementing revised arrangements for handling Welsh Language calls about energy and postal issues, which will allow these calls to be routed direct to Welsh speaking staff in their Cardiff office. This will replace the previous arrangements which used an interpreter service in conjunction with the Consumer Direct Northampton call centre.

Where Consumer Direct Wales (CDW) identify a Welsh speaking consumer that requires extra help to resolve their case, they will continue to deal with the case on behalf of the Consumer Focus Extra Help Unit (EHU) and will take full details of the problem so that the EHU can take the necessary action with the consumer's energy or postal provider.

In most cases, on completion of the call, CDW will email details of the case to the EHU. For disconnection/off supply and other urgent cases, CDW will also telephone the EHU to ensure that urgent action is taken on case.

CDW will ensure that Welsh speaking staff are trained to handle calls on energy and postal issues. Consumer Focus will provide initial training and ongoing support for handling cases from vulnerable consumers on behalf of the EHU.

When the case is received from CDW the EHU will take responsibility for progressing the case with the energy or postal company.

Any further telephone discussions or correspondence with this consumer will be dealt with as described in sections 2 and 3 below.

2. Written communication to/from the consumer

The Extra Help Unit will deal with, and respond to, any correspondence or emails received in Welsh using an external translation service. All Welsh language letters will have the EHU address, but will show the CDW telephone number so that any follow up contact from the consumer is answered by a Welsh speaker.

3. Telephone contact to/from the consumer during the investigation of the case

Following receipt of a Welsh language case from CDW, the EHU will send a written acknowledgement in Welsh to the consumer. This will show the CDW telephone number. The investigation of the case, including all dealings with the suppliers remains the responsibility of the relevant Consumer Advisor in the Extra Help Unit and he/she will ensure that CDW is kept informed of the progress of the case. CDW will handle any further calls received from the consumer and will provide the EHU with details of any additional information or issues raised by the consumer. Any outbound calls to the consumer will also be conducted through CDW.

4. Referrals from Welsh M.P.s and A.M.s

These cases will be handled in a similar way to the procedures for handling consumer cases described above, with all telephone contact in Welsh being routed through CDW.

Annex 2: Review and development timetable

Action	Date to be implemented by
Voluntary Welsh Language Scheme operational from day one of vesting of new organisation.	October 2008
Communications launch briefing to media, stakeholder and the general public in Wales.	October 2008
Energy/ Post consumer education leaflets translated in Welsh.	October 2008
Information signs in and around the Consumer Focus Wales office to be bilingual, with equal prominence given to English and Welsh.	October 2008
Offering of a language choice when writing to individuals or organisations in Wales where the preferred language is not known.	October 2008
Calls received during working hours at the Cardiff office or on the answer phone outside working hours to be answered with a bilingual greeting.	October 2008
Translation facilities to be provided, with prior notification, at public meetings.	October 2008
Provide bi-lingual Internet access – for all Consumer Focus Wales web pages and additional key parts of the general Consumer Focus website. The core website provides general guidance and information to consumers about Consumer Focus’s work and how we can help the public. FAQs will be translated. The site will direct Welsh speakers to Consumer Direct Wales (by phone or email) for further questions. CDW would have access to the Knowledge Base and use this facility to provide responses in Welsh.	Consumer Focus Wales web homepage by October 2008. Knowledge Base access end January on approval by SMT.
Consumer Direct Wales take on Extra Help Unit Welsh Language calls	January – February 2009
Internal approval of Welsh Language Scheme (Senior Management Team, Wales Board and CF Board)	January – February 2009
Send draft to the Welsh Language Board for comment	February 2009
Welsh Language Scheme approval by the Welsh Language Board	To be determined by the Welsh Language Board
Ensure that all staff are made aware of the requirements of the scheme, and provide guidelines for dealing with Welsh speaking members of the public	February 2009
Develop a scoring system to identify objectively when information should be published as separate Welsh and English versions or as bi-lingual documents	March 2009
Provide all relevant staff with the opportunity to develop their spoken and written Welsh.	Ongoing
Three month review of complaint handling part of the scheme.	May 2009.
Six month review of the scheme	August 2009
Produce Welsh language versions of general leaflets and brochures for distribution throughout Wales (Section 4)	TBC
Develop a system to record the language preference of those who wish to correspond with us in Welsh (Item 4.8)	TBC