



Welsh Language Standards

Annual Report for the year 2019 – 2020

Who we are

We are Welsh National Opera (WNO), we are proud to be the national opera company of Wales and the largest provider of touring opera across the UK. At our heart lies a passion for singing and for sharing a love of opera with as many people as possible, we want to share the power, drama and raw emotion of opera.

As a national company with international status, we sit at the heart of music-making in Wales. From our iconic home at Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff, we keep opera accessible through opera and concert performances right across Wales.

WNO recognises that the culture of Wales is rooted in the Welsh language and the rich choral and musical tradition that is associated with the Welsh language and its communities.

Beyond the theatre, WNO connects with young people, schools and communities through its extensive education work and digital projects.

The largest arts employer in Wales, WNO employs over 250 musicians, craftspeople, technicians and administrators, thereby supporting and contributing to the economy.

WNO and the Welsh language

The Welsh language is important to us as a company, and it is part of what makes us stand apart – through our influence and status we feel we have a part to play.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established the principle that the Welsh and English languages should be treated on a basis of equality in the conduct of public business. WNO fully recognises its responsibility to comply with the Welsh Language Standards.

WNO understands Welsh Government's ambitions to secure the future of the language, and ambition to see a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

WNO also recognises that the Welsh language is a key component of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and in particular: 'A Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language – a society that promotes culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, sports and recreation.'

This report provides an overview of our activities related to complying with the requirements of the Welsh language standards during the 2019 – 2020 financial year.

Contact

Please contact us on cymraeg@wno.org.uk if you would like further information about this report or our Welsh language provision.

Overview

We have, since January 2017, worked to put processes and procedures in place to ensure compliance with a total of 136 standards, which cover the following areas:

Standards	Total
Service Delivery – Relating to the way we deliver services to the public	57
Policy Making – Relating to our policy decisions	9
Operational – Relating to provisions for our staff	42
Record Keeping – Relating to how we keep records	8
Supplementary – Relating to how we report on progress	20

For WNO the Welsh language standards are only part of the story, we strive to go beyond compliance, exceeding our commitments and seeking new ways of embracing and promoting the Welsh Language. Examples include:

- Surtitling all mainscale opera performances in Cardiff and Llandudno in both Welsh and English
- Launching our Welsh language podcast, *Cipolwg*, presented by comedian and journalist Lorna Prichard
- Offering our Youth and Community programme in north Wales bilingually with Community Chorus and Youth Opera sessions led in Welsh
- We have translated classic opera choruses into Welsh including choruses from *Carmen* and *The Magic Flute*
- Engaging with Welsh language media, which has resulted in articles in publications such as *Golwg*, we have featured in *Heno*, the daily magazine programme on S4C, and regularly contribute to arts items on BBC Radio Cymru
- Working with the Eisteddfod over the past three years, running ‘Come and Sing’ participatory public events and small chorus concerts and we are looking to extend our partnership with them over the forthcoming years
- Producing our mainscale opera programme books in bilingual format, whether sold at performances in Wales or England
- We also produce free bilingual cast lists
- Providing free pre-performance talks in Welsh at Venue Cymru in Llandudno launched in Autumn 2019 – a similar offering is planned for Cardiff from Autumn 2020
- Maintaining a strong level of Welsh language proficiency among Trustees on the WNO Board of Directors – a quarter of the Board are fluent Welsh speakers

Compliance focus 2019 – 2020

This reporting period coincides with what has been, undoubtedly, one of the most challenging periods for WNO in our 77-year history. The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted our creative output, with the cancelling of tours and countless performances and events, our staff have had to adapt to a new way of working. Although the pandemic has put the company under pressure, we have continued to focus on ensuring compliance with the standards. During the year we:

- Responded to the findings of the Welsh Language Commissioner's 2019 – 2020 monitoring work, which saw WNO being part of the random sample of organisations reviewed. The Commissioner reported that the performance was positive in most of the services monitored. However, some areas were identified which required further work, these were:
 - Dealing with correspondence
 - Dealing with telephone calls
 - Corporate identity

Since the review, we have responded to the Commissioner, outlining how the findings have contributed to updating key processes.

- Commissioned our retained Welsh language consultants, ATEB to undertake a comprehensive compliance audit for us. Having completed the review in spring 2020, the detailed findings note:

'During our review, evidence was found which confirms that processes which were put in place in preparation for the standards have, generally, been successfully implemented within the areas focussed upon.

We found that the standards are considered to be part of the 'business as usual' approach and as such there is a broad understanding of the rationale behind the standards and what they aim to achieve.

We observed a strong overall commitment to compliance and achieving the requirements of the standards. The focus, three years on from the imposition date is clearly changing from compliance focus to setting a strategic agenda for the language within the organisation.

Whilst we found no fundamental failings and that processes and procedures are in place for most service areas reviewed, we found some potential compliance risks which need to be addressed, with improvements required in the following areas:

- *HR processes linked to the 'active offer'*
- *Handling inbound telephone calls*
- *Record keeping*
- *Training'*

We are now in the process of discussing the audit among senior colleagues so that the necessary improvements can be made over the coming months.

Service Delivery Standards

Compliance

The reviews referenced above, show that overall, we are successfully complying with the requirements of standards imposed within this class. Where potential areas of improvement were identified, plans are now in place to respond.

Complaints

During the reporting period, we received no complaints in relation to the way we comply with the Service Delivery Standards.

Policy Making Standards

Compliance

We believe that we are successfully complying with the requirements of all imposed standards within this class.

Having developed a policy assessment matrix, we continue to make use of the tool to assess the impact of relevant new and revised policies on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language. The same tool ensures that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language.

Complaints

During the reporting period, we received no complaints in relation to the way we comply with the Policy Making Standards.

Operational Standards

Compliance

The reviews referenced above, shows that overall, we are successfully complying with the requirements of standards imposed within this class. Where potential areas of improvement were identified, plans are now in place to respond.

Complaints

During the reporting period, we received no complaints in relation to the way we comply with the Operational Standards.

Operational Standards – specific reporting requirements

In line with the requirements of the standards, we consider the need for Welsh language skills for every new post or vacancy we advertise. During the reporting period we advertised a total of 22 posts, they were classed as follows:

Total No. of posts advertised during reporting period	22
Posts where Welsh language skills were essential	1
Posts where Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post	0
Posts where Welsh language skills were desirable	18
Posts where Welsh language skills were not necessary	3

In line with the requirements of the standards, we keep a record of the Welsh language skills of our staff. Based on a self-assessment questionnaire, the number of employees who assessed themselves as having Welsh language skills are as follows:

Total number of staff at the end of the year	236	
Welsh language skills	No.	%
Staff with Welsh language listening, reading, speaking and writing skills, based on self-assessment (level 3 and above)	14	6
Staff with basic Welsh language listening, reading, speaking and writing skills, based on self-assessment (levels 1 and 2)	75	32
Staff with no skills or yet to complete assessment at the end of the year	147	62

In line with the requirements of the standards, we offer training in Welsh in the following areas, when training is provided in English:

- Recruitment and interviewing
- Performance management
- Complaints and disciplinary procedures
- Induction
- Dealing with the public
- Health and safety

During the reporting period, none of the attendees for the relevant courses noted that they would wish to receive the training through the medium of Welsh. However, we confirm that we have procedures in place to respond should the offer be accepted.

As highlighted in our previous Annual Reports, we actively encourage our staff to learn or improve their Welsh skills. Due to an increasing level of interest in Welsh lessons, we took a more focussed and strategic approach by undertaking a whole staff mapping exercise to establish the requirement and demand.

Weekly face-to-face beginners lessons were arranged with Cardiff University that began in August 2019 and continued through the autumn. A total of 23 people enrolled from across the organisation including Chorus, Orchestra, stage management, artistic administration, marketing, press, development and music staff.

This was very successful and all who took part enjoyed it enormously. A second term of lessons took place in January/February 2020 with the same group of learners. The positivity around the classes led to increased demand, with a 'waiting list' of around 20 people keen to join, and plans were being discussed for doubling the sessions and looking at intermediate classes.

Sadly, the COVID pandemic meant that face-to-face classes had to stop, but we intend to reintroduce these when we are back at Wales Millennium Centre and it is safe to do so.

In August 2020, Cardiff University offered a full range of their online classes for autumn 2020 onwards, and we facilitated 11 enrolment requests in total.

Future focus

While the short-term focus for the Company will be on recovery and ensuring the future sustainability of the Company, we are committed in our resolve to ensure that Welsh language and culture are at the heart of our organisation and our work in Wales.

In relation to the standards, we plan to:

- Deliver the improvements identified as a result of the compliance review and audit carried out
- Strengthen strategic leadership for the Welsh language with the appointment of a dedicated Board member to support the development of a Welsh language Strategy
- Creating a role for operational management of Welsh language services