

**Welsh Language Scheme
[Hafod Housing Association]**

Welsh Language Scheme prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993 (the Act) and the Regulatory Code for Housing Associations in Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, March 2006.

This Scheme received the approval of the Welsh Language Board under section 14(1) of the Act on [*date approval granted*]

1. Opening Statement

Aim of the Scheme:

Hafod Housing Association has adopted the principle, that in the conduct of public business in Wales, that it will treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality. This scheme notes how we will operate that principle in providing services to the public in Wales over the next 3 years.

Objectives:

- to enable everyone who uses a service or is in discussion with the Association to do so through the medium of Welsh or English according to the personal choice of the individual
- to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language in the workplace

The Association 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 the Welsh language is a matter of good practice rather than a concession, and that denying them the right to use their chosen language could place them in a disadvantaged position. The Association will therefore offer the public the right to choose which language to use when dealing with it, in accordance with the principle above.

2. Introduction

➤ Background and Corporate Values

- *The Association was formed in 1968 and has developed into a leading provider of affordable accommodation across South East Wales.*
- *Our vision is to be a leading partner in creating affordable and high quality housing solutions and contributing to the creation of communities, which are economically and socially sustainable*

➤ Structure and Area of Operation

- *Governance is provided by a voluntary Board of up to 15 members. Our Board Members bring a range of skills and experience including community relations and needs, tenancy and housing management, finance and management. The Association operates 3 Area Committees to provide governance at a local level.*
- *Staffing - The Association employs over 45 staff. The majority of these staff work from the three Area Offices in Bridgend, Taffs Well and St. Mellons, which provide locally based services. The remainder of staff work from our Head Office in Cardiff.*
- *We have significant stock holdings in Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan, and also some properties in Caerphilly and Newport. Properties ranges from 1*

bed flats through to large family homes and included schemes catering specifically for the elderly. A variety of tenures are available including low cost home ownership as well as properties for rent. The Association also operates schemes specifically developed to assist local authorities with homelessness.

➤ **Service Users**

- *The Association provides accommodation and related services to arrange of clients, but particularly those who are otherwise disadvantaged in terms of the quality and security of their living circumstances. This embraces tenants and prospective tenants from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds.*

➤ **The Welsh Language**

- *It is encouraging that the number and percentage of people able to speak Welsh in the areas where we work has increased and now stands at 11.3%, ranging from 10.2% to 12.5%. This encouraging fact should continue as the percentage of Welsh speakers in these areas is highest among children and young people*
- *We will strive to act in accordance with the principles of Iaith Pawb, the Assembly Government's action plan for a bilingual Wales).*

The contact point for the Language Scheme is the Director of Housing, who can be contacted on 02920 675823, gwynp@hafod.org.uk

3. Planning and Delivering Services

3.1 Policies and Initiatives

3.1.1 In formulating new policies and initiatives, or in amending policies, we will assess their linguistic impact and make sure they are consistent with this Language Scheme and that the measures in the Scheme are implemented when new policies and initiatives are implemented.

3.1.2 We will consult the Board beforehand regarding any proposal which would directly affect this Language Scheme. This Scheme will not be amended without the prior agreement of the Board.

3.1.3 We will ensure that whoever is involved in the formulation of policies is aware of the Scheme and of the Association's responsibilities under the Regulatory Code and the Welsh Language Act 1993.

3.2 Service Provision

3.2.1 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.

3.2.2 The Association will carry out the commitments noted in the Scheme by implementing the following arrangements

- enable officers from one office who can speak Welsh to assist another office when the need arises;
- employ professional translators;
- raise awareness among the Association's staff of the Language Scheme;
- consider the need to increase the availability of Welsh language skills by means of training and recruitment.

3.3 Services provided for the public by other organisations

Regulatory functions and third party services

3.3.1 Any contracts or arrangements made with a third party will be consistent with relevant sections of this Scheme.

3.4 Quality Standards

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

3.4.2 The Association will highlight this central principle in key documents such as corporate plans and annual reports.

4. Dealing with the Welsh speaking Public

4.1 Correspondence

4.1.1 We welcome correspondence in Welsh.

4.1.2 All correspondence will be dealt with promptly and correspondence through the medium of Welsh should not in itself lead to delay.

4.1.3 When someone writes to us in Welsh, we will provide a reply in Welsh (if a reply is needed).

4.1.4 All correspondence following a telephone or face-to-face conversation in Welsh or a meeting where it was established that Welsh is the preferred language of the person will be in Welsh.

4.1.5 We will agree arrangements for correspondence and for arranging translation.

4.2 Communication over the telephone

4.2.1 The Association welcomes telephone calls in Welsh and our standard practice is to ensure that the public can speak in Welsh or in English when dealing with us over the telephone.

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

4.2.3 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 Association in Welsh over the telephone:

- 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

4.3.1 When public meetings are held by the Association, including conferences and other similar events, those present will be welcome to contribute through the medium of Welsh or English.

4.3.2 When there are Welsh speakers among those invited to attend, or if it is known that Welsh speakers intend to be present, translation facilities should be arranged.

4.4 Other Meetings

4.4.1 The Association welcomes meetings with the public in Welsh or in English, but due to the shortage of Welsh speakers, we cannot guarantee a face to face meeting in Welsh. In such circumstances we will politely explain the situation and offer other options, such as organise translation or proceed with the meeting in English.

4.4.2 If it is obvious that there is a consistent demand for face to face meetings through the medium of Welsh, and that we are failing to meet that demand, we will consider taking action such as training or appointing bilingual staff.

4.5 Communicating with the public in other ways

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

4.5.2 We will operate and maintain a bilingual website.

5. The Public Face of the Association

5.1 Corporate Identity

5.1.1 We are committed to developing a bilingual corporate identity and will adopt a bilingual public image during the lifetime of this Scheme.

5.2 Signs

5.2.1 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

5.2.2 The size, standard of clarity and prominence of the words on the signs will respect the principle of language equality.

5.2.3 It will be our 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.

5.2.4 When developing a new housing estate or other accommodation, the Association will suggest a name that is consistent with the heritage and history of the area.

5.3 Publishing and Printing Materials

5.3.1 We will produce our key strategic documents or those aimed at the public in general in a bilingual form.

5.3.2 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.

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

5.4 Forms and explanatory material

5.4.1 We will produce bilingual forms when it is reasonably practicable and appropriate under the circumstances.

5.4.2 When we produce bilingual forms, our standard practice will be to produce bilingual forms with both languages appearing together in the same document.

5.5 Press Releases

5.5.1 Press releases are a prominent part of our public face and we will therefore publish them bilingually when appropriate under the circumstances.

5.6 Marketing and Publicity Campaigns

5.6.1 Our marketing campaigns will comply with the relevant sections of this Scheme.

5.7 Official Notifications, Public Notifications and Staff Recruitment Advertisements

5.7.1 Our official and public notices will be bilingual when it is appropriate under the circumstances. They will be equal as regards form, size, quality, clarity and prominence.

5.7.2 Our staff recruitment advertisements will be bilingual for posts where Welsh language skills are required.

6. Implementation and Review of the Scheme

6.1 Staffing

6.1.1 We 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 area.

6.1.2 We will respond to any lack of skills by means of our recruitment and training policy, or by considering the possibility of relocating staff internally

6.2 Recruitment

6.2.1 When it is desirable or essential that an applicant should possess skills in the Welsh language, this will be noted clearly in the qualifications 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”.

6.3 Welsh language Training

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

6.3.2 Dictionaries and electronic material will be available to help members of staff who are learning Welsh.

6.3.3 The Association will provide awareness training for staff with regard to the requirements of the Scheme. Our standard practice will be to include such training in the induction of staff

6.4 Administrative Arrangements

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

6.5 Reviewing the Implementation of the Scheme

6.5.1 The Director of Housing will monitoring and review this Scheme

6.5.2 We will use our 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.

6.5.3 The Managing Director will report to the Management Board annually and will send a copy of the report to the Welsh Language Board. 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.

6.6 Publication of Information

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

6.7 Publicity

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

6.7.2 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.