

# **Severn Trent Water Ltd Welsh Language Scheme**

**Prepared under the Welsh Language Act 1993**

# Severn Trent Water Ltd

## Welsh Language Scheme

### Recognition

This scheme received the approval of the Welsh Language Board under section 14(1) of the Act on 19/01/2011, and replaces the previous scheme approved on **05/06/06**.



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## **Statement**

The provision of services bilingually in Welsh and English by public bodies serving the public in Wales is one of the statutory equalities which became a reality since the passing of the Welsh Language Act 1993.

Following an order by the Welsh Assembly Government, which specified companies providing water and sewerage services for customers in Wales as public bodies for the purposes of the Welsh Language Act 1993, Severn Trent Water Ltd has now prepared a 2<sup>nd</sup> iteration of a statutory Language Scheme following the expiration of the previous scheme .

It describes how we will give effect, so far as is both appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable, 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.

However, whilst recognising the statutory requirement placed upon us, we are not providing services bilingually simply because we have been made to or because it is a ‘good’ thing to do. It actually makes good business sense to deliver excellent customer service and where appropriate, to seek to satisfy the needs and expectations of all our customers.

### **1. Introduction**

Severn Trent Water Ltd is one of the Severn Trent Plc companies. We are a regulated business with statutory responsibilities for the provision of water and sewerage services to over 8 million people (3.5 Million Domestic Customer Households and 0.2 million Business Customer properties and sites) in an area stretching from the Severn Estuary to the mouth of the Humber.

Specifically in Wales our area of responsibility is an area running from Pen Y Gwely Reservoir near Oswestry, West to Machynlleth, South to Llanidloes, East to Newtown and Montgomery and North to Welshpool.

Our head office is at 2 St John’s Street, Coventry, CV1 2ZL.

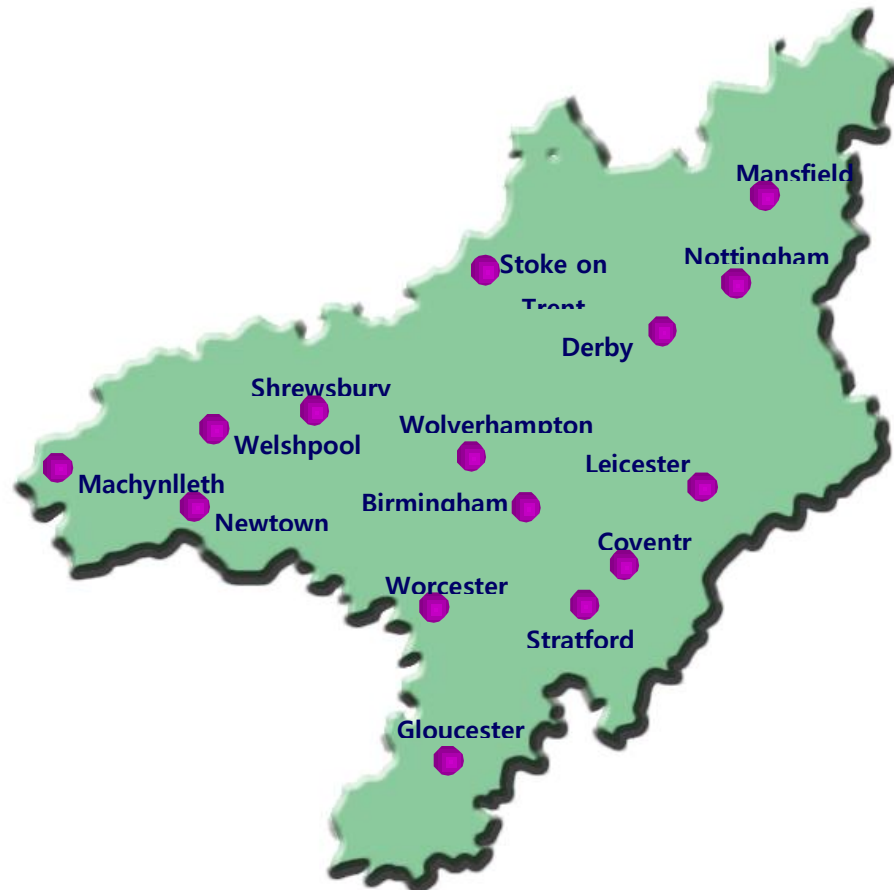
We aim to deliver a high standard of service to our customers allowing our customers the choice to conduct their business in their preferred language.

We aim to ensure that facilities are available at our Customer Contact locations to ensure the standard of service is maintained to those customers who wish to communicate with us in Welsh.

We will implement this policy by adopting the following principles –

- It is recognised that our customers can express their needs better in their preferred language
- We acknowledge that engaging with our customers in the language of their choice is a matter of good practice and customer care
- We provide our customers with the right to choose if they wish to communicate with us in English or Welsh.

## Where we operate and who we serve ...



8.6 million Customers benefit from our sewerage service

7.5 million Customers benefit from our water service

## **2. Delivery of Service**

### **2.1 Policies and Initiatives**

Our 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.

We will use the opportunity provided by new policies and initiatives to move our organisation closer to the principle of equality and ease of communication for all our customers

2.1.1 We will consult with the Welsh Language Board before any new policy or initiative is set in place that could affect our Welsh Language Scheme.

2.1.2 We are committed to the policies, initiatives and are aware of the requirements set upon us by the Welsh Language Act 1993. Supportive guidelines will be made available to ensure the Act is complied with.

2.1.3 Our Executive Team is fully aware of the requirements of this scheme and will ensure they are reflected in the provision of our customer services provided by us, our agents and contractors.

2.1.4 The scheme will be monitored by our ACCESS team which is in place to ensure that we meet the specific needs and expectations of all of our customers.

### **2.2 Delivering Services**

Service delivery to customers differs, some services are provided direct to our customers whilst others may be provided from other operational sites, depots and specific work places.

2.2.1 We will ensure that as many as possible of our services are available in Welsh – and we will let our customers know about our progress.

2.2.2 Whilst it will not be practicable to provide for some specialist and technical services to be available in Welsh, it is our intention to provide as comprehensive a service as possible. Our staff that are unable to communicate in Welsh will be made aware of the support that is available to them and how it may be accessed. Awareness of the scheme

and the supportive services available will be ensured by using our existing internal communication media.

2.2.3 Not all services are provided by us, some areas of our business are provided on our behalf by agents or contractors. We will ensure that all relevant aspects of this scheme will be incorporated into all contracts for services provided to our customers in Wales.

## **2.3 The Standard of Service we provide in Welsh**

We welcome communication with our customers in Welsh or English and aim to provide an effective service to all of our customers. The principle of ensuring we provide a high level of customer service, immaterial of the language used by the customer, forms part of our overriding principle that it makes good business sense to deliver excellent customer service and to, where appropriate, seek to satisfy the needs and expectations of all our customers

2.3.1 Our aim is to provide a high standard of service and customer care in every aspect of our work in accordance with the commitments contained within this scheme. Our standards of service are subject to regular review and our guaranteed Standards of Service Scheme (which will apply equally to all customers immaterial of the language used.)

2.3.2 As such, services provided in Welsh and English will be of equal quality and will be provided within the same timescale.

## **3 Dealing with the Welsh Speaking Public**

### **3.1 Communications in Writing (including e-mails)**

Our normal practice will be as follows:

Customers are welcome to correspond with us in Welsh or English and will receive a reply in the appropriate language in accordance with our Guaranteed Standards Scheme. The corporate image and address will not be provided in a bilingual format.

3.1.1 Any correspondence sent to a customer following a conversation held in Welsh, whether face to face or over a telephone will be forwarded in the Welsh language.

3.1.2 Where it is known that a customer prefers to receive correspondence in Welsh, we will ensure that we communicate with that customer in Welsh.

3.1.3 A database of customers expressing their preference to receive communications from us in Welsh will be maintained on our customer billing platform which will in turn update our Operational systems.

3.1.4 To facilitate correspondence with customers in Welsh, a data base of approved translators will be maintained and be made available to our staff.

## **3.2 Telephone Communication**

Customers wishing to communicate with us in Welsh are welcome to do so. It is unlikely that the employee receiving the call will be able to speak Welsh and the call will be progressed using the services of a translation service.

3.2.1 If a customer wishes to discuss a matter which requires specialist knowledge, this will also be progressed using a translation service with the added option of having that information subsequently confirmed in writing in Welsh or English. This will be done within existing timescales for such queries/complaints.

3.2.2 We will ensure that our staff are provided with guidance on handling telephone calls received from customers wishing to communicate with us.

3.2.3 The advertisements appearing in published directories applicable to our Welsh customers will be updated as appropriate.

## **3.3 Face to Face Communications**

Because of our location it would not be practicable for us to conduct face-to-face meetings with the public through the medium of Welsh at our offices.

3.3.1 In the event that an appointment is made to visit a customer at home or at some other location and the customer has expressed a wish to conduct the meeting in the language of their choice, the use of a translator will be employed. Where it is impractical to use a translator, we will offer the choice of continuing the meeting in English, or dealing with the subject by corresponding in Welsh.

3.3.2 Where we are requested to provide a presentation about the services we provide to schools, voluntary or local community groups, the language needs of the audience will be considered.

## **3.4 Public Meetings**

3.4.1 In the event that we organise a public meeting, we will determine the necessity for translation services having considered the location, the likely audience and whether we have been informed of, or have prior knowledge of, the specific language needs of customers attending the meeting.

3.4.2 Notices for public meetings, where appropriate, will be published in a bilingual format and will either note that translation facilities will be available or invite the public to let us know in advance their preference to speak either Welsh or English.

## **4 Corporate Image**

We are a regulated business with statutory responsibilities for the provision of water and sewerage services to over 8 million people. The corporate image will not be provided in a bilingual format.

4.1 Public notices, press releases and staff vacancies placed in English language newspapers (or similar media) distributed mainly or wholly in Wales, will be in a bilingual format. Notices will be in Welsh in Welsh language publications. NB In emergencies this may not be possible

4.2 Display and information material used by us at exhibitions or promotional events in Wales will be bilingual.

4.3 The site signage on our above ground assets in Wales (including visitors Centres) is bilingual and all signs are of equal size, quality, legibility and prominence.

4.4 We will endeavour to ensure our vehicle fleet that would normally operate within the borders of Wales will have bilingual signage where appropriate. All information that relates to our contact numbers, or that invites customer contact, will be provided in a bilingual format of equal size, legibility and prominence.

4.5 We do not currently have any operational sites within Wales or Shrewsbury that are equipped to accept customer visits and as such we do not foresee the necessity to provide bilingual internal signage.

4.6 Those ‘visitor centre’ sites within Wales where we actively promote customers to visit us and make the most of the scenery and nature trails, have all relevant signs in a bilingual format

4.7 All road traffic signs used by us or our contractors working on our behalf in Wales are bilingual. The signs comply with the New Roads and Street Works Act (NRSWA) and those of the Welsh Highway Authority (WHA).

4.8 All warning of planned works will be provided in the language of choice to those customers that have registered their choice with us. In addition, we will offer to translate any correspondence we send into Welsh for customers who would prefer this option. In emergency situations, best efforts will be made to meet the language requirements of our customers, but operational needs will take priority.

### **4.10 Publishing and Printing Public Materials**

4.10.1 Documents issued by us to customers seeking their views and/or asking for feedback will be provided in Welsh if we are aware that the customer has registered their preference to communicate with us in Welsh.

4.10.2 Specific requests for information will be provided in the language of choice if requested, or if we are aware of the requirement being registered with us.

4.10.3 Customers receiving either measured or unmeasured bills from us will be given the opportunity to register their language preference with us and so receive their bills in the language of their choice.

4.10.4 Customers in specific identified areas (supply areas within Wales and overlapping the border with Wales) will be regularly offered the opportunity to register their preference to choose a Welsh bill. This will be made clear on the bills they receive.

4.10.5 Once a customer has opted to receive their water and or sewerage services bill in Welsh, if there is any recovery (credit management) action to be taken on that account, the reminders and solicitors notices will also be issued in Welsh.

4.10.6 Bills for miscellaneous services provided will not be provided in Welsh, but every effort will be made to explain the circumstances in the language of choice if required.

4.10.7 Cheques will be issued in English only.

4.10.8 Due to the risk of distraction burglaries and the current focus on Bogus Callers, there are no plans to provide different identity cards for those staff visiting customers in Wales. All identification cards for Severn Trent Water and its contractors will be in English.

4.10.9 We will operate in accordance with the Board's advice on the *Welsh Language Act the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations*.

When we release information under the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations, we will translate it into the applicant's preferred language provided that the number of words to be translated is less than 500.

## **4.20 Website**

4.20.1 Website - We will continue to develop applications on our website in Welsh and ensure all documents we have produced in Welsh are published on our website in the relevant sections. Visitors to the site are welcome to e-mail messages requesting further information and/or to send queries/complaints to us via e-mail. When designing new websites, or redeveloping our existing websites, we will take into account the Welsh Language Board's guidelines on website design. Whenever we post English language publications on our websites the Welsh versions will be posted at the same time if available.

## **5 Operating the Scheme**

### **5.1 Staffing**

We have no public offices in Wales. Even so, we will seek information about the Welsh language skills of job applicants and existing staff.

5.1.1 We will, within our Human Resources department, maintain a register of all of our employees who are able to speak Welsh.

## **5.2 Recruitment**

When recruiting new staff we will assess the linguistic requirements of the post.

5.10 In the case of candidates for posts where skills in the ability to communicate in Welsh and English are an essential qualification, if a situation arises where two candidates are equal as to formal qualifications, experience etc., level of bilingual skills will determine the decision. In the case of candidates for posts where Welsh is a desirable qualification where two candidates are equal as to formal qualifications, experience, etc., level of bilingual skills is to be considered an advantage.

## **5.3 Learning Welsh**

We will encourage and support our staff to learn the Welsh language, provided a business need for the language skill has been identified.

5.3.1 If such a business need has been identified, we will undertake training needs assessments of employees so as to:

- identify staff who will benefit from training programmes designed to assist Welsh speaking employees who need further help to develop their language skills,
- Provide Welsh speaking employees with the necessary Welsh language writing skills with such administrative, technical or operational skills as they may require to provide our customers with a Welsh language service.
- All new staff will be made aware of the Welsh Language scheme in their induction when joining STW.

5.3.2 We will subsequently monitor the progress of such employees, maintaining our Welsh speaking employee register.

## **5.4 Services Delivered on our behalf by others**

We would expect any bodies or organisations carrying out services on our behalf to comply with this scheme.

5.4.1 We will ensure through our contracting arrangements that the agencies or contractors implement all relevant elements of the scheme when dealing with our customers.

5.4.2 Provision will be made in our audit system to monitor compliance with the relevant parts of the scheme by our contractors, agents and other third parties, within our monitoring arrangements.

5.4.3 Written guidance will be made available to our employees engaged in the preparation of contracts and in dealing with our contractors, agents or third parties.

## **5.5 Translation Facilities**

We will maintain a list of official translators providing services which are available to employees in dealing with responses to customers, and in the preparation of published materials. This will also include those translators who provide simultaneous translation equipment for use at public meetings.

## **6 Implementation and Monitoring**

The Chairman and the Directors of Severn Trent Water Ltd. are fully aware of the requirements of this scheme and will ensure that these requirements are reflected in the provision of our services by our Company and bodies acting on our behalf.

6.1.1 This scheme will be monitored by our ACCESS team under the Chairmanship of a senior manager of our Company and will represent all areas of the business. The ACCESS team has overall responsibility for co-ordinating all activities of the scheme, but all managers have responsibility for implementing those aspects of the scheme relevant to their department

6.1.2 The Directors (through the ACCESS team) will ensure that all employees are made aware of the scheme, and in particular that all Senior Managers adhere to the requirements of the scheme in respect of their areas of operational responsibility. Written instructions, guidance and other communications will be issued to our employees setting out the requirements of the scheme.

6.1.3 We will ensure that all correspondence, complaints and enquiries, are logged for levels of service standards monitoring. All correspondence in Welsh will be subject to the same standard of service.

6.1.4 The ACCESS team will abide in principle by the suggestions in the consultation letter to monitor the scheme and produce a report annually based on the agreed action plan.

## **7 Reviewing and amending the scheme**

We will review this scheme within four years of its coming into effect. Also, from time to time, we may need to review this scheme, or propose amendments to this scheme, because of changes to our functions, or to the circumstances in which we undertake those functions, or for any other reason

No changes will be made to this scheme without the Welsh Language Board's approval.

## **8 Publicising the Scheme**

We will refer to this scheme in relevant published material, but will ensure that the main method of communicating with our customers, their bills, and associated billing

stationary are used to stress that they are welcome to use the language of their choice in conducting their business with us.

8.1 We will post notices at all appropriate exhibitions and displays or else include with such exhibitions and displays, reference to our Welsh Language Scheme including a summary of the services provided under the scheme.

8.3 We welcome feedback on the scheme, suggestions for improvements from customers or employees. Such comments should be directed to our ACCESS team at the following address:

**ACCESS Team**

**Severn Trent Water**

**Customer Relations**

**PO Box 5310**

**Coventry**

**CV3 9FJ**

**Or by e-mail to: [Access.team@severntrent.co.uk](mailto:Access.team@severntrent.co.uk)**

## **9 Action Plan**

**See appendix 1**