

PLANNING GUIDANCE (WALES)  
TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTE (WALES) 20

# THE WELSH LANGUAGE - UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND PLANNING CONTROL



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Further information is available from the Planning Division, The National Assembly for Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ or by telephoning (029) 2082 3877.

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# Contents

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	<i>Paragraph Number</i>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1-2
<b>The Welsh Language</b> .....	3-4
<b>Unitary Development Plans</b> .....	5-10
<b>Consultation</b> .....	11
<b>Planning Control</b> .....	12
<b>Signs and Advertisements</b> .....	13-14
<b>Planning Services in Welsh and English</b> .....	15
<b>Glossary of Welsh Planning Terms</b> .....	16
<b>Cancellation</b> .....	17

**Reference**

**Introduction**

1. This Technical Advice Note (Wales) (TAN) should be read in conjunction with 'Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy', First Revision 1999. Planning Guidance, including Technical Advice Notes and circulars should be taken into account by local planning authorities in Wales in the preparation of development plans. They may be material to decisions on individual planning applications and will be taken into account by the National Assembly for Wales and its Planning Inspectorate in the determination of called-in planning applications and appeals.

2. Documents listed in the Reference column in the margin provide information which should be read in conjunction with the TAN.

**The Welsh Language**

3. The Welsh language is part of the social and cultural fabric of Wales. It is spoken by around 20% of the population, although many others have some knowledge of the language or are in the process of learning it. There are substantial variations between the proportion of Welsh speakers in different communities, varying from below 5% to above 85%. While most fluent Welsh speakers were born and educated in Wales, many people who have moved to Wales from other parts of the United Kingdom or elsewhere have learned the language and make a valuable contribution to the continued success of both the language and the communities in which they now live.

4. In some areas both the number of Welsh speakers and the use made of the language is increasing, but in other areas there is decline. The future well being of the language across the whole of Wales will depend on a wide range of factors, particularly education, demographic change, community activities and a sound economic base to maintain thriving sustainable communities. The land use planning system should also take account of the needs and interests of the Welsh language and in so doing can contribute to its well being.

**Unitary Development Plans**

5. In preparing Unitary Development Plans local planning authorities should consider the relationship of planning policies and proposals to social needs and problems including their likely impact on different groups in the population. All local planning authorities should consider whether they have communities where the use of the Welsh language is part of the social fabric. Where the use of the Welsh language is part of the social fabric of a community, the needs and interests of the language should be taken into account in the formulation of the policies set out in Unitary Development Plans. The Unitary Development Plan written statement should include a reasoned

*Planning Guidance (Wales) Planning Policy, First Revision, 1999, paragraph 3.8*

*Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 11. Planning Guidance (Wales): Unitary Development Plans, 1996; paragraphs 16 & 24*

*Reference*

justification of all the Plan's policies and proposals. The reasoned justification for all Unitary Development Plans should include a statement of the regard had by the local planning authority to social, economic and environmental considerations, including the needs and interests of the Welsh language, and how any policies relating to the Welsh language interact with other plan policies.

6. Where strategic policies in Part I of a Unitary Development Plan would be likely to have implications for the Welsh language those implications should be taken into account. Decisions about the location of new housing between different areas can affect the character of those areas including the linguistic balance. It should be the aim of local planning authorities to provide for the broad distribution and phasing of housing development taking into account the ability of different areas and communities to accommodate that development without eroding the position of the Welsh language. Appropriate policies about the broad scale, location and phasing of new development could assist in achieving this aim. Policies relating to the provision of affordable housing could also be of benefit.

7. The distribution of economic growth can also affect the character of different areas including the linguistic balance. Policies to ensure that there is a sufficient level and range of economic opportunities to support and develop local communities would benefit the Welsh language. However, in some cases the location of large scale developments can introduce major change to communities and the linguistic balance. Policies for the location of such developments should take into account which areas could best accommodate them to secure economic benefits while not eroding the position of the Welsh language.

8. The more detailed policies and proposals contained in Part II of a Unitary Development Plan should also take account of the needs and interests of the Welsh language. Policies and proposals to provide adequate housing, including affordable housing, and to increase employment opportunities in relation to individual communities could help support them and thus benefit the Welsh language. Policies and proposals could reflect the implications of the distribution of housing development between individual settlements, or the effect of phasing particular developments in order to meet housing needs while not eroding the position of the Welsh language.

9. Unitary Development Plan policies which take into account the needs and interests of the Welsh language should not seek to introduce any element of discrimination between individuals on the basis of their linguistic ability. Planning policies should not seek to control housing occupancy on linguistic grounds.

*Planning Guidance  
(Wales) Technical  
Advice Note (Wales)  
2: Planning and  
Affordable Housing,  
1996*

**Reference**

10. Local planning authorities have formed regional groupings to collaborate in considering strategic issues which should inform Unitary Development Plan preparation, in particular Part I policies. Regional statements prepared by these groupings should include a consideration of the needs and interests of the Welsh language in the area covered.

*Planning Guidance (Wales): Unitary Development Plans, 1996, paragraphs 4 & 24*

**Consultation**

11. In preparing their Unitary Development Plans local planning authorities should consult the Welsh Language Board Public Sector Department, Market Chambers, St Mary Street, Cardiff. CF1 2AT.

*Planning Guidance (Wales): Unitary Development Plans, 1996: paragraph 28 & Annex C*

**Planning Control**

12. In determining individual planning applications and appeals where the needs and interests of the Welsh language may be a material consideration decisions must, as with all other planning applications, be based on planning grounds only and be reasonable. These planning grounds include adopted development plan policies, including those which have taken the needs and interests of the Welsh language into account. Local planning authorities should determine planning applications in accord with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

*Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), Section 54a*

**Sign and Advertisements**

13. Signs can have a very visible impact on the character of an area, including its linguistic character. They are also one method of promoting the distinctive culture of Wales, which is of significance both to the identity of individual communities as well as the tourism industry. Policies in Unitary Development Plans relating to signage and advertising, subject to planning control, may promote the provision of bilingual signs.

*'A Guide to Bilingual Design' - Welsh Language Board, 1995*

14. Detailed advice on signs and advertising, to encourage and assist bilingual provision, could also be set out in supplementary planning guidance to the Unitary Development Plan. Encouragement may also be given to the retention of traditional Welsh names for new developments and streets.

**Planning Services in Welsh and English**

15. The Welsh Language Act 1993 requires that the English and Welsh languages should be treated on a basis of equality in the conduct of public business and administration of justice so far as is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable. In preparing their Unitary Development Plans authorities should be prepared to make documents, notices, advertisements and other materials associated with consultation or the local inquiry available in both the Welsh and

*Planning Guidance (Wales): 'Unitary Development Plans', 1996, paragraph 13*

**Reference**

English language. Authorities should ensure that anyone wishing to use either the Welsh or English language has the opportunity to do so. Simultaneous translation facilities should be provided at inquiries except where authorities have established it is very unlikely that any of those attending will wish to use both Welsh and English. Authorities should liaise with the Planning Inspectorate regarding the arrangements for inquiries and appeals to ensure linguistic needs are catered for. Further detail on provision in the Welsh language in relation to its planning services should be set out in the Welsh Language Scheme prepared by each local planning authority.

**Glossary of Welsh Planning Terms**

16. To assist local planning authorities and others achieve a consistent use of planning terms in Welsh, the Welsh Office published a glossary of such terms. This is available for purchase from Y Llyfrfa Oriol, The Stationery Office, 18 - 19 High Street, Cardiff. CF10 1PT.

*A 'Glossary of Welsh Planning Terms' The Welsh Office, 1998*

**Cancellation**

17. Circular 53/88 'The Welsh Language: Development Plans and Planning Control' is cancelled.