
Using the Welsh language on social media: A practical guide for businesses and charities



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner



Background

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The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 gave the Welsh language official status in Wales and established a new framework for imposing duties on organisations to use the Welsh language, in the form of Welsh language standards.

The Welsh Language Commissioner is an independent body established to promote and facilitate use of the Welsh language. The Commissioner can impose standards on specific organisations but also offers advice and guidance to all organisations whether or not they have a statutory requirement to use the Welsh language.

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Important note

In accordance with section 4 (2) of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, this guide offers advice on best practice on the use of Welsh on social media. The guide is not legally binding, but the Commissioner encourages businesses and charities to consider the best practice presented in the document when using Welsh on social media.

Many organisations have a statutory duty to communicate and promote in accordance with the standards system established under the Measure. This guide does not offer legal advice that can be relied upon and is not a statutory code of practice for the use of Welsh, so it is not necessary to refer to it when considering the interpretation of the standards.

1 Foreword

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'Welsh in the shopping basket: customer attitudes to the use of Welsh by supermarkets'

'The Benefits of Bilingual Marketing by Charities in Wales'

Research clearly shows that the public values the provision of Welsh medium services by businesses and charities. This is especially true in terms of marketing and making direct contact.¹

With social media now directing more traffic to specific websites than Google, it is clear that these platforms are powerful marketing, networking and advertising tools. They can reach a wide audience quickly, simply and effectively, and enable organisations to target specific audiences. A number of companies, organisations and charities have already seen the benefit of using the Welsh language on social media as a way of attracting and retaining customers.

The aim of this guide is to provide guidance to charities and businesses on using the Welsh language on social media.

The guide will present:

- the benefits of using the Welsh language to your business or charity
- case studies and good practice and provide practical support and advice on using the language.

Our hope is that, by considering the guidance provided, you develop the confidence to use more Welsh when promoting your services, campaigns or products on social media. In doing so, you will reach and engage more effectively with a wider bilingual audience across Wales and beyond.



Meri Huws

Welsh Language Commissioner

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The business case for using more Welsh on social media

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Businesses and charities understand the importance of developing relationships with their customers or service users in order to ensure that they have trust in the service, product or experience offered. Many realise that using the Welsh language contributes to this:

“ The Welsh language provides us with an extra tool when creating content on social platforms – **when people run through their feed, very often, Welsh language content gets more hits than English language content**

Jones Crisps - The Welsh Choice

Using the Welsh language can be a way of increasing sales and ensuring more participation and support from the public across all sectors.

Using the Welsh language on social media:

- provides opportunities to sell and undertake promotional activities in new markets
- makes you stand out
- opens the door to a wider audience
- enables you to target a specific audience
- strengthens and creates relationships with communities, schools and supporters etc
- is a way of increasing donations via fundraising campaigns
- strengthens the rights of users

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'Welsh in the shopping basket: customer attitudes to the use of Welsh by supermarkets'
welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/hyburesearch

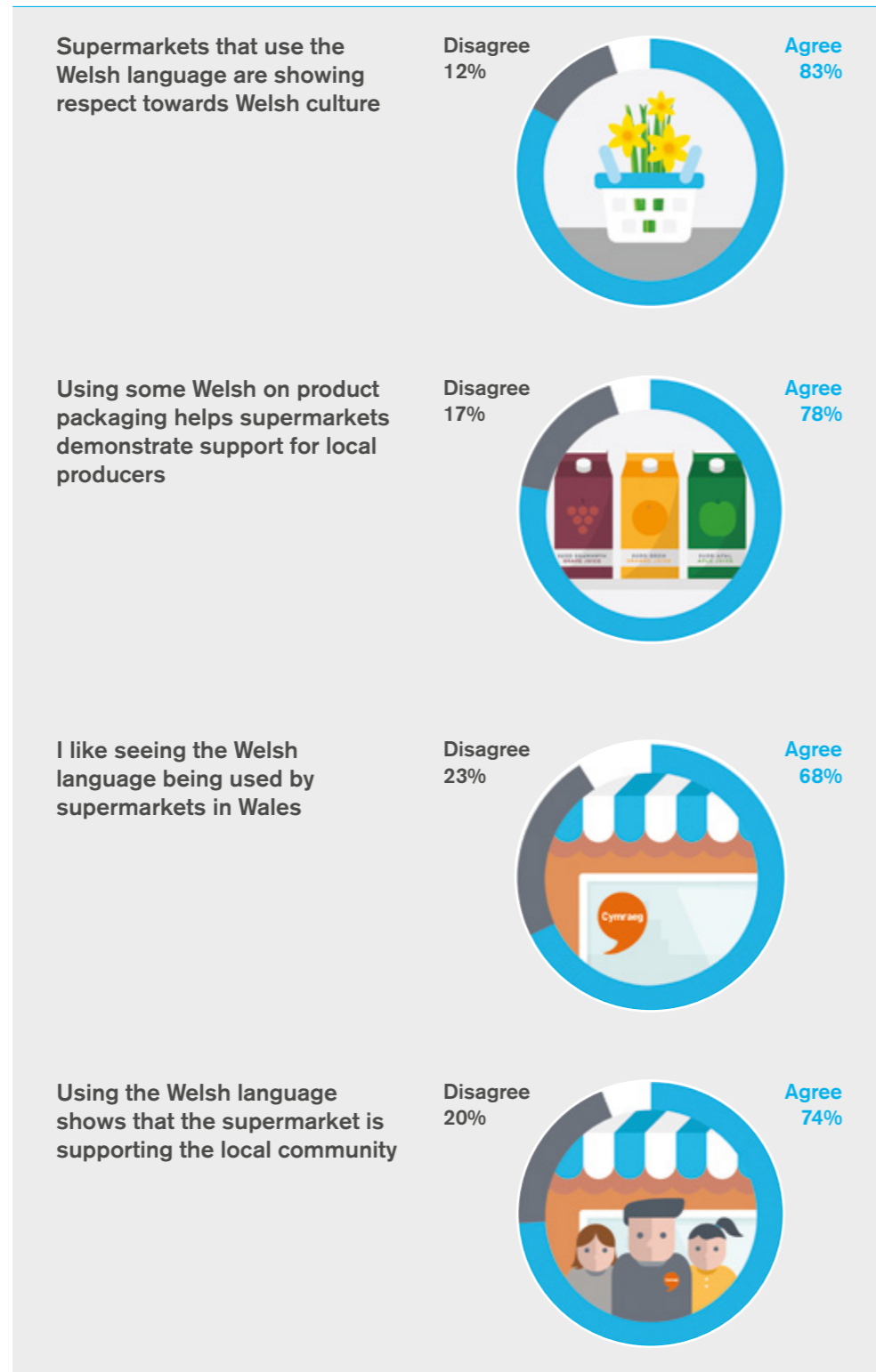
The following sections consider the business case for different types of businesses and charities:

Small and large businesses

The Welsh Language Commissioner's Promotion team has undertaken several pieces of research into aspects of the Welsh language in the private and third sectors.

The research 'Welsh in the shopping basket: customer attitudes to the use of Welsh by supermarkets' showed that using Welsh is an effective way of developing and maintaining relationships with customers. A clear message from this research was that businesses benefit from using the Welsh language, not only commercially but in terms of being a unique selling point (USP). It can be used to attract customers and to develop relationships with them.

- these results show that using the Welsh language is a way of developing closer relationships with customers across Wales
- by playing a key role in their communities, businesses can gain loyalty and long term support from their customers



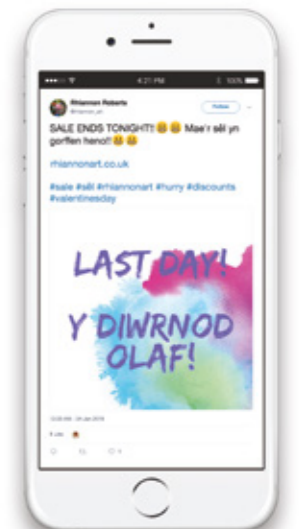
Social media provides an extremely effective platform for businesses to market their services or products, enabling them to reach a wide audience without a budget. Using the Welsh language can:

- attract new customers and strengthen their loyalty
- improve and strengthen brands, image and values
- show respect towards Welsh culture and communities

This is certainly the experience of the artist Rhiannon Roberts, who tweets in both languages on a regular basis:



Using the Welsh language is very important to me when marketing my work on Twitter and Facebook. I feel that the business is growing quicker as I can expand my audience through bilingual marketing.



Arts movements and organisations

Most people now turn to the internet and social media for news and information about events, workshops or sessions. As a result, it is becoming increasingly important to find ways of engaging with audiences through these mediums.

According to the Arts Council of Wales:



The Welsh language is gaining ground in terms of technological developments. By using the language on social media platforms, looser and more informal vocabulary is being developed – a vocabulary which our young people, in particular, feel more comfortable using compared perhaps to the Welsh used in the classroom.

Facebook supports the development of a Welsh language social media culture and Welsh language promotional activities which enable communities of Welsh speakers to be easily reached and targeted.

One organisation that sees the huge benefit of using Welsh is Galeri in Caernarfon:



As a social initiative based in Caernarfon, the Welsh language is part of our DNA. Developing our digital and online communication is key to reaching and expanding our audiences. The Welsh language comes first in any post or tweet, and subsequent conversations are held in the user's preferred language.

Sporting Organisations

By using the Welsh language, clubs and societies can attract new members and volunteers, strengthen links with schools and the local community and instill a sense of pride and team spirit.

According to the Scarlets Regional Rugby Team:



The Welsh language has always been an intrinsic part of the Scarlets and we as a region take great pride in our bilingualism. A large percentage of our supporters are Welsh speakers who interact with family, friends and colleagues in both Welsh and English, as we do on a daily basis at Parc y Scarlets.

Bilingual marketing on social media gives us the opportunity to speak to our supporters in their mother tongue but it also gives them the choice of communicating with us in Welsh if they choose to do so. The Welsh language is in our blood here at the Scarlets and, as a result, it can be seen on posters, signs, social media, press releases, our website, and on the day of the game.



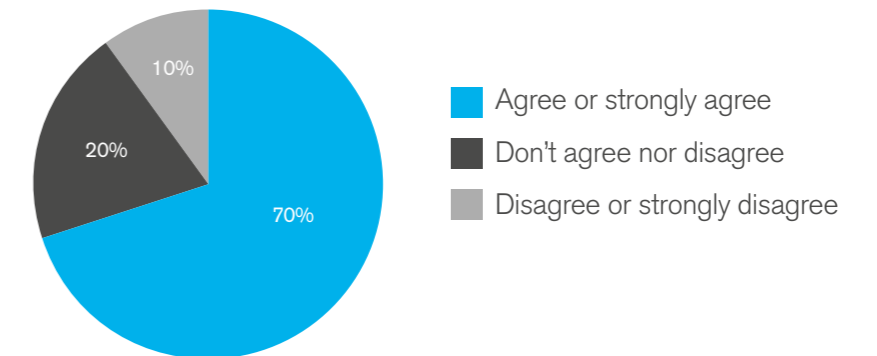
The Benefits of Bilingual Marketing by Charities in Wales: welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/hybusresearch

Charities of all sizes

The use of the Welsh language can be a powerful tool for charities. It can be used to raise awareness of campaigns, increase support and donations and attract Welsh speaking volunteers.

Our research 'The Benefits of Bilingual Marketing by Charities in Wales' showed the clear benefits of bilingual marketing.

Should charities operating in Wales market bilingually?



Here are some quotes from the public as part of the research:



An organisation that produces materials in Welsh is more inclusive and sensitive to people's needs.



Bilingualism expands on who might support a charity.

The ability to share messages in Welsh and English ensures that the message can reach a wider audience.

One of the charities that realises the value of the Welsh language is Barnardo's Cymru.



We are passionate about our Welsh identity, and giving both Welsh and English equal status wherever we can on social media is key to that, enabling us to share information about what we do across Wales.

Many of our service users speak Welsh as a first language and our Welsh speaking supporters and volunteers truly appreciate the fact that we use Welsh on social media. This is clear from the way in which they engage with us.



The Welsh language strengthens our campaigns

Social media now has a central role to play in any communication plan and, at Save the Children Wales, we concentrate on two platforms – Facebook and Twitter. This is mainly as a result of time constraints, as preparing regular messages of interest takes time.

When we launched the accounts, we decided that we weren't going to go down the route of having two separate accounts (one in Welsh and the other in English). Instead, we decided to create one bilingual account. It was our policy from the outset that all messages would be bilingual and that questions would be answered in the language in which they were asked.

We intentionally don't post the same message in both languages – we try to translate the meaning rather than the words. We have been praised for doing this and I believe that people appreciate the fact that they don't get a direct translation.

We are also accustomed to using international hashtags, with more specific hashtags for Wales in Welsh language messages. Using the Welsh language should strengthen campaigns by introducing the language to users in Wales and beyond.

Without doubt, the Welsh language has enriched our social media accounts, and we will continue to give it equal status in our campaigns in Wales.



Using the Welsh language on social media:

- is a powerful marketing, networking and advertising tool
- can target new and specific audiences
- attracts and retains customers or service users and gains their loyalty
- improves and strengthens brands, image and values
- increases donations and ensures that important campaign messages reach a wider audience
- provides an opportunity to develop staff and volunteers' Welsh language skills

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Practical support and advice

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Recruitment: Welsh Language Considerations
welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/hybuguidelines

The aim of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 is to work towards ensuring that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language, thereby ensuring that Welsh language services are as good as English language services. We understand that this can be challenging for some small businesses and charities, but with a little imagination and creative planning, it is possible to work towards that aim.

In this chapter, we offer practical guidance on some of the issues which arise when planning the use of Welsh on social media. Of course, numerous platforms exist and the following advice can be applied to many of the most popular ones.

Before starting...

It is important that all organisations ensure that they have a social media plan in place in order to plan what messages will be shared from the outset and ensure that they are prepared in advance in both languages.

It is worth considering who will be responsible for creating and planning the messages. What linguistic skills do members of staff or volunteers have? Our guide 'Recruitment: Welsh Language Considerations' will be useful to any organisation in terms of planning its workforce.

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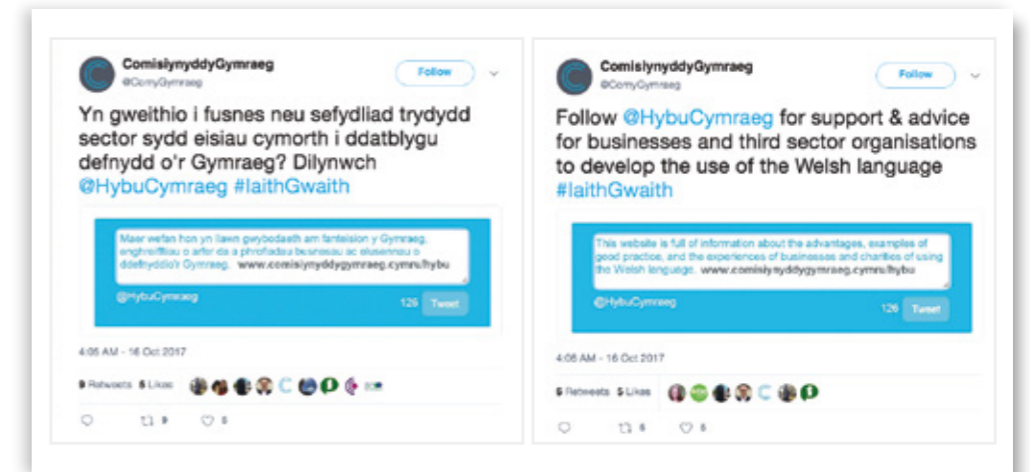
with a little imagination and creative planning, it is possible to work towards that aim.

Do you already have a marketing plan?

You may need to re-examine it and ensure that you include the Welsh language. It is far more cost-effective to ensure that the Welsh language is included in any marketing plan from the outset. It also provides an opportunity to assess the workforce's linguistic skills and identify officers or volunteers who would be able to draft bilingual messages for your social media accounts.

Managing one account or two – what's best?

It is possible to have a bilingual feed with a mixture of Welsh and English content. Another option is to have one Welsh language feed and one English language feed. Whichever option you choose, you must try to ensure that both languages are treated equally. You need to think in practical terms about managing accounts and ensuring that both Welsh and English are given equal status. When posting messages on feeds, you must ensure that posts in both languages appear simultaneously and that the experience and messages are of the same standard. If you are using one account, you should ensure that your profile is bilingual. If you choose to have Welsh and English accounts, you should refer to the other account in the profile. When reposting or sending a message (retweeting or sharing), ensure that the language used corresponds to the language of the feed and the account.



What is the best way of creating bilingual messages?

The easiest and most cost-effective way of creating short bilingual text for social media is to encourage officers to draft messages bilingually from the outset. This is undoubtedly the best way of ensuring that you do not have to depend on translating everything in order to provide a bilingual service, and that you make the best use of officers' linguistic skills.

There are many advantages to drafting bilingual messages on social media, including:

- financial savings
- better control over the schedule for producing bilingual text
- the ability to adapt text for different audiences
- developing officers' confidence in using both languages in order to be able to respond to messages instantaneously

But I don't have any Welsh speaking staff.

It is therefore important to plan any new campaigns, products or services in advance. It will then be possible to prepare and ensure that bilingual messages are created in advance. This may mean contacting a professional translator or using the Commissioner's proofreading service. It is also an opportunity to think about recruiting a member of staff or volunteers with Welsh language skills in order to ensure that you have the internal capacity to create bilingual content.

You should ensure that you have a process and plan in place so that you are able to respond to any Welsh language requests or questions.

Further information on commissioning a professional translator and the proofreading service is available on the Welsh Language Commissioner's website

welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/proofreading



What if I am part of a large organisation with a number of branches?

You may have one corporate feed which is administered by officers at your headquarters and a number of other feeds which are run by branches across the country. You should ensure that any corporate messages are bilingual. Welsh speaking officers may not always be available at every branch to maintain bilingual feeds. The headquarters or umbrella body can support branches by planning messages in advance and helping them respond to requests. Where there are no Welsh speakers available, you could ask whether there are any volunteers who can speak Welsh and would be happy to help.

What style of writing is appropriate?

Social media posts can be seen by everyone, therefore it is important that the language used is correct and that any posts are proofread carefully.

It is important that you appear friendly and personable, therefore using language which is familiar and user-friendly is essential, especially when posting messages. Social media provides the opportunity to chat, therefore it is acceptable to use less formal or conversational language when responding to messages.

You could also consider taking advantage of the concise and catchy nature of the medium and experimenting by using idioms, cultural references and perhaps more colloquial or spoken language depending on the target audience. This would be a great way of building bridges between Welsh and English speakers and learners.



It is okay to depend on translation software to create bilingual messages?

Although there is a place for automated or machine translation in a bilingual workplace, one cannot depend fully on the accuracy of automated text. Although the results provided by this kind of software are generally very good – and are continually improving as technology develops – they are not always reliable, and officers must be made aware of the advantages and risks involved.

We would advise you not to depend on this kind of software for fast, easy translations. It may be used to provide rough translations but it must be emphasised that you should not post an automated translation without ensuring that it has been thoroughly edited. Neither should you rely on machine translation to provide the most concise translation. This is particularly relevant when considering the number of characters allowed in a tweet, for example.

Is there help available to translate a series of messages?

The content doesn't have to be a direct translation from Welsh to English. What's important is that both the Welsh and English messages are of the same standard. It is good practice to build a relationship with professional translators if there are no Welsh language skills within the business or organisation. The translators would also be able to offer a proofreading service and provide feedback on officers' efforts to draft bilingual messages. The Commissioner also provides a proofreading service which can check and correct text for messages. Having a go at drafting bilingual messages is an excellent way of practising and improving skills.

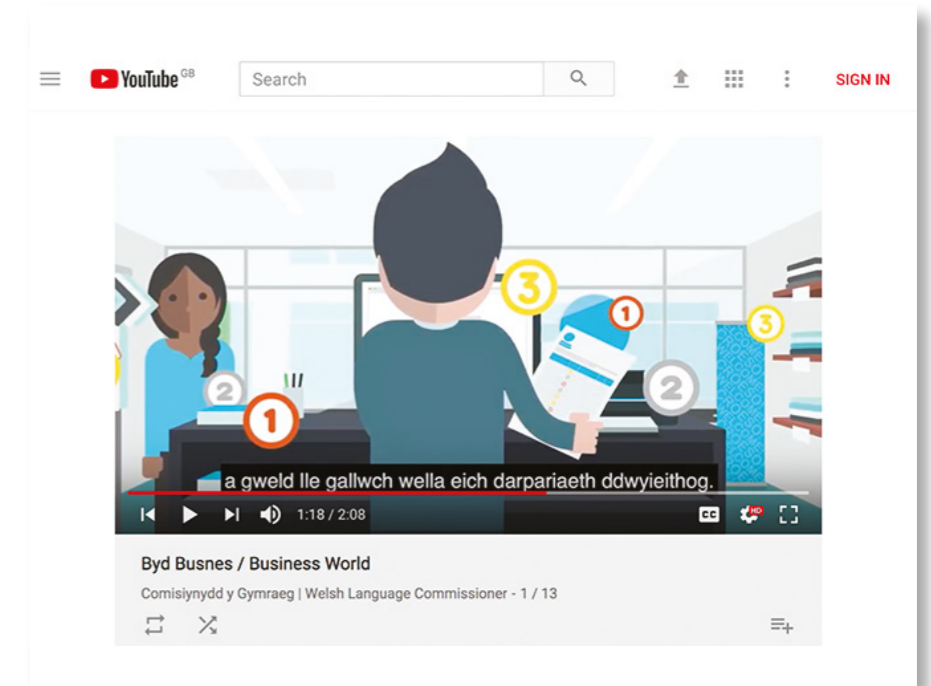


If we are creating a video to share on social media does it have to be bilingual?

It is good practice to create videos in Welsh and English, and it is possible to use subtitles – for example, providing English language subtitles for Welsh language contributions and Welsh language subtitles for English language contributions. When filming Welsh speaking individuals, you don't need to ask them to re-record the video in English, just use English subtitles. It is also possible to use software which allows easy subtitling. There is also a free option on YouTube which allows you to create subtitles in several languages.

Is there a way to ensure that our messages reach new and wider audiences?

A unique aspect of social media, particularly Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, is the use of the hashtag (#) which makes it easier for people to search for a specific topic of discussion. It is used to attract followers and enables people to search for specific things and follow wider discussions on a particular topic. When composing messages, it is worth considering which hashtags would be worth using in Welsh and English.



What about links to websites or images/posters/GIFs?

It is important to ensure that any images or GIFs used in messages are either bilingual or don't contain any language. Remember, any links to websites need to take the user to the Welsh/English pages of that website, depending on the language of the message.

Where can you find further technical information on using the Welsh language on social media?

The Commissioner has published a detailed advice note, namely 'Technology, Websites and Software: Welsh Language Considerations'. Part 2 of this advice note refers specifically to websites and social media and you are encouraged to refer to this part of the document should you require further details on some of the themes examined in this document. The advice note is available in pdf format on the Commissioner's website or as a series of web pages which makes it easy to share or search for relevant sections. It should also be emphasised that this advice note also addresses all kinds of related, relevant issues such as using the Welsh alphabet.



Using emojis and images also helps with visual communication rather than just using words – Galeri

Need further support and advice on developing the Welsh language?

You can discuss ways of developing the Welsh language with the Welsh Language Commissioner's staff.

The Commissioner's Promotion and Facilitation Team can offer support and advice on developing and increasing use of the Welsh language in the private and third sectors.

Businesses and charities can assess their current use of the Welsh language online by completing the questionnaire and creating a Promotion Plan. This will help you to develop your Welsh language services.

Various guidance documents also provide practical support on using the Welsh language, and evidence and research shows the value of the Welsh language.

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