



# Residential Property Tribunal for Wales Welsh Language Standards Annual Report

April 2022– March 2023



Y Tribiwnlys Eiddo Preswyl  
Residential Property Tribunal

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# Foreword

This is the Residential Property Tribunal for Wales (“the Tribunal”) seventh annual report on its compliance with the Welsh Language Standards since the standards came into force on 30 March 2017. The focus of this report is the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The Tribunal has two parts: the secretariat and Members. Both work together, during the appeal and claim process doing different tasks. The Members consist of:

- the Tribunal President i.e. the judicial lead;
- a Vice-President;
- lawyer chairpersons;
- professional members who are chartered surveyors; and
- lay members.

The tribunal, its members and decisions are independent from Government. The tribunal has 5 members (2 legal, 2 surveyors and 1 lay) with strong Welsh language skills and is able to convene a full panel (i.e. a lawyer chairperson, professional member and a lay member) that can hear and conduct a full hearing through the medium of Welsh. The Tribunal’s Vice-President is a fluent Welsh speaker.

The secretariat is responsible for tribunal administration and deal with all telephone and written enquiries. They are civil servants employed by Welsh Government and form part of the Welsh Tribunals Unit, who are responsible for administering six devolved tribunals across Wales. The secretariat team has two members who are fluent in Welsh as are the Senior Operations Manager and the Head of Welsh Tribunals.

**Publication date:** 29/09/23

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# **Section 1 – Compliance Oversight Arrangements**

This Annual Report has been drafted by the Welsh Tribunals Unit and has been approved by the President of the Residential Property Tribunal.

This annual report appears on the Tribunal's website and the Welsh Language Commissioner has been notified of its publication.

# Section 2 – Compliance Assessment

## Service Delivery Standards

The tribunal ensures compliance with the service delivery standards by:

- Providing staff with guidelines on responding to correspondence, telephone answering and e-mail messages.
- Letter templates offering Tribunal users an opportunity to receive correspondence in Welsh. Letters and emails from the Tribunal also include a standard sentence stating that correspondence is welcomed in Welsh, and that corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay.
- All documents produced for the public are available in Welsh and English, including application forms and guidance documents. English versions of documents and forms produced by the Tribunal also include a standard sentence stating that they are available in Welsh, and that the public can submit information to the Tribunal in Welsh.
- Making sure there is an awareness that provision is in place to enable Welsh language hearings to be held and that an attendee can use Welsh in a hearing.
- Every page of our website is available in Welsh and English.
- The Welsh Government rolled out a new telephone system through Microsoft Teams in April 2021. The Tribunal use this new system to ensure that it complies with standards 8 and 9 by ensuring that Tribunal users have the option of pressing 1 to speak with a member of the team in Welsh and pressing 2 to speak with a member of the team in English.

## Use of our Services

The tribunal received 181 applications in 2022-23 and of these applications 38 hearings were held, none were requested to be processed in Welsh and as a result the tribunal held no hearings in Welsh.

## Websites

Below is a breakdown of how many visits were made to the Tribunal home page of the internet, in both Welsh and English.

|            | English | Welsh | Total  |
|------------|---------|-------|--------|
| Page views | 11,044  | 265   | 11,309 |

## Policy Making Standards

The Tribunal exercises its statutory functions as set out by its governing legislation. The Tribunal does not have a remit to develop policy. However, we consider the impact of our operational decisions on the delivery of our services in Welsh.

## Record Keeping Standards

The Tribunal's Compliance Notice (that details the Service Delivery, Policy Making and Record Keeping Standards that the Tribunal must comply with) has been published on the Tribunal's website: [www.residentialpropertytribunal.gov.wales/sites/residentialproperty/files/2019-01/welsh-lang-compliance-notice-en.pdf](http://www.residentialpropertytribunal.gov.wales/sites/residentialproperty/files/2019-01/welsh-lang-compliance-notice-en.pdf).

We keep a record of the number of complaints we receive, if any, relating to our compliance with the Standards.

## Complaints

The Tribunal received no complaints regarding the implementation of the Standards during the reporting period.

# Section 3 – Reporting on work undertaken in 2022-2023

The table below reports progress on the Forthcoming Work included within the 2021-2022 Annual Report.

|    | Action   | Progress   |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | Develop an action plan for promoting and encouraging the public to use the medium of Welsh when interacting with the Tribunal.   | <b>Objective completed.</b> Actions have been developed that will feed into the Welsh Tribunal Unit's Divisional Plan for 2023-24.   |
| 2. | The Tribunal will be conducting a skills audit of the Tribunal Legal and Lay members. This is to review our records for those able to conduct a Welsh language Tribunal hearing through the medium of Welsh.                 | <b>Objective completed.</b> Results of the audit can be seen in the foreword section of this report where it details the number of members who can conduct a hearing without the need for an interpreter. Two members were not able answer the audit at this time. |
| 3. | Work will also be carried out to design a system of self-regulation regarding compliance to the Welsh language standards for the Tribunal.   | <b>System designed.</b> Two tick box questionnaires have been devised, one for clerks and one for the business manager. They act as an aide-memoire and to check knowledge of the Welsh Language standards. To be implemented 2023-24.                             |
| 4. | A guidance document will also be produced, providing the Tribunal with instructions on how to access both written and simultaneous translation, and on facilitating bilingual meetings through video conferencing platforms. | <b>System designed.</b> The guidance for the system is not complete as a new translation framework is being procured. Once the new framework is in place the guidance will be completed. To be implemented 2023-24.  |

## **Section 4 – Forthcoming work 2023-2024**

1. Engage with service users to identify barriers to interacting with the Tribunals through the medium of the Welsh language.
2. Identify improvements that can be made and implemented within 2023-24 to promote the use of the Welsh language in our tribunals.
3. Deliver training to all tribunal members and WTU staff to raise awareness of the use of the Welsh language in its hearings and wider communication and the tribunals obligations within the Welsh Language Standards.