

Safer Buildings in Wales: A Consultation

Welsh Language Impact Assessment reference number: 06/12/2020

Does the proposal demonstrate a clear link with the Welsh Government's strategy for the Welsh language? – *Cymraeg 2050 A million Welsh speakers* and the related Work Programme for 2017-2021?

The Building Safety White Paper sets out proposals for a comprehensive reform of legislation that contributes to building safety in Wales. It focuses on legislative change across the lifecycle of buildings, as well as setting out aspirations for culture change in the way buildings are designed, constructed and managed.

Whilst the proposals do not have a direct impact on the Welsh language, they will be supportive of Themes 2: Increasing the use of Welsh and Theme 3: Creating favourable conditions – Infrastructure and context of *Cymraeg 2050*.

Our proposals will have an effect on public and private sector bodies, as well as individuals. The public sector bodies effected by our proposals are all subject to the Welsh Language Standards and we would expect them to promote the Welsh language and its use throughout their duties.

We will encourage private sector bodies to take account of the Welsh language and promote its use where possible.

Residents in multi-occupied buildings are at the heart of our proposals and we want to see greater engagement with residents from those who manage the buildings they live in. We have defined the buildings in scope of these proposals as Category 1¹ or Category 2². The greatest impact will be for Category 1 buildings. As part of this, we would encourage that the language profile of residents should be taken into account, which should support the use of the Welsh language.

¹ Category 1 buildings will be multi-occupied residential buildings with six or more storeys or a floor of 18 metres or more in height above ground level, but with scope for this definition to be flexible should evidence suggest it should be widened.

² Category 2 buildings would be residential properties with two or more dwellings that are no more than 18 metres in height.

Describe and explain the impact of the proposal on the Welsh language, and explain how you will address these impacts in order to improve outcomes for the Welsh language.

The Building Safety White Paper sets out our proposals for the reform of building safety in Wales and a new building safety regime. We propose that the scope of the regime covers all multi-occupied residential buildings – that is, buildings where there are two or more dwellings, regardless of whether there is a shared front door to the building.

We expect some of our proposals to have a positive effect on the Welsh language in terms of some information potentially being made available in Welsh.

We propose the requirement for a series of dutyholder roles through the design and construction of a building and during its occupation, each of which will have specific roles and responsibilities.

Our proposals require dutyholders during the occupation phase for Category 1 buildings engage with residents in a meaningful, proactive and collaborative manner. As part of these duties, the dutyholder (the Accountable Person) will be required to take into account the language profile of residents in their buildings when engaging with residents, providing them with building and fire safety information about their building and making them aware of how and in what format (including language) they can access the information. This will not only benefit those requiring services in the Welsh language, but potentially benefit speakers of other languages too.

Some of the buildings within scope of our proposals will be in the social housing sector. Social housing providers are covered by the Welsh Language Standards.

During the design and construction phase, it is proposed that the element of choice with regards to building control is removed and the local authorities will provide Building Control for all residential buildings in Wales over 18m in height. Local Authorities, as well as and Fire and Rescue Authorities, are covered by the Welsh Language Standards.

The existing regulatory oversight in Wales is split between the three Fire and Rescue Authorities and the 22 Local Authorities. Whilst we have not made any decisions on the regulatory framework of the new Building Safety Regime we would anticipate on going involvement from these bodies.

We do not believe there would be any significant impact from our proposals on their operational standards, service standards, service users or how services or functions are delivered.

The White Paper sets out some potential options for a regulatory model, but where it will sit, how it will be structured and funded and other issues are still to be

determined. We will ensure a further Welsh language impact assessment is undertaken when the regulatory model is finalised.

It is likely that our proposals will require some additional upskilling of the design and construction workforce. In line with other training provision in Wales, we would expect providers to take account of the Welsh language in planning the delivery of their training courses, as is set out in Cymraeg 2050.

Our proposals will cover multi-occupied residential buildings, wherever they are located in Wales. We expect our proposals to have a negligible effect on issues such as sustainability of Welsh speaking communities, Welsh learners and Welsh medium education. We would hope that Welsh speaking residents in Category 1 buildings within scope of our proposals may have greater opportunity to use the Welsh language during engagement with the dutyholder (Accountable Person) during the occupation phase.

We are not aware of any Welsh speaking groups that are relevant to these proposals, but would welcome additional information as part of the consultation. Similarly, we would also welcome suggestions for how we further support the Welsh language as part of our proposals.

Following the consultation on the White Paper, we will review the consultation responses and work to refine our proposals prior to introducing changes into the current building safety regime and bringing forward legislation in this area.