



Ein cyf/Our ref: ATISN 25062

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

10 September 2025

Dear ,

Request for Information - ATISN 25062

Thank you for your request for information of the 14 August. You have asked for the following information regarding road signs in Wales:

Risk Assessments for putting Welsh before English and in the same font on road signs in Wales.

Our response

The Welsh Government does not hold the information you require with regards to risk assessments about the order of languages on the road signs.

The below explains why the Strategic Road Network Division would not undertake an additional risk assessment on the order of languages when erecting a new sign.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 introduces a system of duties relating to the Welsh language, known as Welsh Language Standards ('standards'), on public bodies such as Welsh Ministers and local authorities. The aim of standards is to promote the use of the Welsh language and ensure that it is treated no less favourably than the English language. Standards only make provision in relation to the Welsh language; they do not specifically make provision for any other languages, including English. The provision in Schedule 1, Part 3, Paragraph 26 of the [Welsh Language Standards \(No.1\) Regulations](#) ('No.1 Regulations'), the regulations which apply to the Welsh Ministers, local authorities and national parks, is intended to explain that the standards, unless a standard specifically provides to the contrary, do not prevent a body from providing material or a service in Welsh only or bilingually. Standards 61-63 within the No.1 Regulations impose duties relating to signs (including road signs). Those standards do not specifically require a body to provide



Llywodraeth Cymru /
Welsh Government
Parc Cathays / Cathays
Park
CF10 3NQ

FOI.ETCC@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

signs in Welsh only although a body would not be in breach of Welsh language standards if it only provided a sign in Welsh. However, standards 61-63 also do not prevent a body from providing signage bilingually (in Welsh and English) in order to comply with those duties.

With regards to the placement of Welsh language text on signage, standard 62 within the No.1 Regulations states:

“When you erect a new sign or renew a sign (including temporary signs) which conveys the same information in Welsh and in English, the Welsh language text must be positioned so that it is likely to be read first.”

For signs that provide the same information in both Welsh and English, this means that there is a legal requirement on bodies to ensure that the Welsh language text is placed so that it is likely to be read first. This may mean placing the Welsh language text to the left or above the corresponding English language text. This is not intended to disadvantage drivers in any way but rather support and encourage those who understand Welsh or who are learning the language. Placing the English language text before Welsh language text would likely render the Welsh language sign redundant.

The Bowen Committee (under the Chairmanship of Roderick Bowen QC) presented a report to the UK Parliament in 1972 which recommended that traffic signs in Wales should be bilingual and also recommending that Welsh should be placed above the English in all traffic signs in Wales. In coming to their findings, the Bowen Committee sought evidence from the UK and abroad and no evidence was provided which showed a correlation between road accidents and the reading of bilingual signs. Bilingual road signs have therefore been commonplace in Wales since the 1970's.

In addition, there are also more recent studies which, again, have found no correlation between bilingual signs and road accidents. A study by Leeds University in relation to Variable Message Signs, evaluating the effects of bilingual traffic signs on driver performance and safety, noted:

“Drivers were able to read one – and two-line monolingual signs and two-line bilingual signs without disruption to their driving behaviour. However, drivers significantly reduced their speed in order to read four-line monolingual and four-line bilingual signs, accompanied by an increase in headway to the vehicle in front.”

Another study commissioned by the Scottish Government, and published in 2012, into the effect of bilingual signs on road safety in Scotland, noted:

“It is concluded that on those trunk roads where bilingual signs have been installed, while there is evidence that bilingual signs may have increased the demand of the driving task, that this increase can be absorbed and managed by the driver and therefore does not result in a significant increase in crash risk and accident involvement. Analysis of accident data in Scotland concurred with this conclusion, as it found no evidence that, overall, accidents increased or decreased as a result of bilingual sign installation.”

Bilingual signs are considered the norm in a number of European countries, with no known evidence to suggest an increase in road accidents in those countries. Since

2016, as noted above, Local Authorities and Welsh Ministers have been required, through statutory Welsh language standards, to place Welsh text on signs so that it is likely to be read first, for example, by placing the Welsh text above the English text. There has been no evidence of more accidents where the Welsh language is placed above the English language on signs.

I trust this response provides you with the assurance that bilingual signs, where the Welsh language is placed above the English language is longstanding practice, are not considered to pose a safety issue.

Next Steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response.

Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales.

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner.

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are:

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: www.ico.org.uk

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely