



# Welsh Language Impact Assessment

## Introduction of the Article 4 Direction

### The Proposal:

To introduce an Article 4 Direction under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.

An Article 4 Direction would revoke the development rights allowed for a defined area. This would mean that the Authority would have the ability to restrict 'permitted development' rights, namely the change of use between different classes of dwelling houses (Main Homes, Secondary Homes, Short-term Let Accommodation) through the requirement to obtain prior planning permission. By implementing the need to receive prior planning permission, the impacts of the development will need to be considered in accordance with the local and national planning policy context.

### The Purpose / Aim of the Proposal:

By introducing the Article 4 Direction, the long-term aim is to create sustainable communities, ensuring a sufficient supply and a suitable choice of housing that meets the needs of local people. High numbers of holiday accommodation and second homes ("holiday homes") can be a real threat to the social, cultural and economic prosperity of communities across Eryri.

The core objective of introducing this intervention is the hope that over the longer term the Authority can protect and maintain Welsh-speaking communities, through offering opportunities for people to live and work within them.

### Who will this Proposal Effect?

This proposal effects everyone who currently resides in Eryri, as well as people from outside the area who are considering moving into Eryri on a permanent basis, people who are considering buying a second/holiday home and people who are considering buying properties for the purpose of offering short term holiday lets in a community within Eryri.

## Direct Impacts of this Proposal on the Welsh Language

### Development and Consultation on the Proposal

In general terms, as there will be an extended period before final approval and the introduction of this proposal (12 months), it is firstly important to identify whether there is likely to be any direct impacts on the Welsh language during the development and consultation stage, before considering the implementation of the proposal once it is adopted.

As part of the development and consideration of this proposal, an extensive public consultation will take place which will involve direct contact with every household within Eryri, as well as community consultation sessions through Community Forums, a media awareness campaign, online publicity etc. At each stage of this process and through every type of contact and communication, it is important to emphasise that the Authority will fully adhere to its Welsh Language Policy (which incorporates the statutory Welsh Language Standards). This means that all written communication via direct correspondence or through paper or online communication to the wider public, will be fully bilingual, with both languages being used identically i.e. using the same font, size and layout.

Written submissions will be welcomed in Welsh, and any direct responses from the Authority if needed will be given in the same language without delay. Any face-to-face contact through community events will be held in Welsh by the Authority Officers with a simultaneous translation service available for non-Welsh speakers if required.

Therefore, due to the above reasons, no new or additional direct impacts have been identified on the ability of people to use the Welsh language or for treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language during the developmental and consultation stage of this proposal, other than the current positive action in place by the Authority which is in-built within the planning consultation process.

### **Direct Impact: Neutral**

#### Implementing the Proposal:

No direct impact has been identified on the opportunities for people to use the Welsh language through the proposed introduction of the Article 4 Direction across Eryri. In addition, the introduction of the Article 4 Direction would have no direct impact on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. This is because the proposal itself will be an additional requirement within the Authority's current planning process, namely the need to submit a planning application for change of use.

Once implemented, the process for submitting a planning application under the Article 4 Direction will follow the long-established current planning application process within the Authority. This already ensures that all application forms and guidance notes (paper and electronic) are available in both Welsh and English, with both languages being used identically i.e. using the same font, size and layout.

The whole planning application process in terms of written documentation can be submitted entirely through the Welsh language. This includes written or electronic correspondence with the Planning Officer, Planning Technicians and other planning service staff, without any additional delay in response.

Due to the current number of fluent Welsh speakers in the Authority's planning service, it will always be possible to have a verbal discussion regarding a planning application through the medium of Welsh.

It is also important to note that the introduction of the Article 4 Direction will necessitate the development of a new Supplementary Planning Guidance. This guidance will give detailed policy considerations to enable a full assessment on the impact a planning application approval for a change of use is likely to have on that community. This will include threshold levels of each type of Dwelling House in each community etc. This will ensure fair and consistent decisions on these future planning applications.

The development of the Supplementary Planning Guidance will follow the same long-established process already in place within the Authority, which includes a full public consultation and scrutiny by Authority Members. Again, all associated documentation, public consultation processes etc., will be fully bilingual and fully compliant with the Authority's Welsh Language Policy.

Therefore, due to the above reasons, no new or additional direct impacts have been identified on the ability of people to use the Welsh language or for treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, other than the current positive action in place by the Authority which is in-built within the planning process.

**Direct Impact: Neutral**

#### Indirect Impacts of this Proposal on the Welsh Language

The primary objective of introducing the Article 4 Direction is to create an intervention with the expectation that over the longer term the Authority can contribute towards protecting the Welsh language and Welsh-speaking communities. The intervention aims to create and maintain sustainable communities through the adequate stock and affordability of main residence dwelling houses for the residents of Eryri.

Outlined below are the accumulative indirect negative effects on the Welsh language and the number of Welsh speakers within Eryri of continuing to allow increasing numbers of second homes and holiday lets within Eryri communities without intervention (please refer to paper 'Justifying the Introduction of Article 4 Guidance' for detailed background data to supplement this assessment). These accumulative impacts have an adverse effect on the culture, language and economic prosperity of a community over the longer term.

1. Without intervention, house prices continue to increase making them more and more unaffordable and out of reach of local people. This would mean more people (who are statistically likely to be younger people or families with young children) having to move out of the community to look for affordable housing. Affordability even for permanent homes would be restricted to more affluent adults, which are statistically likely to be older / retiring people moving into the area.

In addition, for a business person, more income can be made from short term holiday lets than renting on a permanent basis to a local family, therefore rental market options for local residents continue to decrease. These barriers against buying and renting a permanent home locally will affect the linguistic demographic of a community, which would result in the decrease of Welsh speakers within the area.

2. Without intervention, when the percentage of second homes and holiday lets within a community exceeds a threshold previously researched as being the critical point to enable the long term sustainability of that community; local facilities and businesses become unviable and are lost.

When this happens there are not enough permanent residents to sustain local community groups, hubs and businesses e.g. youth clubs, adult interest clubs and groups, community centres, post offices, community shops and village pubs etc. Apart from the loss of employment opportunities, this has an adverse effect on the Welsh speakers and Welsh learners within the community as the opportunities to socialise through the medium of Welsh is also lost.

In addition, reduced numbers of children within the community means a critical point is reached where there are not enough numbers to sustain local schools and nurseries such as Cylch Meithrin, which are very important in setting firm foundations for the Welsh language through early years learning. Once a school is closed, children in that community would then need to travel to a larger school which is likely to be some distance away. That community then becomes unattractive to many families with young children, as many prefer to live near a local school within the immediate catchment area.

3. Without intervention, more people moving out of the community to look for affordable housing leaves less people to work in local public services which are vital to sustain a community.

Within Eryri, Welsh language skills are often essential in the public sector to be able to offer Welsh language public services to the local residents. With a reduced pool of Welsh speakers to recruit for locally based public service positions, the ability to offer services through the Welsh language is severely hampered. This again, reduces the opportunities for Welsh speakers to live and work through the medium of Welsh within their own communities.

It can be seen from the list above that the effect of continuing with the current situation without introducing a planning intervention will likely result in a further decline of the number of Welsh speakers within Eryri, and a decline in the opportunities for people to use Welsh in both their working and social lives. This will have a detrimental impact on the Welsh language in Eryri over the medium to long term.

Introducing the Article 4 Direction is likely to affect house prices within a community. If the determined critical threshold has been reached in a community, the availability of second homes and short term let properties will be limited to the current stock, which in turn is likely to at the least keep house prices stable if not reduce house prices.

There is a risk that some local residents (who are likely to be Welsh speakers) may find themselves in a situation of negative equity on their mortgage, if house prices reduce significantly within a community. It is difficult with any certainty to predict the effect on the housing market if the Article 4 Direction is introduced; however, there is a risk that this may affect a small number of permanent residents within a community.

However, with any stabilisation or reduction in house prices there is also an increased opportunity for local residents to get on the housing ladder, if homes become more affordable. The current housing stock within a community may be increased in the future through new housing developments, which in communities which have reached the determined critical threshold of second homes and short-term holiday lets, should make those new dwellings more affordably priced as they will all be permanent dwelling houses.

When considering the indirect effect of the introduction of the Article 4 Direction on the Welsh language, it is important to consider the wider policy context within which it operates.

The Article 4 Direction is one policy in a suit of policies that the Authority in conjunction with Cyngor Gwynedd and Conwy County Borough Council has already implemented or will implement in the near future. The accumulative impact on the introduction of the Article 4 Direction along with council tax raising powers of the local authorities should make local communities within Eryri more resilient and sustainable. This in turn will assist in the safeguarding of Welsh language within Eryri, one of its special qualities.

**Indirect Impact: Positive**

### Additional Considerations:

This Welsh Language Impact Assessment should be read in conjunction with the 'Paper Justifying the Introduction of Article 4 Guidance'.

This paper details the whole range of relevant background data, including data on the Welsh language within Eryri communities from the 2011 and 2021 UK Census, which has been duly considered and has informed the proposal. For this reason, this impact assessment has not replicated the background data, to avoid duplication.

This impact assessment sets out what Snowdonia National Park Authority has identified as both direct and indirect impacts of introducing the Article 4 Direction on the Welsh language, both in terms of the opportunities of people to use the language and also to ensure that it is not treated less favourably than the English language.

During the public consultation process, the Authority would like to hear views on whether there are additional direct or indirect impacts on the Welsh language that need to be considered, and which have not been identified in this assessment. Those impacts could be positive or negative.

For any additional negative direct or indirect impacts identified on the Welsh language, the Authority would also like to seek views on what changes can be made to this proposal to mitigate the negative effects.