Languages Consultation Report – 2010

Background
The role of the Public Weather Service Customer Group includes ensuring weather forecasts meet current and future public requirements. Follow the successful release of a site specific forecast in the Welsh language in Financial Year 2009/10 and plans to introduce some Scottish Gaelic forecasts in Financial Year 2010/11, research has been conducted to ascertain which other languages may require translation.

Methodology
Desk top research was carried out with a review of a representative sample of major public sector web sites. No engagement with other government departments or the public was undertaken.

Findings
Web sites for Health Services, Government, Police Services and Fire Services across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were looked at during the desk top research exercise. The majority only use the English language, with Welsh and Gaelic added in Wales and Scotland. Many sites use on-line translators (e.g. Yahoo! Babel Fish and Google Translate) which allow the public to convert web pages into specific languages. However, the standard of translations is variable and the accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

Apart from the Welsh Language Act 1993, which requires all organisations in the public sector providing services to the public in Wales to treat Welsh and English on an equal basis, there is currently no legislation requiring or recommending the translation of public sector web sites.

Recommendations
It is recommended that due to financial constraints the Met Office web site is not translated into any more languages than those already used, namely, English, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic.

It is not intended, at this time, to set any language targets for the Met Office in Financial Year 2011/12.

Next Steps
The Met Office should consider and investigate the use of translation web sites for converting individual fixed content pages to other languages. However, potential inaccuracy issues need to be carefully considered.