

Institute of Welsh Affairs

House Style and Writing Guidelines for contributors

We hope that these guidelines will assist writers and editors wishing to have an article published in *the welsh agenda* online and in print. As we are a small team, it is helpful when we receive submissions that require very little copy-editing prior to publication so we can provide more support to all contributors.

About *the welsh agenda*

Our readers are spread across Wales, the UK and much further afield. They include Members of the Senedd, Members of Parliament, business owners, students and anyone with an interest in Welsh affairs. Our goal is to cultivate an inclusive platform for robust and informed debate. As a result, we publish articles that are well-written and researched, but not intended for specialist audiences.

Quick guide to keep in mind when writing

- Avoid unnecessary jargon and abbreviations. If you are using abbreviations make sure you spell out the full terms when you first use them and follow with the abbreviation in brackets.
- Keep sentences short and simple (average length of 15-20 words)
- Use everyday language (if you would feel strange saying it, don't write it)
- Write in the active voice (put the subject at the start of the sentence - more info [here](#))
For example:
We will draw upon evidence and experience to create practical solutions
Not:
Evidence and experience will be drawn upon to create practical solutions
- Use verbs and adjectives and limit the use of nominalisations (words often ending in '-tion' followed by 'of')
For example:

We will also consider the additional socio-economic benefits of locally owned energy projects

Not:

Consideration will also be given to the additional socio-economic benefits of locally owned energy projects

House style

General

Footnotes

Our website does not currently support footnotes and endnotes. References should be embedded in the text in the form of hyperlinks.

Images and Infographics

For accessibility reasons, please avoid using text in images.

Paragraph layouts

Separate paragraphs with a line space. Do not indent the first lines of paragraphs.

Headings

Headings should be short and snappy and have an initial capital only. Do not put a full stop at the end of a heading.

Emphasis in a sentence

In print, always use italic not underlining, block capitals or bold.

Online, always use bold, not italic, underlining or block capitals.

Photo credits

Follow this formatting for photo credits:

- *Individual* - Photo: Natasha Hirst
- *IWA owned* - Photo: Institute of Welsh Affairs
- *Individual on behalf of an organisation* - Photo: Institute of Welsh Affairs/Natasha Hirst
- When multiple owners, use alphabetical order.

Hashtags

Use lower case if hashtag is just one word:

#energy

Use initial capitals if two words or more:

#RenewableEnergy

except when it would be clearer without:

#IWAenergy

Grammar and punctuation

Abbreviations

Avoid using abbreviations. If an abbreviation only occurs a few times, it is best to write it out in full each time.

If you do use an abbreviation, spell out the words in full the first time you use the expression and put the abbreviation in brackets after it: for example ‘Swansea Bay City Region (SBCR)’. For form articles, only do this if the abbreviation is used frequently in the text.

If the short version is more familiar than the full one, like BBC or FAQs, you don’t need to write it out.

Avoid using the abbreviations ‘eg’, ‘ie’ or ‘etc’ – instead write them out in full: ‘for example’, ‘that is’, ‘and so on’.

Do not use full stops in abbreviations.

Ampersand

Don’t use them unless they’re part of a brand name, like M&S, or with certain abbreviations.

‘And’ and ‘But’ at the start of a sentence

‘And’ and ‘But’ can be used sparingly at the start of a sentence to add emphasis or effect.

Bullets

Use bullets sparingly if you need to make a list easier to understand and for emphasis. Avoid using bullet lists and aim for a maximum of five items.

If the sentence before the bullets ends with a colon (like this one):

- start each point with a lower case letter
- don’t punctuate at the end of each line
- finish the last one with a full stop.

If the bullets are complete sentences, do them like this:

- Capital letter at the start of each one.
- And a full stop at the end of each one.

Bullet lists do not have to be introduced with a colon

- red
- blue
- green.

Capitals

Job titles

Minimise the use of capitals for job titles. Use initial capitals when an individual’s

title or job is immediately before or after their name but not when it is a description.

The IWA Director Auriol Miller spoke at the event.

The IWA director spoke at the event.

Titles

The titles of books, magazines, films, television programmes, published papers and reports should follow the case of their original publication. They should be in italic (you can use **bold** to highlight).

For example:

The Western Mail

New Scientist

Lord of the Rings

Government

The Welsh Government begins upper case when talking about ‘the [current] Government’. However, put government in lower case when talking about a government or governments in general.

The full job titles of Government ministers begin with the upper case: Secretary of State for Wales.

Acts and bills are in capitals when using the full title: the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Regions of Wales

No capital for the region - north Wales, not North Wales.

Dates and times

Years

Write 2017-18, not 2017/18 or 2017-2018. When referring to years that are in both this and the last century use all four digits of both years. For example: 1999-2000. Write the 1990s, not the 1990’s. Write 90s, not 90’s.

Date

The order is day, month, year. For example: 15 May 2018. The number in the date should not have letters after it – 1, not 1st.

Use Monday, Tuesday and so on with initial capital. Do not shorten to Mon, Tues other than listings of opening times and so on if space is tight.

Use January, February and so on with initial capital. Do not shorten to Jan, Feb.

Seasons

Spring, summer, autumn and winter are lower case unless at the start of a sentence.

Time

The time should be written as 9.00am or 3.30pm. Do not use the 24 hour clock.

Full stop

At the end of a sentence leave only one space after a full stop, not two.

Exclamation marks

Generally avoid them, unless you are transcribing an interview. If you absolutely do need to use one, make sure it is only one.

Commas

Where commas mark a phrase, as if in brackets, use them in pairs:

The IWA, which was established in 1987, is Wales' leading think tank.

Joe Rossiter, the IWA's Policy and External Affairs Manager, introduces our new report.

Generally, don't use the Oxford comma (i.e. before an 'and' in a list) unless one of the items in your list has an 'and' in it:

Economy, education and governance

Economy, education, and health and social care

Do not use a comma to join two independent clauses (a sentence that can stand alone). This is sometimes referred to as 'comma splicing'.

You can fix a comma splice by using a semicolon or adding a coordinating conjunction ('and', 'but', 'so' and so on). You could also add a full stop and create two shorter sentences.

For example

Comma splice:

Wales is a country in the UK, it has a population of over 3.1 million.

Fix:

Wales is a country in the UK; it has a population of over 3.1 million

Wales is a country in the UK, and has a population of over 3.1 million

Wales is a country in the UK. It has a population of over 3.1 million.

Only use a comma before a coordinating conjunction when separating two independent clauses:

The IWA is an independent think tank, but works in partnership with government.

Hyphens and dashes

Hyphen

In general, do hyphenate words when they are used as adjectives:

24-hour news

81-year-old arch

Cross-party

Don't hyphenate:

Think tank

Wellbeing

Do not use hyphens to split words at the end of lines.

En dash

En dashes (the length of an N) are used between numbers to indicate a range (10–12 people) or equal pair (the Wales–England match).

Use hyphens, not en dashes online.

En dash can be used in a pair in place of round brackets or commas, surrounded by spaces:

The IWA – which was established in 1987 – is Wales' leading think tank.

It can be used singly and surrounded by spaces to link two parts of a sentence, in place of a colon.

The train was late today – we nearly missed the conference.

Em dash

Not used in the UK.

Initials

No stops, no spaces.

Numbers

Numbers nine or lower should be written in full, 10 and above are written numerically. For example: five; eight; 15; 34; 105.

The exception to this rule is when two numbers are used in the same phrase. In this case, if one is a numeral, then so should the other be. For example:
The report should be between 6 and 12 pages.

First, second and third should be written as words not 1st, 2nd, 3rd. Use figures for 10th upwards.

Put a comma in numbers over 1,000. Every three zeros get a comma.

Spell out million and billion.

Usually avoid starting a sentence with a number. If you can't avoid it, use a word not a number, unless it's statistics-based or marketing copy.

Percentage

Use the symbol %, or per cent, not percent.

Quotation

Use a colon to introduce a quotation:

She said: 'soft power needs to be underpinned by hard strategy'

Use single quotation marks for quoting or for highlighting a specific word or phrase.

Only use double quotation marks for a quotation within a quotation.

'I said to the minister: "soft power needs to be underpinned by hard strategy".'

Punctuation should be inside quotation marks if it belongs in the original.

Any changes made to the original quoted material for clarification should appear in square brackets:

'Wales [itself] now stands at a crossroads'

Ends