

SWF Review

Final Report

March 2014

cornish language partnership
maga

STANDARD WRITTEN FORM REVIEW – FINAL REPORT

MARCH 2014

At the time the Standard Written Form was launched in 2008 the decision was made to review it after a five year gap. This is the Final Report of that review.

The process requested comments from all interested parties and altogether there were 46 responses, mostly from individuals, but a small number from language organisations. Between them these respondents raised 56 issues, all of which the SWF Review Board have addressed. Most issues were raised by only a small number of respondents: 37 issues by one respondent only (66.1%), and a further 8 issues by only 2 respondents (14.3%).

In September 2012 a summary of the issues (Expanded synopsis) was circulated, and comments invited; there were three responses, and one brief comment, in response to this invitation. These figures would seem to indicate that the SWF has been well received, and we would like to thank all those who responded at any time throughout this process.

For the purposes of this report, we have combined some issues and then divided them into 'Issues examined but where no change is recommended' (18 issues, 32.1%), 'Issues where a change is recommended' (25 issues, 44.6%) and 'Other Issues' (13 issues, 23.2%).

'Other Issues' can be divided into those issues which concern dictionary methodology and are issues that should be addressed by the Dictionary Board, together with issues, such as questions of taste that do not relate to the function of representing pronunciation, and 'inconsistency in verb roots' which is not a SWF spelling issue and should not be addressed by this Board.

The figures in brackets in the following sections relate to Issue Numbers in the Expanded synopsis circulated in September.

A Issues examined but where no change is recommended:

Issue: (2) <i> graph used inappropriately in prefixes and suffixes.

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: no change – retain the status quo.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Issue: (4) **Distribution of <i> and <y> is unclear and incoherent**

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: no change – keep the distribution as is.

Scale of recognition: 7.1% (4 respondents)

Issue: (6+56) **Use of <oo>, giving rise to unfortunate or ‘risible’ spellings.**

Proposal for resolution:: This was acknowledged to be a subjective issue. Recommendation: Retain <oo>. It is an umbrella graph for two pronunciations [o:] and [u:]. In addition too many words would be affected and its retention is in the interests of minimal change.

Scale of recognition: 3.6% (2 respondents)

Issue: (7+19) **Introduce minimal use of <z>.**

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: no change – the distribution of voiced [z] is not the same for different periods and revived pronunciation systems. This issue might be reconsidered one day.

Scale of recognition: 8.9% (5 respondents)

Issue: (9) **Vocalic alternation - lack of a systematic and understandable rule.**

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: no change, to leave as at Treyarnon; but we do recognise the need for further research on this issue.

Scale of recognition: 8.9% (5 respondents)

Issue: (12) **Respelling of SWF/L <e’wedh>, <endella> and <e’mann> with initial <a>.**

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: no change in order to keep correspondence between SWF/M <y> and SWF/L <e>.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Issue: (16)**Traditional graphs.**

Proposal for resolution::

Recommended: no change, The Guiding Principles for the SWF Review which were agreed by the Partnership stated that "issues that were closed in 2009 should not be re-opened unless the solution found then is now causing problems." It was therefore clearly understood by the Board that they were not to re-consider those issues that were fundamental underpinning issues of the 2009 Treyarnon agreement.

The use of Main Form Graphs and the status of Traditional Graphs were undoubtedly such fundamental issues, "closed in 2009", which were therefore outside of the remit of the Panel. However, the Board did, of course, discuss them and if they had been within the Board's remit, it would nevertheless have been their recommendation to restate the position agreed at Treyarnon.

Scale of recognition:

3.6% (2 respondents)

Issue: (24)**Reduction of unstressed vowels to schwa.**

Proposal for resolution::

Recommended: There is no issue of spelling to be resolved here, but the SWF specification needs to be re-written as the wording is ambiguous and implies that all final unstressed vowels became schwa;

Scale of recognition:

1.8% (1 respondent)

Issue: (27)**Diacritics**

Proposal for resolution::

Recommended: NO diacritics EXCEPT in pronunciation guides, dictionaries and teaching materials if the author so wishes. We are seeking a meeting with the Dictionary Board to ensure that such diacritics as are chosen are properly defined and used consistently.

Scale of recognition:

1.8% (1 respondent)

Issue: (28)**No phonemic distinction is made between /iw/ and /lw/; <iw> should be replaced by <yw>**

Proposal for resolution::

Recommended: leave it as it stands; this is important for those who make the distinction in Kemmyn pronunciation.

Scale of recognition:

3.6% (2 respondents)

Issue: (30)**Inconsistent treatment of pre-occlusion: <jynn> & <gonn> etc.**

Proposal for resolution::

Recommended: no change – in items of which there are no attested RLC spellings, regular development of /N/ > /dn/ is

assumed. <gonn> is not used in RLC, where [g]oram is used instead.

Scale of recognition: 5.4% (3 respondents)

Issue: (31) M <ew> vs. L <ow>: pronunciation difference.

Proposal for resolution:: This change happens within Middle Cornish (MC), not just Late Cornish. <ow> is universal, <ew> is earlier MC only. Recommended: retain <ew> as the M form and <ow> for both M and L.

Scale of recognition: 3.6% (2 respondents)

Issue: (32) Initial ye-/e- alternation in words like yehes~ehes not handled in a unified way. Learners unable to tell whether a RMC word in <ye-> has a RLC variant in <e->.

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: no change – retain the status quo.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Issue: (44) <junya> - confusion over the vowel and pronunciation.

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: retain <junya> and teach pronunciation. Allow spelling <jùnya> in pronunciation guides etc. (see below).

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Issue: (46) Issue with the use of <eu>; for the small group of words always spelt with <o> in the manuscripts. Applies to seulabrys>/< seuladhedh>.

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: no change; remain with the present spellings for both SWF/M and SWF/L. More research is needed.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Issue: (53) Final <i> / <ei> variants.

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: Remain as is. It would be beneficial to resolve this into one grapheme, but difficult to see how.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

B Issues where a change is recommended:

Issue: (1+48)

Double consonant spellings.

Proposal for resolution::

Recommended:

1. Retain medial <ll> & <rr> in roots (do not revert to single letter in unstressed non-final syllables where that changes the root).
2. In addition: introduce <ll> for <dell>, -ell for the suffix implying 'tool' or 'device'. Exact list of affected words to be agreed upon.

Scale of recognition:

26.8% (15 respondents)

Scope & size of change:

c.15 words: (~0.08% of corpus)
Proposal for resolution 3. Dell + for example: dewynnell, draylell, gwariell, hornell, karrigell, musurell, pibell, rostell, skitell, skubell, skwyhell, tempredhell, trogentrell, yeynell.

Issue: (5+13+49)

Difficulty in distinguishing different sounds for long <a>, short <o> and <u>.

Proposal for resolution::

Recommended:

1. The short equivalent of <oo>, [ʊ] or [ʌ], could be spelt <ò> in dictionaries and teaching materials for learners to show that it is pronounced differently from the short equivalent of <o>.
2. A small group of loanwords like <duk>, currently spelt with <u>. The range of pronunciations of the vowel is wide: /y/ in KK and SWF/M, [u:] or even [ɪʊ] in UC/R and RLC. We recommend that an optional circumflex <û> for [y:]~[u:]~[ɪʊ] and grave accent <ù> for short [ʊ] in words like <junya> may be used in dictionaries and teaching materials to indicate pronunciations other than /y/ for some or all speakers.
3. It was suggested that <pob> replace <pub> to address a specific mispronunciation. Recommend remaining with <pub> (optionally <pùb>) to minimise change.
4. Change to <o> in <arlodh> to make consonant with <toll> <tomm> <bocka> <bronn> & <koska>

Scale of recognition:

7.1% (4 respondents)

Scope & size of change:

194 words (optional use of <ò>); (~0.97% of corpus), <10 words (optional use of <ù>) (~0.05% of corpus) in pronunciation guides, teaching materials etc.

Issue: (8)

Reduction of <oo> to <o> (not dealt with here) and <gh> to <h>, causing confusion and misrepresentation.

Proposal for resolution::

Recommended: <gh> everywhere - except word-initially. <h> and <gh> denote the same phoneme (/x/ and /h/ had

probably merged well within the MC period), if not the same pronunciation. For example: flogh / fleghes

Scale of recognition: 43.2% (24 respondents)

Scope & size of change: 684 headwords (~3.42% of corpus)

Issue: (10) Particle <th> in SWF/L with gap before following verb.

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: join particle with verb as in <thera>.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Scope & size of change: 1 word: (<0.01% of corpus). See Proposal for resolution.

Issue: (11) Particle <ow> - RLC variant <o>: <a> would be preferable.

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: Retain existing <o> (present participle) in RLC but drop the apostrophe.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Scope & size of change: 1 word: (<0.01% of corpus). See Proposal for resolution.

Issue: (15+42) Voiced and unvoiced consonants – confusion. <nowyth> breaks the general rule of morphemic word-final fricatives.

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: respell <nowyth> as <nowydh> (M) or <nowedh>.

Scale of recognition: 16.1% (9 respondents)

Scope & size of change: 2 words: (~0.01% of corpus). See Proposal for resolution.

Issue: (17+36) Use of hyphens – optional use is confusing.

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended:

1. Remove hyphens from numbers, particles and some other words e.g. <ebost>.
2. Addition of hyphens in loose compounds of the form 'noun + verbal noun', e.g. <jynn-skrifa>, <skath-wolya> etc.,
3. <poslev/ow> to replace <poos-lev/ow>
4. <erbynn> to replace <er-bynn>

However, personal use remains optional.

Scale of recognition: 5.4% (3 respondents)

Scope & size of change: >15 words: (<0.1% of corpus). See 1, 2, 3 & 4 above (Proposal for resolution).

Issue: (21+39) Use of graph <c> for /s/

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended:

1. Keep <c> where it is used for /s/ in loanwords now except in morpheme-final position - e.g. <cita>, <cirk>, <cinema>, <certan>, but <avonsya>. Generalisation of morpheme-final <s> removes unnecessary alternation of <c> and <s> in paradigms.

2. Keep <c> as part of the digraph <cy> where the latter stands for [sj]~[ʃ]~[ʃj], according to variety or reconstruction; e.g. words ending in –acyon.

Scale of recognition: 5.4% (3 respondents)

Scope & size of change: c.10 words (~0.1% of corpus).

Issue: (22+34)

Failure to indicate vowel length in monosyllabic loan-words ending in -p and -t.

Proposal for resolution::

Recommended:

1. Write such loan-words with <pp>, <tt> if they contain a short vowel.
2. Accept both permissible plural endings; e.g. <hattys>/<hattow>

Scale of recognition: 3.6% (2 respondent)s

Scope & size of change: c. 25 headwords in database; additionally: general rule for spontaneous borrowings from English. (~0.13% of corpus).

Issue: (23)

The spelling of dhyworth/dyworth

Proposal for resolution::

Accept <dhyworth> and <dyworth> as alternatives, and to the RLC variants <dhort>and <dort>.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Scope & size of change: 2 words: (~0.1% of corpus). See Proposal for resolution.

Issue: (33)

<a/oa> alternation not handled in a unified way.

Proposal for resolution::

Recommended: Rationalise RLC variants, removing <toal>, <kloav>, <gwoav> <gwloan>, etc. and their derivatives, leaving only <broas> of all RLC forms in <oa> from SWF 1.0. Add <boas>, <doas> & <moas> for RLC users, corresponding to <bos>, <dos> & <mos> respectively. Result: New distribution of <oa> is limited to RLC broas, boas, doas, and moas.

Scale of recognition: 3.6% (2 respondents)

Scope & size of change: 13 headwords (all RLC). (~0.07% of corpus).

Issue: (38)

The inconsistent conversion of KK <oe> to SWF <oo> in monosyllables. Cannot use double <oo> in some cases because this would lead to mispronunciation in LC – corresponds to some KK long <oe>. Spelt with an <o>.

Proposal for resolution::

Recommend: no change except <goolan> becomes <golan>. <skoodhya> retains the <oo> (long stressed vowel in RLC!).

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Scope & size of change: 1 word: (<0.01% of corpus). See Proposal for resolution.

Issue: (45) **Choice of <kk> or <ck>. Clear definition needed on when to use <kk> or <ck>.**

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: <ck> to be used for all borrowings and <kk> in all other cases including those in doubt. One spelling change: <okkupyra> to be respelt <okupyra>.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Scope & size of change: 1 word: (<0.01% of corpus). See Proposal for resolution.

Issue: (47) **Use of apostrophes in RLC variants confusing. The SWF/L frequently shows an apostrophe where a corresponding letter in SWF/M is dropped.**

Proposal for resolution:: Recommended: the following rules for SWF-L

1. Keep an apostrophe before nouns like <'manyn> where an initial, unstressed vowel (here schwa) has been dropped. Helps SWF/M users to recognize the words.
2. Do not use an apostrophe elsewhere where the beginning of a word has been shed, e.g. <skydynya> (=diyskynna)
3. Do not use apostrophes internally. Write <mos> (mowes) and <metern> (myghtern) – as previously agreed.
4. Do not write an apostrophe after <kal> (KK kalgh).
5. For words like porth, fordh and war-barth which often lose -dh and -th, an apostrophe may be used: por', for', warbar' but should be up to the discretion of individual writers.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Scope & size of change: c.10 words; (~0.1% of corpus).

Issue: (50) **extent of use of <uw>.**

Proposal for resolution:: Recommend: no change – but the addition of <pluw> to words in the SWF Specification.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Scope & size of change: 1 word: (<0.01% of corpus). See Proposal for resolution.

Issue: (51) **The variant graph <eu> - should it be universal?**

Proposal for resolution: More research is required but the following changes are recommended;
Add: (SWF/L) <enkladhva> (SWF/M) <ynkladhva> (SWF originally <ynkleudhva> only).
Allow: <teudhi> and <tedha> (alternative spellings)

Add: (SWF/L) <bidhi> (currently <beudhi> only) and <briji> currently spelt <breuji> in SWF/L.
No change to: <breusi>, <Meurth>, <feusik>

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Scope & size of change: 6 words: (~0.03% of corpus). See Proposal for resolution.

Issue: (52)

M <gwr-> / L <gr-> variants

Proposal for resolution:: Recommend: Write <gwr-> in RMC and RLC.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Scope & size of change: <5 words. (~0.02% of corpus). Including: gwra, gwruthyl

Issue: (54)

Gemination & provection in superlatives/subjunctives

Proposal for resolution:: Recommend: retain <tth>, introduce corresponding <ggh>, <cch>, <ssh>.

Scale of recognition: 1.8% (1 respondent)

Scope & size of change: c.15 words; (~0.08% of corpus).

In addition to the changes outlined above the Board recommends two additional changes which arose from our discussions:

1. <wortiwedh>/<wostiwedh> & <wostalleth>/<wortalleth> as single words – no apostrophes.
Scope & size of change: 4 words; (<0.02% of corpus).
2. SWF/L variant that is no longer needed: 1 pers. sing. Pronoun <me>, 2nd state <ve>.
Scope & size of change: -1 word; (<0.01% of corpus).

CONCLUSION

This Board has reviewed the SWF, as defined in the specification “An Outline of the Standard Written Form of Cornish”, June 2008 (with modifications approved by the Cornish Language Partnership (CLP)), and has made a number of recommendations, above, to resolve identified issues. With one exception the recommendations made involve a relatively small number of changes, which we hope will stabilise the language for the future.

It is very important in the view of the Board that we can all now have a period of prolonged stability. We strongly recommend that an academic board be established which can agree on new words, and prevent some of the issues discussed above being raised again. It is equally important that the SWF Specification is updated, along with dictionaries, to include these recommendations as soon as possible.

While the issues detailed above were picked out as specific issues for discussion there were a number of more general issues. By far the most prominent of these was the request for a single written form and spelling. Some of the changes recommended do move towards convergence, but not to the extent that many would like. The choice of spelling system is, of course, a personal one. The new MAGA online dictionary will probably act as the primary source for checking spellings, but it is not yet in itself convenient for use on many, particularly mobile, electronic devices, nor indeed as a source for a hard-copy. We suggest that thought be given to ways in which both virtual and hard-copy resources can be improved to make the SWF and the choices available within it easily accessible for all users

Membership of the SWF Review Board:

Vanessa Beeman (Chair)
George Ansell
Albert Bock
Peter Harvey (Co-opted Chair)
Neil Kennedy
Maureen Pierce
Polin Prys
Esmé Tackley

5th March 2014