



Roinn Cumarsáide, Fuinnimh agus Acmhainní Náúrtha
Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources

SCHEME 2014 – 2017
UNDER SECTION 15 OF THE
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT 2003

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

The Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources' first language scheme commenced in October 2006. This second language scheme was prepared under Section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003 ("the Act") by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. Section 11 provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services they will provide—

- through the medium of Irish,
- through the medium of English, and
- through the medium of Irish and English

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

Section 12 of the Act provides for the preparation of guidelines by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and their issue to public bodies to assist in the preparation of draft Schemes. This Scheme has been drawn up in conformity with the guidelines and is predicated on all of the commitments in any previous scheme being implemented. In the event of commitments in earlier schemes not having been fully implemented to date, this matter will be/or has been the subject of discussion with the Office of an Coimisinéir Teanga.

Consultation Process

The Department published a notice under Section 13 of the Act in the Irish Times inviting representations in relation to the preparation of the draft scheme from any interested parties. No submissions were received.

The scheme has been informed by our experience with the first scheme and suggestions put forward by staff in the various Divisions of the Department.

The Content of the Language Scheme

The objectives of this second Scheme are to build on the progress achieved since 2006 by the then Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources in the provision of quality services to our Irish-speaking customers and to broaden the range of services available bilingually over the lifetime of the scheme.

The scheme also includes a commitment to assess on an ongoing basis the level of demand for services through Irish and to ensure that the Department continues to meet this demand in a planned, coherent and accessible way. The Department will continue to gauge the level of demand for its services in the Irish language by carrying out regular and timed audits through a system of counting and measuring the level of queries and requests for services through Irish in a given period.

The new Scheme also builds on the principles of Quality Customer Service and will continue to ensure that persons who wish to conduct their business in Irish are facilitated. However, we must take account of the prevailing public service context and in this regard, the current constraints on resources and on public sector recruitment allied with the state of the public finances could have a negative impact on the level of progress that can be achieved.

The scheme was finalised following widespread consultation with all staff of the Department and also following consultation with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Responsibility for monitoring implementation of the scheme will rest with senior management within the Department. The Department appreciates the time and effort put in by all concerned in this process.

Commencement Date of Scheme

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in succession to the earlier scheme. The scheme will commence with effect from 05 March 2014 and will remain in force for a period of 3 years from this date or until a new scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to Section 15 of the Act, whichever is the later.

Overview of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources

Mission and Functions

The Department's Mission, as set out in our Statement of Strategy 2011-2014 is:

“To promote the development of communications and energy infrastructure and markets that contribute to sustainable economic development and to harness our natural resources in a productive and environmentally responsible manner.”

Our Mission Statement aims to encapsulate the policy objectives for the Department which are delivered either directly or through associated State bodies and agencies. Our principal responsibilities in the fields of communications, energy and natural resources can be summarised as follows:

Communications

- To contribute to sustained macro-economic growth and competitiveness and to ensure that Ireland is best placed to avail of the emerging opportunities provided by the information and knowledge society, by promoting investment in state-of-the-art infrastructures, by providing a supportive legislative and regulatory environment, and by developing a leading edge research and development reputation in the information, communications and digital technologies sectors.

Broadcasting

- To create an environment that encourages the maintenance of high quality Irish radio and television services by both independent broadcasters, TG4 and RTÉ.

- To secure a viable future for high quality public service broadcasting in the Irish market.
- To seek to retain access to a range of quality programming in analogue and digital form, on a universal and free-to-air basis.

Postal

- To ensure Irish industry and domestic customers enjoy competitively priced, high-quality postal services on a par with the highest quality standards in key comparator economies elsewhere in the EU.
- To maintain the nation-wide postal services and network, with uniform tariffs applying throughout the State, where required by regulation.
- To develop the Irish postal sector in such a way that it will underpin the key economic objective of Ireland becoming a knowledge economy.

Energy

- Safeguarding security of energy supply.
- Developing a sustainable energy future.
- The development of competitive, efficient and properly regulated energy markets.

Natural Resources

- To stimulate discovery of economic mineral deposits and to maximise the contribution of the mining sector to the national economy, with due regard to its environmental and social impact.
- To maximise the benefits to the national economy from exploration for, and production of, indigenous oil and gas resources, while ensuring that activities are conducted safely and with due regard to their impact on the environment and other land and sea users.
- To acquire and maintain the currency and validity of geoscience data in order to provide timely, authoritative, impartial and up-to-date information and advice to assist relevant sectors of the economy to develop and prosper.
- To support decision making in the areas of environmental protection and sustainable management of earth resources through the provision of information and advice by the Geological Survey of Ireland, which is the national geological agency.

The functions which we discharge in respect of these areas of responsibility embrace policy development and review, sectoral development, regulation, public resource management and corporate governance.

The Services We Provide

Our work includes a significant range of services which we provide directly to the public. Among these are:

- Licensing and leasing under the Minerals Development Acts 1940 – 1999 and the Petroleum and Other Minerals Development Acts 1960 - 1995;
- Maps, reports and databases describing the onshore and offshore geology and landscapes of Ireland, as well as the effective management of its water and natural resources.

Further details of the Department's services are available in the guide we publish pursuant to section 15 of the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003 (which can be accessed on the Department's website: www.dcenr.gov.ie).

Functional Areas of the Department

The Department's functional areas comprise three sectoral areas and one corporate support area. These are:

- Communications
- Energy
- Natural Resources
- Corporate Services.

Each functional area is divided into a number of business units or sections each of which is headed by a Head of Function. The Department has three Assistant Secretaries who, with the Deputy Secretary General and Secretary General, are members of the Management Committee.

Our Customers

The Department's customer base reflects the wide range of sectors and activities which fall within our remit. Among our customers we count specifically the Minister and Minister of State, other members of the Oireachtas, local public representatives, individual members of the public, the public bodies under our aegis, representative bodies engaged in the sectors for which we are responsible, individuals and companies with whom we have a direct business relationship, other Government Departments and public bodies, the European Union, international organisations, the media, and voluntary groups whose interests and concerns bring them into contact with the Department.

The Department's Offices

The Department's head office is located at 29 – 31 Adelaide Road, Dublin 2. There are also offices in Beggars Bush in Dublin and in Cavan town. Appendix A contains the list of our addresses.

Assessment of extent to which services are already available through Irish

The primary objective of the Official Languages Act 2003 is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish.

The Department provides a limited number of services bilingually.

- The Department's corporate publications – Statement of Strategy, Annual Report and Customer Service Action Plan and Charter – are available in Irish and English. A limited number of other publications have also been made available in Irish and English.
- The Department currently has a policy of placing the majority of its press advertisements in both Irish and English and the Department's headed paper and main signage are also in Irish and English.
- All correspondence received in Irish is answered in Irish and every effort is made to accommodate customers who telephone or visit the Department and who wish to conduct their business in Irish without detriment to the speed or quality of service provided.

The provisions of Regulations made under the Official Languages Act are being implemented progressively as required.

Chapter 2: Means of Communication with the Public

The Department communicates with the public through:

- (1) written means, including electronic communication; and
- (2) interpersonal means.

Written means of communication, including electronic communication

The following table outlines the various written means of communication together with the commitments the Department will continue to make, in relation to the development of an Irish language service policy.

Means of Communication	Irish Language Service Delivery Commitment
Corporate Publications, including Statement of Strategy, Annual Report, Customer Service Action Plan, Customer Service Charter, and Customer Comment Card.	Section 10 of the Act requires a Statement of Strategy, Annual Report, Audited Accounts or Financial Statements and any document setting out policy proposals to be published by the Department simultaneously in Irish and English. All other corporate publications will be made available in bilingual format.
Guidelines, information leaflets and application forms relating to individual schemes/programmes/processes.	All guidelines, information leaflets and application forms generated by the Department in relation to its schemes, programmes or processes and which are referred to in the Department's Freedom of Information Sections 15 and 16 Manuals will be made available in bilingual format.
Departmental publications on major policy statements or reviews in the communications, energy, and natural resources sectors.	These publications will in general be made available bilingually. If the cost of bilingual publication in any individual case is deemed excessive due to the size of the document, the Department may choose to publish the executive summary and recommendations in bilingual format.
Publications generated by other bodies but available from the Department.	These publications will be made available in the language in which they have been published by the generating Department or body.
Press Releases.	Departmental press releases, other than speeches which have been issued as or are attached to press releases, will be made available bilingually on the Department's website and in hardcopy. (Appendices attached to press releases e.g. details of Board appointees <i>etc.</i> will be available in one official language only).
Pre-recorded computerised	The standard disclaimer on email communications

messaging.	<p>will be bilingual.</p> <p>Individual staff members can choose to put the non-system generated part of the “out of office” e-mail message in Irish or English or both languages.</p>
Speeches.	Speeches will be made available in the language in which they are delivered.
Requests for Tender.	Requests for Tender will be made available in English only unless the tender itself relates to an Irish language issue.
Replies to Freedom of Information requests	The practice in the Department is that replies to all FoI requests (other than requests for personal information) are published on the Department’s website in the language in which the request was received and this practice will continue.
Website.	The Department has developed parallel English/Irish websites in relation to the general material relating to the Department and its services. Certain material, as indicated above, <i>e.g.</i> speeches, publications generated by other Departments/bodies and any material which the Department does not propose to publish bilingually will be available in English only on the website.
Statutory Instruments.	<p>The Department is responsible for several Statutory Instruments (SI) each year. Some of the categories of SI made by the Department (internal market in natural gas, electricity <i>etc.</i>) are technical and can be very large in size.</p> <p>Information about the requirements created by such instruments is communicated to the public by way of notices in the media which will be available in both languages. Given the resources we have available and the other areas we have identified as greater priorities for improving the quality of our services to customers in the Irish language, translation of all such SIs is not a priority for this scheme.</p> <p>Other SIs (payment in lieu of fines regulations, licence fee regulations, etc.) will be available in Irish and English with the Irish translation of instruments made in English available within four weeks of the publication of the original SI.</p>
Gaeltacht Place Names.	The Department has put in place the necessary arrangements to ensure that official Placenames of Gaeltacht areas as declared by the Minister in the (Ceantair Ghaeltachta) Placenames Order 2005 will continue to be used as the default for corporate

	<p>purposes, including, where appropriate, legislative corporate and statistical purposes.</p>
Other Publications.	<p>Expenditure Review Reports, Progress Reports under the National Development Plan, Action Plans and Progress Reports under Programmes for Government, Consultants' Reports, documents intended for an audience outside the State and documents intended primarily for internal Departmental use, <i>e.g.</i> HR policies, training and development plans, will in general be made available in English only.</p> <p>It is not the intention to publish bilingual versions of documents which are of a technical nature or that have a small circulation.</p> <p>Any other publication not listed above and not referred to in any other category will be considered for bilingual publication on a case-by-case basis with due regard to public interest and nature, size and layout of the material.</p>
Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) Activities & Publications	<p>The GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF IRELAND (GSI), founded in 1845, is the National Earth Science Agency. It is responsible for providing geological advice and information, and for the acquisition of data for this purpose. GSI produces a range of products including maps, reports and databases and acts as a knowledge centre and project partner in all aspects of Irish geology. It is a division of the Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources (DCENR) and has about 50 multi-disciplinary staff.</p> <p>This agency has contact with the general public through its Educational Outreach Programmes and its geological surveying work throughout the country. During the life of this scheme the following will be completed:</p> <p>Irish language versions of the following will be produced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - G.S.I. Information Booklet 2012 - G.S.I. "Staff Working Code" document - G.S.I. "Careers in Geology" document - "The value of Geological Services" document - "Climate through Time" poster - "Geoschol" programme for schools (5 posters, pack of activity sheets, & booklet)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Geoschol” website - “An A to Z of Geology” booklet - “Written in Stone” booklet <p>-“ An alternative publication may be substituted for any of the above if it is deemed appropriate at the time to do so. It is planned to launch the above booklets/programmes at an event organised by the Department each year to coincide with the annual Seachtain na Gaeilge celebration. The above work will be of benefit in the education system and we intend to liaise with An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) during this work.</p>
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Where the Department has made commitments in relation to the development of bilingual means of written communication, including electronic communication, the following approach will continue to be applied:

- The bilingual commitments referred to above will not generally have retrospective effect;
- All new/updated written means of communication will be produced in bilingual format at the time they are produced or updated. However, the Department will produce guidelines, leaflets and application forms relating to ongoing schemes, programmes and processes, as set out in the Department’s Freedom of Information Sections 15 and 16 Manuals, in bilingual format;
- When publishing in hard copy format, the Department will make every effort to ensure that bilingual publications are produced under a single cover rather than as separate publications. However, where the length of any bilingual publication would reduce its effectiveness, separate Irish language and English language versions will be provided. Each will then contain a statement that a version is available in the other language. This commitment does not apply to web publications or to Statutory Instruments which will be published separately.
- The Department’s bilingual website will be further developed over the period of the scheme. Website publication will, in general, not be simultaneous Irish/English publications unless otherwise required under the Act or the scheme.

Interpersonal Means of Communication

The following table outlines the various interpersonal means of communication together with the commitments the Department will continue to make, in relation to the development of an Irish language service policy.

Means of Communication	Irish Language Service Delivery Commitment
Telephone/Switch Board Service	<p>The main non-system generated pre-recorded announcements (<i>i.e.</i> the pre-recorded announcements in place when the Department's offices are closed or when the switchboard operator is busy) are in bilingual format.</p> <p>The switchboard operator will answer the phone by referring to the name of the Department in Irish and English.</p> <p>The switchboard staff will be provided with a list of Departmental staff members in each section or unit who can provide a service through Irish.</p> <p>Individual staff members can choose to put their voicemail messages in Irish or English or both languages.</p>
Reception Facilities.	<p>The reception staff will be provided with a list of Departmental staff members in each section or unit who can provide a service through Irish.</p>
One to one contact either by phone or in person.	<p>In order to provide interpersonal services through Irish, whether by phone or in person, the Department has assigned overall responsibility for matters relating to the Official Languages Act to an Irish Language Officer.</p> <p>The role of the Irish Language Officer will be to oversee implementation of the Act and Scheme in the Department.</p> <p>The Irish Language Officer will be assisted by staff throughout the Department who have Irish language proficiency.</p> <p>Staff with ability to provide interpersonal Irish language services will, with their agreement, be identified in an appropriate way on telephone lists, at reception and on the organisation chart and their e-mail addresses will be included under relevant</p>

	sections on the website.
Public Meetings policy.	The Department conducts the majority of its public meetings in the English language only. However, the Department will, when warranted, provide staff proficient in Irish for meetings in Gaeltacht areas or when dealing with Gaeltacht / Irish language issues.
Computer Systems	Development of new interactive on-line services will be compatible with the Irish language, taking into account the availability of Irish language software from the relevant software supplier.
Service to Gaeltacht Areas	The Department undertakes to provide a service through Irish to members of the public in Gaeltacht areas over the lifetime of this scheme.
Offices in the Gaeltacht	We have no offices in the Gaeltacht at present. If however circumstances change in the future this Department is committed to ensure that Irish will be the working language these offices, in accordance with the timeline outlined in our first scheme.

Chapter 3: Enhancement of services to be provided bilingually

Services not available in Irish

The Department's continued focus will be on building up the range of written and electronic means of communication available bilingually and on developing Irish language competency amongst staff to facilitate interpersonal Irish service language delivery on a general level. In practice, this means that while the Department will be in a position to provide general information about the Department and its overall services through Irish, the Department will not always be in a position to conduct detailed service or programme-specific business through Irish.

General Commitment to Irish Language service development

The Department remains committed to encouraging the development of Irish language skills across all areas of the Department to facilitate the progressive development of a quality one-to-one customer service in Irish to meet the demand for such services.

The Department is, however, at a relatively low base in terms of both written and interpersonal Irish language service capability. While the provision of written communications in bilingual format is primarily a cost and time issue, the development of Irish language skills by staff to facilitate day-to-day interpersonal service delivery is significantly more difficult. The Department's audit of Irish language skills across the Department showed that it is in a position to provide a certain level of interpersonal Irish language services based on the current availability of Irish language skills. However, it will take considerably more time and effort to increase the relatively small core group of staff with sufficient Irish language capability and confidence to deliver Irish language services on an interpersonal level. The extent to which such interpersonal services can be developed will also be affected by actual demand for such services.

Once it is established that staff and sections have the capacity to deal with Irish language customers on an interpersonal level, the Irish Language Officer, will promote the availability of the Irish language service in such sections by listing, with the agreement of staff, contact details on the telephone list, organisation chart and website for customers. This will have the additional effect of promoting public confidence in the availability of a quality customer service in Irish and unlocking latent demand for services in Irish.

Training and Development

The Staff Development Unit and Irish Language Officer will continue to:

- Make available to all staff of the Department appropriate Irish language training courses, including those held within normal working hours to maximise attendance, relevant to the Department's work;
- Promote the refund of fees scheme as a mechanism for encouraging Irish language training;

- Provide advice to staff on the range of high-quality Irish language classes available outside office hours (*e.g.* third-level Diploma in Irish; Gael-Linn, Gaelchultúr *etc.*);
- Include language awareness as part of both Induction and Customer Service training courses so as to ensure that staff:
 - understand why the Department has an Irish language service policy
 - understand the context and background to the policy
 - are fully informed about how the policy will affect their work;
- Assess all courses, including Irish language courses and courses delivered through Irish, on a regular basis to ascertain how effectively they meet the Department's goals;
- Provide Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in bilingual format in conjunction with each section or unit of the Department to assist staff in dealing with interpersonal Irish language queries at section and unit level and make the FAQs available on the Department's website;
- Continue to seek additional volunteers to provide Irish language services across the Department as Irish language capability develops. With the agreement of staff, they will be identified in an appropriate way on telephone lists, at reception and on the organisation chart and their email addresses will be included under relevant sections on the website;
- Put in place arrangements for the celebration, in an appropriate way, of the Annual Seachtain na Gaeilge event within the Department;
- Explore opportunities to encourage the development of Irish language skills amongst staff through informal activities.

Recruitment and Placement

The following measures will continue to be put in place, over the lifetime of this scheme, to ensure that an adequate number of staff with proficiency in the Irish language are recruited and retained within the Department in order to comply with the provisions of the Act. It must be acknowledged that delivery on these commitments may be negatively affected by financial and staffing changes that may occur in the future, which are beyond the control of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

- As part of its recruitment policy, the Department, in cooperation with the Public Appointments Service, will publicly advertise competitions for staff to work through Irish (especially in the Gaeltacht and/or serving Gaeltacht communities), when suitable people are not available through general entry level competitions.
- Appropriate placement of staff with such proficiency will be implemented by the Department in offices that will service Gaeltacht areas.

Language Resources

All staff will continue to have easy access to information and language resources, *e.g.* dictionaries, both hard copy and in electronic format.

Translation Services

The Department will continue to make available to staff a list of companies and individuals providing translation services. Support IT services such as spell checker software will be available within the Department.

The Department, in monitoring the demand for services through Irish, will consider the option of recruiting a translator to provide in-house translation services.

Corporate Identity

The Department's stationery such as headed paper and complimentary slips will continue to be produced in bilingual format. The Department's stationery carries the invitation:

Fáiltítear roimh chomhfhreagras as Gaeilge.

Third Parties

Third parties working for the Department will be made aware of the scheme where relevant and will be encouraged to reflect the spirit of the scheme in the services being provided by them.

Chapter 4: Monitoring and Revision

The Irish Language Officer will provide support and assistance to all areas of the Department on the commitments contained in the scheme and will have overall responsibility for overseeing implementation of the Act and Scheme within the Department.

The day-to-day monitoring and implementation function will be carried out by Heads of Function in respect of the Divisions for which they are responsible. The Irish Language Officer will also monitor on a regular basis supply and demand for Irish language services across all areas of the Department.

The Irish Language Officer will report on progress to the Central Partnership Committee and to the Management Committee every six months. Progress on the Department's scheme will be included in the Department's Annual Reports.

Chapter 5: Publicising of Agreed Scheme

The contents of this scheme will be publicised by means of:

- Internal Circulation within the Department
- Press Release
- Official launch of the scheme
- Public advertisement of availability of scheme
- Circulation to appropriate bodies and
- Publication of the scheme on the Department's website.

The Department will take every opportunity in our day to day interaction with our customers to promote and publicise the services we provide in Irish through the following means:

- directly informing customers on a pro-active basis of the option of dealing with us through Irish, for example by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the Irish language services that are available;
- prominently listing these services on our website;
- signifying on selected guidelines, leaflets and application forms that these documents are also available in Irish, unless presented bilingually;
- giving equal prominence to Irish and English language materials.

A copy of this scheme has been forwarded to Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga

The English language version is the original version of this scheme.

APPENDIX A

LOCATION OF DEPARTMENT'S OFFICES

The Department's Headquarters Office is currently located at **29 – 31 Adelaide Road, Dublin 2** - Tel: 01-6782000; LoCall number: 1890 44 99 00. The Department also has offices as follows:

- Geological Survey of Ireland, Beggars Bush, Haddington Road, Dublin 4.
- Corporate Services, Elm House, Farnham Road, Cavan, Co. Cavan