



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government

**Department of the Environment, Community and Local
Government**

Irish Language Scheme

2013-2016

under Section 15 of the

Official Languages Act 2003

September 2013

An Irish version and an English version of the Irish Language Scheme is available on – www.environ.ie or www.comhshaol.ie.

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Chapter 1 Background

1.1 Introduction

The Department's first Irish language Scheme, prepared in accordance with Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003, came into effect in August 2005. The second Scheme covering the period 2009-2012 built on the progress made in the provision of services through Irish and bilingually in the Department.

This third Scheme has been developed to strengthen the emphasis given to the Irish language in the daily conduct of the Department's business, taking account of what is reasonably practicable over the next three years.

The Department's previous Schemes have been reviewed internally on an annual basis and the results of that process have contributed to the development of this third Scheme. The new Scheme reflects the newly restructured Department, following the post-General Election transfer of functions in 2011, with responsibility for community matters transferring into the Department and responsibility for heritage matters (including the National Parks and Wildlife Service) transferring to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

1.2 Review of the operation of the Second Scheme 2009-2012

The second Irish Language Scheme set further challenges for the Department and further embedded the implementation of Irish language obligations into the Department's culture.

Over the course of both Schemes, staff in the Departmental Strategy Unit (DSU) of the Department have worked closely with colleagues from across the Department to promote an awareness of, and to ensure compliance with, the terms and spirit of the Scheme. Through a series of annual internal surveys, the Department has sought to gauge the level of demand for services through Irish, both orally and in print.

There is a recognition within the Department of the importance of our Irish Language Scheme, and of the statutory obligations arising on foot of both the Scheme and the Official Languages Act. The DSU has been committed to ensuring that staff and managers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to providing a service through the Irish language. For example, a comprehensive Office Notice issued to all staff in May 2012, via email, the Department's electronic magazine, 'Weekly Wrap', and the Department's intranet site regarding requirements to make certain publications available in both Irish and English. General guidance on all Irish Language obligations was further developed on the Department's intranet site in July 2012. A range of supports have been developed in order to meet staff requirements and ensure the effective implementation of the Scheme. These include a series of tailored oral Irish language classes delivered in-house; support to staff who wish to undertake Irish language courses provided externally; provision of guidance and details on translation services, and; a variety of online resources provided for staff on the Department's intranet site. A series of surveys conducted annually allowed the DSU to assess progress in relation to the implementation of the Scheme and provided an indication of any issues sections were

encountering in relation to implementation. Similarly, the annual audit provided information on the level of demand from the public for services in Irish. The results have consistently indicated that the level of demand for services from the public through Irish – in person or via telephone calls – has remained low.

The Department has also worked with officials from An Comisínéir Teanga's office to ensure that complaints and issues of non-compliance were brought to staff's attention and addressed, with a view to avoiding a recurrence.

1.3 Approach to Developing New Scheme

The Department published a notice on its website on 18 September 2012 under *Section 13* of the Official Languages Act 2003 inviting representations from interested parties in relation to the preparation of this new language Scheme. Two submissions were received representing a range of Irish language organisations/interested parties and these submissions are available to view on the Department's website www.comhshaol.ie or www.viron.ie. The Department would like to extend its thanks to those who contributed to the process.

The new Scheme has been informed by these submissions, suggestions gathered from staff across the various Divisions of the Department and from the annual surveys which have assessed progress under the Department's previous Irish language Schemes.

1.4 The Content of the Language Scheme

This third Irish language Scheme aims to continue to deliver on the commitments outlined in previous Schemes and also to build on the progress achieved.

The new Scheme will also build on the principles of Quality Customer Service and continue to ensure that persons who wish to conduct their business in Irish are facilitated.

The Department will continue to gauge the level of demand for its services in the Irish language by carrying out annual audits of the demand for services and the implementation measures undertaken. The Department intends to report on progress made annually in its Annual Report.

1.5 Commencement date of Scheme

This Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht Affairs and is commenced with effect from 16 September 2013. It 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 Official Languages Act, whichever is the later.

Chapter 2 Overview of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government

2.1 Mission and Mandate

The Department's mission, as set out in its *Statement of Strategy 2011-2014*, is to pursue sustainable development.

In pursuing this mission, its mandate is to:

- contribute to national recovery through the timely delivery of our policies and programmes, especially in support of job creation;
- contribute to public service reform;
- ensure good quality housing in sustainable communities;
- protect and improve water resources and the quality of drinking water;
- achieve a high quality environment with effective environmental protection;
- support and enable democratic and responsive local government;
- promote and support the development of communities and the community and voluntary sector;
- ensure that planning and building in our regions and communities contribute to sustainable and balanced development; and
- monitor, analyse and predict Ireland's weather and climate.

The Department has offices in: the Custom House, Dublin; Newtown Road, Wexford; Ballina, Co. Mayo; and Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo. Staff in the housing and water inspectorates, and the audit service are located throughout the country. Met Éireann is headquartered in Glasnevin, Dublin, and has staff in regional locations.

2.2 Departmental Customers

Given the breadth and nature of the Department's mandate, its work impacts on a wide range of people and communities across the country. While the majority of services promoted by the Department are delivered through the local government sector, the Department has an extensive customer base. This includes:

- Members of the public;
- Communities throughout the country;
- Social Partners;
- Non Governmental Organisations;
- Bodies under the aegis of the Department;
- Other Government Departments and Offices;
- Local and Regional Authorities;
- Elected representatives; and
- European and International Institutions.

2.3 Summary of Services and Activities provided by the Department

The work of the Department is carried out through six Divisions – Environment; Water & ICT; Community; Local Government; Planning and Housing; and Finance and Central Services. In addition, Met Éireann and the Local Government Audit Service also form part of the Department. An outline of each of the business units within the six divisions of the Department is set out below.

Environment Division

Environment Policy and Awareness Section:

is concerned with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) corpus of legislation, including the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) system, the transposition and implementation of the Industrial Emissions Directive, the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive, the Restriction of the use of Certain Hazardous Substances in Electrical and Electronic Equipment (RoHS) Directive, the Packaging Directive, the Batteries & Accumulators Directive, the End-of-Life Vehicles Directive, the Environmental Liability Directive and the 'Aarhus' Directives on Access to Environmental Information and Public Participation. Other issues dealt with are two Directives on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), eco-innovation, research & development and the promotion of Producer Responsibility Initiatives in other areas. In terms of the international environmental agenda, the section is responsible for the Aarhus Convention, the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register Protocol and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The section is also responsible for monitoring and promoting public awareness of environmental issues, providing funding for Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and managing the Local Agenda 21 Partnership Fund.

Environment – International and Sustainable Development Section:

has responsibility for coordinating preparation for the participation of the Minister in the EU Environment Council, the Department's responsibilities under the European Union (Scrutiny) Act, including submission to the Oireachtas of proposals for environmental legislation, matters relating to North/South and British-Irish cooperation in the environmental area.

Environment International was responsible for the Department's preparations for the Irish Presidency of the EU. The section is also responsible for the renewed National Sustainable Development Strategy, the Green Public Procurement Action Plan, management of the LIFE+ programme and coordinating the national input to the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

Environmental Compliance and Air Quality Section:

is responsible for coordinating and progressing resolution of outstanding ECJ cases, as well as monitoring/reporting on transposition of European legislation into Irish law and infringements of EU environmental legislation. In addition, the Section manages the implementation of EU and national ambient air quality and noise legislative provisions, including the monitoring (with the EPA) of ambient air quality, reporting of emissions to air, regulation and reporting of environmental standards for road, non-road and marine

fuel, regulation of solid fuel and bituminous (i.e. smoky) coal, regulation of the control of persistent organic compounds, ozone depleting substances and volatile organic compounds. In addition, the section manages expenditure from the Environment Fund to support European Mobility Week, to reduce air and noise pollution and to make financial contributions under international Conventions and related Protocols to which Ireland is a party including the EMEP Protocol to the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, the Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and the Vienna Convention and associated Montreal Protocol on the Control of Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

In addition to its core policy areas, the Section also has a general oversight role in the Dublin Docklands Development Authority, ensuring that the Authority complies with its statutory requirements and that it continues to fulfil its role in revitalising and regenerating the Docklands area.

Environment Inspectorate Section:

provides technical and scientific analysis, support and advice. The Inspectorate also provides technical support to the EPA and local authorities in facilitating the implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation and provides technical support for liaison with Government Departments, Agencies and relevant stakeholders in support of the Department's strategic environmental objectives.

Climate Change Section:

aims to ensure the full implementation and further development of the *National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012*, including measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to integrate climate change adaptation issues into decision-making at national and local level.

Waste Policy Section:

supports the advancement of Government policy and implementation of Government commitments in respect of certain aspects of waste policy, by developing policy and, as necessary, legislating; administers the Environment Fund, including the administration of receipts from the Plastic Bag Levy and the Landfill Levy; and administers a number of grant schemes.

Community Division

Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) Section

manages and oversees the implementation of the LCDP. The section also has an oversight role in relation to Pobal¹ for all its Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) managed programmes. The section's work programme also includes overseeing and supporting the Social Inclusion Unit Programme in local government and supporting, monitoring and promoting Joint Policing Committees.

¹ Pobal (www.pobal.ie) is a not-for-profit organisation with charitable status that manages various funding programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and the EU. Its mission is to promote social inclusion, reconciliation and equality through integrated social and economic development within communities.

Community and Voluntary Supports and Programmes Section:

is responsible for supporting voluntary activities and developing relationships between the State and Voluntary Sector. The section's main functions are:

- the administration of a number of schemes, including TidyTowns;
- the implementation of the Dormant Accounts legislation;
- the implementation of the Revitalising Areas By Planning Investment and Development (RAPID) Programme nationally;
- supporting the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising.

Rural Recreation Section:

is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy (NCRS) and the Walks Scheme. The section also convenes meetings of, and supports, Comhairle Na Tuaithe (The Countryside Council).

EU Rural Development Section:

implements Axis 3 & 4 of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013 using the LEADER approach.

Alignment of Local Government/Local Development Section:

the main responsibility of the section, working in partnership with local government and local development, is to manage the development and implementation of a coherent local development system through the alignment of the local government and local development sectors.

North/South EU Funding Programmes and Local Government Services Section

is responsible for:

- the management and oversight of a number of themes under the Peace III and Interreg IVA cross-border, co-funded EU funding programmes;
- the legislation covering dog control, dog breeding establishments, safety certification of fairground equipment and burial grounds; and
- oversight of Irish Water Safety.

Inspection Services Section

provides financial and administrative verification of programme and measure based projects carried out by a range of local action groups, community groups and private promoters.

Water and ICT Division

Water Quality Section:

is responsible for policy and legislation in relation to water quality issues and for timely transposition of EU and international water quality obligations. The section co-ordinates the implementation of water quality legislation with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), local authorities and other public bodies.

Water Services Investment Programme Section:

This section's main objective is to manage the capital provision for water services to support social and economic development and to preserve and protect environmental standards.

Water Services Policy Section:

was established to review and develop water services delivery generally, primarily through preparation of comprehensive modern water services legislation, and through refining and overseeing the implementation of the Government's water services pricing policy framework.

Water Sector Reform Management Section:

The main objective of this section is to drive the overall programme of water sector reform, developing programme plans, monitoring the achievement of critical milestones and delivery, as well as engaging in relevant consultations and communications.

Marine Planning and Foreshore Section:

is responsible for the performance of a range of functions under the Foreshore Act 1933 in relation to the management of the foreshore as part of the public estate, including granting development consent where it is deemed to be in the public interest. The section is focused on active caseload management as well as leading legislative reform aimed at modernising the foreshore consent system.

Water Inspectorate Section:

provides professional advice and technical support.

ICT and Communications Unit:

provides and maintains the information and communications systems. The Unit's **Communications Section** develops, implements and monitors appropriate measures to support internal communications in the Department. The **Press & Information Office** deals with the media.

Local Government Division

Local Government Policy Section & Motor Tax Section:

- promotes and supports the role of local government in the delivery of efficiencies, quality services and Programme for Government commitments;
- facilitates effective communications between the Minister, the Department and local authorities;
- maintains and monitors the legislative framework for the local government system; and
- develops national policy on motor tax and oversees the operation of the motor tax system, in co-operation with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Local Government Project Development:

undertakes and develops specific projects relating to local and central government issues; provides necessary input to the political and administrative system; and maintains timely, high quality and efficient services to internal and external clients.

The section's programme of work includes:

- implementation of the Government Programme on local government reform;
- processing of boundary extension applications and the development of policy in relation to same;
- oversight of the legislation dealing with local placenames; and
- oversight of the legislation on joint burial boards and joint drainage committees.

Local Government HR Section:

has a lead HR and reform function in respect of local authorities and state bodies under the aegis of the Department. The section also has responsibility for disability policy, libraries and the Cobh landslide capital programme.

Local Government Finance Section aims to:

- maintain modern, flexible and relevant policy, legislative and regulatory framework for local authority finance function;
- ensure adequate central funding to local authorities via the Local Government Fund;
- promote and facilitate efficiency/value for money in local authorities;
- develop and foster best practice in financial planning and management in local authorities;
- ensure equitable distribution of general purpose grants;
- effectively manage the Local Government Fund;
- effectively monitor financial position of local authorities; and
- ensure due account is taken of impact of government policies on local authority finances.

Local Property Tax Section:

provides policy and administrative support to the Government on the development and implementation of the proposed Local Property Tax. The section also deals with policy and administration matters relating to the Non Principal Private Residence (NPPR) charge and the Household charge.

Planning and Housing Division**Planning and Housing (Finance and Policy Development) Section**

is responsible for developing and maintaining an up-to-date and appropriate policy and legislative framework for the planning system in Ireland.

Forward Planning Unit's

main area of responsibility is the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2020, a national strategic planning framework.

Development Management/Legislation Unit provides the essential legislative framework and policy guidance to local planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála and seeks to minimise the regulatory burden and cost of the system.

Urban Policy and Enforcement Unit

is responsible for policy concerning urban development, planning enforcement, compulsory land acquisition legislation, input to EU/international work programmes on urban development/urban environment including ESPON and URBACT. The Unit is also responsible for developing a Development Contributions policy framework to support economic recovery and jobs and for interaction with An Bord Pleanála to support its efficient and effective operation, improve performance and the achievement of its policy objectives. The section also deals with the Derelict Sites legislation.

Planning Inspectorate Section:

provides professional advice and technical support.

Social Housing Section:

has the primary role of managing an integrated current investment programme for social housing. The section also deals with the implementation of the Social Housing Reform Agenda, the land aggregation scheme, the transfer of rent supplement from the Department of Social Protection to housing authorities and the tenant and incremental purchase of local authority dwellings.

Social Inclusion Unit:

- develops and implements policies to address specific housing needs, including through the development of effective inter agency responses, where there is a care or social dimension to the housing supports required.
- coordinates, manages and reports on all Government expenditure in the housing sector.

The *Homeless Unit* promotes and oversees the development and implementation of policy, programmes and action to address homelessness and related accommodation needs.

Social Housing Investment Programme (Operational):

- manages the national maintenance and improvement programme for the local authority housing stock, including the provision of limited new supply under the construction and acquisition programmes; and
- manages and implements a programme of physical, social and economic regeneration for run-down local authority estates and city flat complexes.
- implements a programme of private housing grants and supports.

The *Traveller Accommodation Unit*, within the Section, aims to maintain an effective policy and legislative framework and oversight of the implementation of effective traveller accommodation programmes.

Housing Regulation, Co-ordination and Statistics Section:

is responsible for developing and maintaining an up-to-date and appropriate policy and legislative framework for the housing sector and the implementation of Government's housing policy statement.

The section is also responsible for the:

- The development and regulation of the rented residential sector;
- The management of a Review of Part V of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2012; and
- The collation and publication of timely and relevant statistical data relating to the planning and housing sectors.

Architecture / Building Standards Section:

- provides technical/professional advice and a strong and evolving building code in support of quality construction, sustainable development and compliance with relevant EU requirements; and
- assesses and advises on capital works projects.

Finance and Central Services Division

Personnel and Accommodation Section:

aims to make the Department a great place in which to work by:

- providing appropriate staffing resources;
- providing active advice and support to managers and staff;
- following best practice in dealing with staffing matters;
- leading the implementation of the Department's Human Resources strategy;
- assisting with staff learning and development;
- delivering and managing the needs for accommodation and other facilities within the Department's office portfolio; and
- monitoring and controlling budgets across a diverse range of the Department's administrative subheads.

Environmental Radiation Policy and Departmental Strategy Section:

is responsible for promoting and progressing all aspects of Government policy in relation to nuclear safety and radiological protection.

Departmental Strategy Unit:

deals with strategic planning and reporting; statutory obligations under the Official Languages Act; processing freedom of information (FOI) requests and access to information on the environment (AIE) requests and complaints from the Office of the Ombudsman.

Departmental Finance and Accounts Section:

is involved in implementing a range of strategies connected with the resourcing and managing the Department. In particular, the section aims to secure the necessary funding through the annual estimates process and monitors expenditure. The *Accounts Unit* manages the accounting function for the Department, the Environment Fund and the Local Government Fund to ensure that it operates effectively to safeguard public funds, deals promptly with payment and receipt transactions and provides relevant and up-to-date management information. The Unit also prepares the Appropriation Account for the Department and the annual accounts for both the Environment and Local Government Funds.

The *Value for Money (VFM) Unit* plays a coordinating role in areas such as VFM, Capital Appraisal, consultancies, EU/IMF reporting, EU Funding and the Public Private Partnership (PPP) agenda. The *Management Information Framework (MIF) Unit* is responsible for maintaining, supporting and developing the Oracle Financial Management System (FMS). The Unit also manages the Fixed Asset Register for the Department and is responsible for the Department's asset policies and procedures.

Legal Office:

provides legal advice to the Ministers and staff of the Department.

Franchise Section:

is responsible for developing policy, legislation and systems as key elements of electoral reform. The section is also responsible for overseeing a modern, efficient, accessible and fair electoral system.

National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management:

with its Management Board and Consultative Committee, develops national policy and strategies, implemented in the main through the fire authorities, for keeping communities safe from fire and other emergencies. The Directorate also acts as the focus for discharging the Department's role as "Lead Government Department" for 10 significant emergency scenarios, whereby it co-ordinates across the full range of Government Departments, Specialist Agencies, Principal Response Agencies and others to facilitate the management of emergency/crisis response and recovery in Ireland.

In addition, the **Internal Audit Unit** is responsible for giving assurance to the Accounting Officer on the existence, adequacy and effectiveness of the Department's internal control systems.

Chapter 3 Summary of Irish Language Services and Improvements planned for 2013-2016

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government is committed to providing quality services in Irish and/or bilingually to its customers. This chapter sets out the measures which the Department will undertake over the next three years in order to build on the progress that was made with respect to the development of bilingual services over the period of the previous Schemes.

3.1 Services that the Department provides bilingually

Generally, the Department does not provide services directly to the public apart from the following sections or divisions which currently provide, and will continue to provide, a bilingual service to members of the public, in the language of the customer's choosing:

- Social Housing Investment Programme (Operational) Section;
- Community and Voluntary Supports and Programmes Section;
- Local and Community Development Programme Section and
- Met Éireann.

In relation to all other areas of the Department, arrangements have been made to ensure that, where Divisions do not have a member of staff proficient in Irish, or where such a person is not available, a designated member of staff from another Division will provide a service in the language of the customer's choosing. These arrangements will continue during the course of the third Scheme.

3.2 Means of communicating with the Public / Information to the Public

3.2.1 Customer Service

The Department is in the process of preparing a new **Customer Service Action Plan (CSAP)** and **Customer Charter** for the period to end 2014. The new Charter will continue to reflect the principles of Quality Customer Service and, in this way, ensure that persons who wish to conduct their business in Irish are facilitated. Both documents will continue to promote the profile of the Irish language in the Department by giving more prominence to the Irish language text. In addition, a short leaflet setting out the services available in Irish in the Department is being reviewed and updated and will be available at our Reception desks and on our website shortly and used as a means of promoting awareness of the specific services available. **[From publication of new CSAP]**

3.2.2 Departmental Websites and Computer Systems

- (i) In addition to the provision of all static content, the Department will continue to build on the amount of Irish language content available on its website www.comhshaol.ie. The Department will continue to ensure that all publications, including information leaflets and brochures, that are produced in Irish or bilingually, will continue to be made available on the Irish version of the website at the same time as the English version. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**

- (ii) The Department will continue to work progressively towards making static content at other websites for which it has responsibility available in Irish. In particular, the focus will be on websites that increase public awareness on important environmental issues and charges for local services: www.tidytowns.ie; protectourwater.ie; www.nppr.ie; www.householdcharge.ie and www.met.ie. The Department will continue to have Irish versions of the static content of these sites maintained and available throughout the period of this Scheme. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**
- (iii) The Department will also continue to ensure that the static content on all new websites developed by it or on its behalf is made available bilingually. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**
- (iv) All new online interactive services (i.e. services which enable members of the public to make applications, receive benefits or make payments) developed over the course of this Scheme will be made available simultaneously in Irish and English. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**
- (v) The Department will continue to ensure that new software and computer systems developed by the Department or on its behalf, which require information in relation to members of the public to be inputted, for example names and addresses, will be Irish language compliant. The Department will also make bodies under its aegis (in particular, the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) which assists local authorities in the development of certain ICT solutions) aware of commitments in this regard. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**
- (vi) The Department will continue to ensure that all ICT developments adhere to statutory Irish language obligations. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme].**

3.2.3 Speeches

Speeches or statements, given by Ministers in the Oireachtas or elsewhere, as well as speeches made by senior officials will continue to be made available in the language(s) in which they are delivered.

3.2.4 Correspondence

In addition to fulfilling its legal obligation to reply in Irish to correspondence received in Irish, the Department will strive to initiate correspondence in Irish with those who are known to prefer correspondence in Irish. Staff will continue to be instructed to maintain a record of such organisations with a view to fulfilling this commitment. This information will be updated on a regular basis on the Department's intranet. Standard messages on the Department's email, such as disclaimers of responsibility, will be in both Irish and English. Staff will continue to be encouraged to provide automatic 'Out of Office' replies in Irish and English. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**

3.2.5 Official Invitations

The Department will continue to ensure that invitations to official functions hosted by the Minister or Ministers of State are printed bilingually. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**

3.2.6 Information Leaflets / Application Forms / Posters

The Department produces a number of leaflets, posters and application forms of general public interest. The Department will continue to ensure that all commonly used application forms, posters and leaflets e.g. in relation to voting, waste management, community and public awareness campaigns, will be produced bilingually under the one cover. Where this is not feasible because of the nature, size, or layout of the material, a separate Irish and English version will be provided. In such instances, the Irish version will be made available in the same manner as the English version. Where leaflets, application forms and posters are made available on the Department's website, the Irish version will be made available at the same time as the English version. The Department specifically undertakes to have the Customer Service Charter and information leaflet on services available in English and Irish made available bilingually under the one cover. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**

3.2.7 Publications

A broad range of publications are produced by the various policy areas of the Department. The Department undertakes to continue to provide bilingual versions of core publications (major policy statements, strategies etc.) preferably within the same cover (either hard copy or electronic publications). However, where the length of any bilingual publication would reduce its effectiveness or involve excessive additional cost, separate Irish and English language versions will be provided. In this regard, each will contain a statement that a version is available in the other language. It is not the intention to publish bilingually large documents which are of a technical nature or have a small circulation. **[From commencement of new Scheme]**

3.2.8 Oral announcements / Telephone communications with the public

In line with the principles of Quality Customer Service, the Department will continue to ensure that receptionists and switchboard operators, who are the first point of contact with the public:

- will give the name of the Department in Irish and English;
- are familiar with basic greetings in Irish;
- can put members of the public in contact without delay with whatever offices or officer is responsible for offering the service required through Irish.

Individual staff members will continue to be encouraged to provide voicemail box messages bilingually, where possible. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**

3.2.9 Press Releases

The Department will produce and issue bilingually 25% of all press releases throughout the period of the Scheme. In choosing which press releases are to be issued bilingually, the Department will ensure that priority is given to press releases involved with Irish language or Gaeltacht affairs, with particular attention to community matters, as well as pre-planned announcements of significant national importance. All such press releases will be issued to the Irish language media in particular. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**

The bilingual version of the press release will also continue to be made available on the Department's website.

3.2.10 Local Government

The Department will continue to supply local authorities in bilingual format, circulars and any associated forms which are used directly by local authority staff to provide services to members of the public. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**

3.2.11 Public Meetings Policy

The Department conducts the majority of its public meetings in the English language only. However, it is the policy of this Department that, when warranted, staff proficient in Irish will continue to be provided for meetings in Gaeltacht areas and/or when meeting Irish language organisations/groups where sufficient notice is given. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**

3.2.12 Service to Gaeltacht areas

The Department undertakes to continue with the provision of a service through Irish to members of the public in Gaeltacht areas over the lifetime of the Scheme. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**

3.2.13 Gaeltacht Placenames

The official Placenames of Gaeltacht areas, as declared by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht will continue to be used by the Department. Official Irish language versions of placenames, both inside and outside the Gaeltacht, are available on www.logainm.ie - a website developed with funding from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

3.3 Improving the Department's Irish Language Capability

3.3.1 Recruitment & Placement

The following measures will be put in place, subject to the constraints governing staff recruitment and placement, 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:

- As part of its recruitment policy, the Department, in co-operation with the Public Appointments Service, will continue to publicly advertise competitions for staff to work through Irish (especially, to serve Gaeltacht communities), when suitable people, identified as needing Irish to perform the role, are not available through general entry level competitions.
- Appropriate placement of staff with proficiency in Irish will continue to be implemented throughout the Department, in particular to serve Gaeltacht areas. Complementing this, staff with a working knowledge of Irish will be appropriately placed across the various divisions to support the commitments set out in this Scheme.
- Departmental interviews through Irish or English will continue to be available to staff, subject to advance notice by interviewees of their language choice. This option will not apply however, where Irish is a particular requirement for the post in question.

3.3.2 Training & Development

In its commitment to provide appropriate training and development for all staff, the Department will continue to assess the Irish language skills of new recruits to the Department prior to their arrival and, where possible, assign them to Sections where their Irish language skills might best be used. In addition, the Department will:

- Continue to seek volunteers to provide Irish language services across the Department where the requirement to provide services through the medium of Irish may arise. Such staff are identified by an asterisk on internal telephone lists. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**
- Continue to assess all courses on a regular basis, including Irish language courses, to ascertain how effectively they meet the Department's needs. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**
- Continue to include language awareness as part of both Induction and Customer Service training courses, to ensure that staff understand their bilingual obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003. **[From the beginning of new Scheme]**
- Continue to provide Irish language classes focused on customer service needs for those sections that interface most with customers, and facilitate staff

attending Irish language classes during office hours. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**

- Continue to offer advice, and in certain circumstances financial assistance, to staff in relation to the range of high-quality Irish language classes available outside office hours. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**
- A one day Training course will continue to be made available each year, and / or subject to demand, to all reception staff /telephonists and Service Officers to increase their awareness of basic greetings and knowledge of Irish. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**

3.3.3 Language resources

The Department will continue to provide all staff with easy access to information and language resources, e.g. dictionaries, both in hard copy, where requested, and in electronic format, advice on written Irish and lists of common phrases etc. The use of online resources such as spellcheckers, www.focal.ie and www.foclóir.ie will be actively promoted. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**

3.3.4 Translation Services

The Department will continue to make available to staff a list of all companies and individuals providing translation services. Detailed guidance and advice on the procedures and best practices to be followed in the engagement and facilitation of these services will also be provided to staff. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**

3.3.5 Seachtain na Gaeilge

The Department is committed to promoting cultural initiatives which support and encourage the use of the Irish language. In this way, the Department will continue to support activities organised during *Seachtain na Gaeilge* over the period of this Scheme. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**

3.3.6 Internal Communication

The Department will continue to encourage staff to submit articles in the Irish language for inclusion in the internal staff magazine *Environment Matters* with the aim that *at least one* article is published in Irish in each edition. In addition, the 'Weekly Wrap' – the Department's weekly electronic newsletter – and the Intranet will continue to be used to provide Irish language related information. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**

Chapter 4 Monitoring & Revision

The Senior Management Group (MAC) within this Department will keep the effective operation of the Scheme under review while ongoing monitoring and annual assessment of the implementation of the Scheme will be undertaken by the Departmental Strategy Unit. A report on the results of these assessments will be presented to MAC **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**

Each section of the Department will be required to reflect the commitments of this Irish Language Scheme in the Annual Business Plan for that Section. The day-to-day monitoring function will be carried out primarily by line managers in each of the Sections who are responsible for the implementation of the Scheme within their own areas.

An annual review of the progress made with regard to the implementation of the Scheme will be undertaken. In order to assess this progress, information will be collected annually on:

- policies or initiatives that have promoted the use of Irish;
- materials published in whole or in part in Irish;
- the incidence and nature of any complaints and suggestions relating to the provision of services in Irish by the Department;
- progress against each of the commitments set out in the Scheme;
- the level of demand for services through Irish.

The Department will continue to consider any additional measures that are necessary to improve the level of service provided by the organisation in the light of demand and arising from the annual assessment of progress.

In addition, a report of the measures implemented under the Scheme will be included in the Department's Annual Report.

Chapter 5 Publicising of Agreed Scheme

Staff have been informed of their responsibilities in respect of the Official Languages Act 2003 and detailed guidance and instructions have been made available to those who may need to implement Irish Language measures. Staff will continue to be made aware of their responsibilities under the Scheme through a variety of means e.g;

- Office Notices;
- Information on the Department's intranet e.g. within the 'Weekly Wrap' (weekly electronic newsletter);
- articles in *Environment Matters* (Department's internal magazine);
- inclusion of information on the Department's Irish language commitments in the Department's Induction and Customer Service training.

The contents of this Scheme, along with its commitments and provisions, will be made available to the general public by means of:-

- Circulation to appropriate agencies and public bodies;
- Prominence on the Department's website;
- Prominence in the Department's Quality Customer Charter and Quality Customer Service Action Plan;
- Short leaflet setting out services available in Irish to be made available at reception desks.

In addition to these measures, the Department will continue to take every opportunity in its day-to-day interactions with customers to promote and publicise the services it provides through Irish, including by:

- directly informing customers on a pro-active basis of the option of dealing with the Department through Irish, for example, by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the Irish language services that are available and also by prominently listing these on the Department's website;
- including footnotes on selected guidelines, leaflets, and applications forms explaining that these documents are also available in Irish (in cases where bilingual printed material is not produced under a single cover); and
- including notes in publications and advertisements that the Department provides services through Irish and, accordingly, welcomes customers who wish to deal with it in Irish, according to the commitments in its agreed Scheme.

A copy of this Scheme has also been forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla and to those who made submissions to the Department in relation to the development of this Third Scheme.

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