

**Mayo County Council**

**Language Scheme**

**2019 -2022**

**Under Section 15 of the Official Languages  
Act 2003**

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## **Section 1**

### **1.1 Introduction and Background**

This Scheme was prepared in accordance with Section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003 by Mayo County Council. This is the third scheme prepared by Mayo County Council.

Section 15 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 for 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.

Mayo County Council recognises that our customers and the public have the right to choose to do business with us in Irish or English whichever is their preferred language and that they will be facilitated in their dealings with us. One of the main objectives of this Language Scheme is to ensure higher standards of public services are made available through the Irish Language

### **1.2 Irish language in County Mayo**

County Mayo is the third largest county geographically in the country, comprising of 3 Gaeltacht areas, a number of Island Communities and 1,168 kms of coastline and a population of 130,425. Of this population, 7.70% reside in the county's three Gaeltacht areas Acaill, Iorras and Tuar Mhic Éadaigh. 43.90% of the County's population can speak Irish.

Based on the 2018 Statistics from Education.ie there are 6 Naíonraí, 23 Primary and 3 Secondary Schools situated in the Gaeltacht areas of Mayo and 4 Gaelscoileanna and 6 Naíonraí outside of the Gaeltacht areas. There are also a number of enterprises and festivals operating through Irish within the County; Scoil Acla, Coláiste Uisce, Ceol na Locha, Coláiste Mhuigh Eo, Coláiste Néifinn, Coláiste Acla etc.

Mayo has a vibrant Irish speaking community, which supports the activities of Irish Language and Cultural Organisations in the county including Coiste Forbartha Thuar Mhic Éadaigh, Comhar Dún Chaocháin, Comhar Deirbhile, Comhlacht Forbartha Áitiúil Acla, Conradh na Gaeilge, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Gnó Mhaigh Eo.

The success of these organisations is testimony to the interest of the public in the Irish language and their efforts to keep the language strong in County Mayo, efforts which Mayo County Council intends to develop and support.

Mayo County Council is aware of the significant challenges that exist to the sustainability of Irish as a community language in the Mayo Gaeltacht, and is committed to the protection and development of the Gaeltacht.

### **1.3 Preparation of the Language Scheme**

This Scheme was prepared having regard to the Guidelines under Section 12 of the Official Languages Act 2003 issued by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Mayo County Council published a notice under Section 15 of the Act inviting submissions from any interested parties on Tuairisc.ie and to their external database by email in relation to the preparation of the draft Scheme. Mayo County Council undertook an internal survey of the staff on their proficiency and willingness to deal with clients through the medium of Irish.

Mayo County Council is extremely grateful to each person and organisation that sent in a submission and made the effort to contribute to the preparation of this Scheme the contents of which have been noted.

### **1.4 Content of the Language Scheme**

The primary objective of the Act is to ensure a better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. This scheme builds on the progress achieved across the organisation during the implementation of the last Scheme. It sets out a commitment on behalf of Mayo County Council and its staff to develop the extent to which services are currently available through Irish and it identifies areas for future enhancement.

### **1.5 Commencement Date of the Language Scheme**

This Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and will commence with effect from 18 February 2019 and shall remain in force for a period of three 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.

### **1.6 An Overview of Mayo County Council**

Mayo County Council provides the range of services outlined below. The Chief Executive is responsible for the administration of Mayo County Council.

#### ***Mission Statement***

***"Promote the well-being and quality of life of our citizens and communities in Mayo and to enhance the attractiveness of the County as a place in which to live, work, visit, invest in and enjoy".***

#### ***Vision***

***"A County that is Sustainable, Inclusive, Prosperous and Proud".***

Mayo County Council provides a variety of services which influence the life of every citizen in the county. The services provided by Mayo County Council can be broken down into eight programme groups.

- Housing and Building
- Road Transportation and Safety
- Water Services
- Development Management
- Environmental Services
- Recreation and Amenity
- Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare
- Miscellaneous Services

### **1.7 Customers and Clients**

The Council's customer base is primarily the population of County Mayo which in 2016 amounted to 130,425. Of this population, 7.70% reside in the county's three Gaeltacht areas; Acaill, Iorras and Tuar Mhic Éadaigh. 43.90 % of the County's population can speak Irish.

The Council also work and liaise with the following groups and organisations:

- The Minister and Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government
- The Minister and Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- Other Government Departments and Ministerial Offices
- Local community groups
- Údarás na Gaeltachta
- Other State Agencies
- Social Partners
- Other Local & Regional Authorities
- Organisations of the European Union
- LEADER Groups
- Private Sector Service Providers
- Local Businesses

### **1.8 Assessment of services currently available through Irish**

This third scheme further develops the extent to which services are currently available through Irish. Areas for future enhancement of the service provided by Mayo County Council are identified in the body 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 the Council continues to meet this demand in a proactive, planned and coherent way. Mayo County Council will continue to actively promote the use of the Irish language within the organisation, endeavour to increase demand for its

services through Irish and monitor the number of queries/requests for services through Irish.

- The Customer Care Charter adopted by Mayo Co. Council on December 2014 was an important reference source in the preparation of this scheme. Mayo County Council Customer Care Charter outlines how the organisation as a whole deals with the public and it also outlines the services the public can expect to get.
- The staff are another very important factor in this process and the preparation of this scheme involved a staff survey. The availability of services through Irish from Mayo County Council is hugely dependent on broad staff participation.
- In the staff survey undertaken by Mayo County Council 69% of the respondents indicated that they would like to have the opportunity to provide services through Irish. Considering that 7.70% of the County's population live within the Gaeltacht boundaries the demand for services through Irish is quite low based on the Staff Survey. On submissions received from organisations there needs to be increased awareness amongst the public that services are available through Irish, such increased awareness will, in time, increase the uptake of services provided through Irish.
- Acht na Gaeltachta 2012 requires that each Gaeltacht county prepares an Irish Language Plan, the purpose of which is to provide for and encourage the increased use of the Irish language in family, educational, public, social, recreational and commercial life. The Mayo Gaeltacht has been divided into 3 separate language planning areas (i) Maigh Eo Thuaidh (Iorras) (ii) Maigh Eo Thiar (Acaill) (iii) Tuar Mhic Éadaigh has been coupled with Dúiche Sheoigheach i gCo. na Gaillimhe. Language Plans are currently being developed by communities in the Gaeltacht areas in Mayo. The Gaeltacht has a significant cultural and economic impact on the towns which serve it. Similarly, those towns have a significant impact on the Gaeltacht itself. Under the Gaeltacht Act 2012, Gaeltacht Service Towns are defined as those towns situated in or adjacent to Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas and which have a significant role in providing public services, recreational, social and commercial facilities for those areas. On foot of a consultation process conducted over the summer of 2014, the following towns have been selected as possible Gaeltacht Service Towns in Mayo - Béal an Mhuirthead (Belmullet), Castlebar and Ballinrobe. On the 9 July 2018 The Government Chief Whip and Minister of State for the Irish Language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands, Joe McHugh TD, announced that it is proposed to prepare and implement a comprehensive language plan for Castlebar. These provide an indication of the level of support required by the Gaeltachtaí from Mayo County Council.

## **Section 2**

### **Provision of Council Services /Activities**

The main objective of this Scheme is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish.

#### **2.1 Communication with the Public**

These methods of communication include:

- Brochures, Information Leaflets & Application Forms
- Publications
- Press Releases
- Website
- Advertisements
- Social Media

#### **2.2 Written Documentation**

##### **2.2.1 Brochures, Information Leaflets & Application Forms**

- Information leaflets and application forms are issued fully bilingually within the one cover except where it is not feasible because of the nature, size or layout of the material.
- In the case where it is not feasible because of the nature, size or layout of the material, to print existing leaflets and application forms bilingually a statement will be included on the English version, indicating that an Irish version is available.
- Application forms and associated documentation will continue to be made available in both official languages for submission or download from our website.

In the case of brochures, information leaflets and application forms issued by another body, bilingual forms will be actively requested.

##### **2.2.2 Publications**

- Documents which are available in both Irish and English, are produced within the same cover, except where it is not feasible, because of the nature, size or layout of the material.
- Annual Reports, Budget Statements, Plans and Policy Documents will generally be published as PDF files issued on the internet or on CD ROM in order to avoid unnecessary printing costs, and to facilitate the simultaneous issue of both the Irish and English versions within the same cover.

### 2.2.3 Press releases

- Press releases relating to events in the Gaeltacht areas of Co. Mayo and/ or the Irish Language Communities are produced bilingually and are circulated to the Irish language and English language media. Every effort will be made to do this simultaneously.
- All other Press Releases, are and will continue to be available bilingually.

### 2.2.4 Website

- Building on our previous scheme approximately 95% of the static content of [www.mayococo.ie](http://www.mayococo.ie) is bilingual. Certain material, such as technical documents etc, will be available in English only on the website. Presentations, speeches, etc., may be published in the language in which they were given.
- The website address [www.cocomhaigheo.ie](http://www.cocomhaigheo.ie) is now established and linked to the Irish language version of Mayo County Council's homepage.
- To meet Accessibility guidelines, accessible versions of some documents will be available in single-language versions only to facilitate screenreaders.

### 2.2.5 Advertisements

- While Mayo County Council is not obliged to publish advertisements bilingually, we will continue to publish some advertisements bilingually where it is considered appropriate.
- In other cases, a statement may be included indicating that Mayo County Council welcomes correspondence through Irish - "cuirimid fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge."

## 2.3 Oral Communication

### 2.3.1 Reception/Switchboard

- Receptionists / Switchboard Operators are the first points of contact with the public. It is the policy of Mayo County Council to ensure that standard Quality Customer Service (QCS) practice apply in this area, which is that:
  - reception/switchboard staff are able to give the name of the Council in Irish, and that
  - they are at least familiar with basic greetings in Irish. Arrangements are in place to ensure that members of the public can be put in touch, without delay, with the office or officer responsible for offering the required service through Irish, where available.
- The main reception desks and the individual public counters in each of the sections will display notices inviting the public to use Irish and the names of staff in each section that are willing and able to provide a service in Irish, will be available on the intranet.

### **2.3.2 Public meetings**

- Efforts have been made to introduce an element of bilingualism into all Council meetings and public meetings throughout the county.
- Contributions in Irish or English will be welcome at meetings with the public, organised by the Council.
- All public events incorporate an element of bilingualism into the proceedings as part of Mayo County Council's effort to positively promote Irish in the community.
- An authorised spokesperson is available to give statements and interviews (where appropriate) to the Irish language media.

## **Section 3**

### **Summary of Services/Activities provided by Sections**

This section contains details of services currently available through Irish and English in the different sections and offices of Mayo County Council.

### **3.1 Operating Language of Each Section**

#### **3.1.1 Sections Providing Services in Irish**

##### Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge

- Mayo County Council has an established Oifig na Gaeilge which consists of a full-time Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge and support services.
- The role of the Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge is to foster and promote the use of Irish in County Mayo and to develop Mayo County Council's bilingual policy, thereby ensuring that the public has the choice of doing business with the Council in either of the two official languages.
- The Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge works through the Irish language and provides all services in Irish except where a request is made for a service through English.
- Since the commencement of the second language scheme the Irish Office of Mayo County Council has introduced new initiatives in promoting Irish with the General Public. Organising many events in conjunction with Conradh na Gaeilge during Seachtain

na Gaeilge. E.g. Family Fun day trí Ghaeilge, Pop-up Gaeltachts, Parkruns, Celebration of Gaeltachtaí Mhaigh Eo on Mayo Day to name but a few.

- The relationship between Mayo and its diaspora has a rich and deep history. In recent years, Mayo County Council has been actively reaching out and connecting with its global diaspora to participate in the celebration and development of Mayo. For the past number of years Mayo County Council has partnered with Cumann na Gaeltachta in Canada to offer a Gaeltacht Immersion Week at the North American Gaeltacht in the Tamworth/Erinsville area in Ontario.
- A number of sections/offices are now in a position to provide a service through Irish, it is hoped to increase this number by the end of the Scheme. It is our intention that every office and library located in The Gaeltacht will be working through the medium of Irish by the end of this Scheme.
- It is our intention to offer a bilingual service in each section and office of Mayo County Council during the lifetime of this Scheme.

### **3.1.2 Sections Providing Services Bilingually**

- The Area Office and Library in Belmullet, and the Library in Achill are now able to provide services bilingually.

### **3.1.3 Sections providing Services through English only**

- Most Sections provide their services through the English language only. Mayo County Council's commitments in relation to enhancing the range and level of services available bilingually, during the lifetime of this Scheme, are set out in Section 4 of the Scheme.

## **Section 4**

### **Enhancement of Services Provided Bilingually**

#### **4.1 General Policy**

Mayo County Council is committed to securing an adequate number of staff capable of providing a service through Irish in all the sections of the Council that deal regularly with the public.

The primary objective will be to create and foster an atmosphere of bilingualism within all sections of the Council so that Irish speaking customers feel welcome and are encouraged to do their business in Irish and so that both customers and staff feel comfortable in conducting their business through the Irish language.

- As per first and second scheme Mayo County Council will ensure that appropriate structures are in place so that a fully bilingual counter service will be available throughout the Council.

#### **4.1.1 Public Awareness**

Mayo County Council published a notice under Section 15 of the Act inviting submissions from any interested parties on [Tuairisc.ie](http://Tuairisc.ie) and to their external database by email in relation to the preparation of the draft Scheme.

It is proposed to promote the demand for an Irish language service in the various sections by increasing public awareness of the availability of these services.

- Appropriate signage will be displayed at public counters, reception areas etc., indicating that Irish language services are available.
- A statement will be included in the Council's email disclaimer indicating that the Council welcomes correspondence through Irish - "cuirimid fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge"
- A statement will be included on application forms (in cases where bilingual printed material has not been produced under a single cover) indicating that the application form is also available in Irish.
- The availability of various services available through Irish will be highlighted on our website [cocomhaigheo.ie](http://cocomhaigheo.ie).
- As there may be a reticence on the part of Irish speakers to request services through Irish, often due to unfamiliarity with terminology, Mayo County Council will ensure that the Irish used in publications is legible and easily understood while adhering to the Official Standard regarding spelling and grammar.

#### **4.1.2 Staff Awareness**

In the staff survey undertaken by Mayo County Council 69% of the respondents indicated that they would like to have the opportunity to provide services through Irish. 80% of staff surveyed indicated that they would like to attend further Irish language classes. It is hoped that with appropriate training and support, and an increased awareness of the provisions of the Language Scheme, will lead to an increase in the provision of Irish language services in Mayo County Council.

- The agreed scheme will be circulated amongst the management and staff of Mayo County Council and published on the intranet. An Information seminar will be organised if required.
- Directorates/Sections will ensure that all members of staff are made aware of the requirements and implications of the Scheme

## **4.2 Information Technology**

Extensive and growing use is made of the Internet in Mayo County Council's dealings with its customers.

- The standard disclaimer on e-mail correspondence is bilingual. A statement indicating that Mayo County Council welcomes correspondence through Irish will be included in the disclaimer - "cuirimid fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge"
- Mayo County Council will seek to ensure that any new computer software being purchased is fully capable of handling the Irish language.
- The email addresses [eolas@mayococo.ie](mailto:eolas@mayococo.ie) and [gaeilge@mayococo.ie](mailto:gaeilge@mayococo.ie) have been added to the website as part of a proactive approach to encouraging and enabling customers to contact Mayo County Council through Irish. The Council will ensure that such queries are addressed promptly in the same manner as English language queries.
- New interactive systems for use by the general public are language compliant. Existing systems will be upgraded to be language compliant when the next upgrading of the systems takes place.

## **4.3 Recruitment & Placement**

The Human Resources Section will address the issue of the Irish language in relation to recruitment, training and management of staff.

- We will, in the context of our staff recruitment and mobility policies, have regard to proficiency in the Irish language (both written and oral) where such would facilitate the achievement of specific commitments made in the scheme.
- The requirements and obligations of each section in relation to being able to provide a high quality service through Irish are taken into account when placing or deploying staff within the organisation.

## **4.4 Training & Development**

It is a core strategic objective of Mayo County Council to develop a highly skilled, flexible and motivated workforce and elected council responsive to the changing environment in which we operate. The Council acknowledge the importance of having such a highly trained workforce to ensure efficient and effective delivery of service. If continued improvement is to be sustained,

Mayo County Council must develop the knowledge, skills and competencies of all staff to full potential.

In the light of The Official Languages Act and this Scheme, the Human Resources Section will:

- Continue to ensure that all staff and Councillors are given equal encouragement and opportunity to improve their Irish language skills through training and development courses, including training courses within normal working hours, to maximise attendance and relevance to their work.
- Since the commencement of our second language scheme Mayo County Council have engaged the services of Gaelchultúr giving staff the opportunity to undertake a part-time programme in Certificate in Professional Irish at various levels on the National Framework of Qualifications. To date 123 members of staff have completed and graduated with Certificates in Professional Irish.
- Continue to include language awareness as part of both induction and customer service training courses, so as to ensure that staff:
  - understand why Mayo County Council is developing an Irish Language Service Policy
  - understand the context and background to the policy; and
  - are fully informed about how the policy will affect their work.

#### **4.4.1 Language Support & Resources**

Mayo County Council will continue to seek and support those staff willing to provide Irish language services in relevant sections across the Council.

- Translation services will be provided to Mayo County Council.
- Provide all staff with easy access to information and language resources, e.g. dictionaries.
- Maintain the 'Gaeilge' section of the intranet as a support and resource for staff, with phrasebooks, terminology, template letters, invitations, faxes, forms etc.
- Promote the use of online resources such as tearma.ie, logainm.ie, focloir.ie etc. amongst its staff.
- Mayo County Council is committed to promoting cultural initiatives which support and encourage the use of the Irish language. It will explore opportunities to encourage the development of Irish language skills through informal, social activities, and the possibility of organising such activities in partnership with other state bodies/organisations operating in County Mayo.

- Information will be relayed to staff in relation to the range of Irish language/cultural events held in County Mayo.

#### **4.5 An Gaeltacht**

- The Gaeltacht areas of Acaill, Iorras and Tuar Mhic Éadaigh fall within the functional area of Mayo County Council. The Council recognises the special needs that the Gaeltacht areas have as centres of our linguistic heritage and culture.
- Mayo County Council is aware of the challenges that exist to the sustainability of Irish as a community language in the Mayo Gaeltacht and is committed to the protection and development of the Gaeltacht and this will continue to be a priority.
- In accordance with Section 13(e) of the Official Languages Act, 2003, Mayo County Council is committed to ensuring that the Irish Language will become the working language of all Mayo County Council offices located in the Gaeltacht by 2025.
- Public meetings organised in the Gaeltacht shall be in Irish with appropriate support for those who don't speak Irish.
- Information directed at the public in the Gaeltacht will continue to be available in Irish only, or in both English and Irish where appropriate. This includes brochures and leaflets, application forms, press releases, policy documents and website, where within the Council's control.
- The Placenames (Ceantair Ghaeltachta) Order 2004 is used by the Council for official purposes.

#### **4.6 Gaelscoileanna & other Irish Language and Gaeltacht Organisations**

Mayo County Council also recognises and acknowledges the particular linguistic preferences of the 6 naíonraí, 23 primary schools and 3 secondary schools that are situated in the Gaeltacht areas of County Mayo, the 4 Gaelscoileanna and 6 Naíonraí outside of the Gaeltacht areas, as well as other Irish Language and Gaeltacht organisations, businesses and groups operating throughout the county and nationally.

The provision of services in Irish to these particular bodies and groups will be prioritised over the lifetime of this scheme.

- Any dealings initiated with Irish language schools, Gaelscoileanna and other Irish speaking groups or organisations is in the Irish language only or bilingually, provision of an Irish language service to these institutions and organisations has been prioritised over the lifetime of the first scheme and this policy will be continued.
- Materials for schemes such as the *Junior Road Safety Officer Campaign*, and the *Green Schools Scheme*, which are administered by Mayo County Council, are now available bilingually.

## **Section 5**

### **Monitoring, Revision & Publicising of Agreed Scheme**

#### **5.1 Monitoring & Revision**

The Senior Management within Mayo County Council will keep the effective operation of this scheme under review.

- 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, with support from Oifig na Gaeilge, and will report on a regular basis to the relevant Director of Services.
- Details of progress will be published in Mayo County Council's Annual Report.
- It is our intention to record details of the number and types of requests through Irish received during the lifetime of this Scheme. By doing so, we can concentrate on improving our provision of service through Irish.

#### **5.2 Publicising of Agreed Scheme**

Details of the Scheme will be publicised in a variety of ways including the following:

- Official Launch of the Scheme;
- Publish the Scheme on Mayo County Council's Website
- A copy of this Scheme will be forwarded to Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga

The Irish language version is the original version of the scheme.