



Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City & County Council

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT 2003

LANGUAGE SCHEME

2015 - 2018

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

The Official Languages Act 2003 provides for the preparation by public bodies of a language scheme detailing the services which 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 currently provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

In accordance with section 14(3) of the Act, language schemes remain in force for a period of 3 years or until such time as a new scheme is confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, whichever is the later.

1.2 Preparation and Content of the Scheme

In the preparation of this scheme, due regard has been given to the Guidelines issued by the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht. In addition, there has been a comprehensive process of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

The **Waterford City & County Council** is guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on:

- the underlying level of demand for specific services in the Irish language,
- the importance of a proactive approach to the provision of such services, and
- the resources, including human and financial resources, and the capacity of the body concerned to develop or access the necessary language capability.

This scheme complements the principles of Quality Customer Service and our Customer Charter. It has been formulated with the intention of ensuring that all relevant obligations under the Official Languages Act by the **Waterford City & County Council** will be fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes.

The time and effort put in by all concerned in this process is acknowledged and appreciated.

1.3 Commencement date of the Scheme

This Scheme has been confirmed on **02 June 2015** by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It commences with effect from this date and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

Chapter 2: Overview of Waterford City and County Council

2.1 Mission and Objectives

Waterford City & County Council's mission is to make Waterford the best possible place for all its people and for those that wish to live, visit, work or invest here. We will seek to deliver all our services with honesty, openness and respect. We recognise that our services are delivered for people and through people and we will accordingly place respect for people as individuals and communities at the heart of the organisation. Notwithstanding pressure on resources we will aspire to quality and long term sustainability in all our services.

2.2 Main Functions

Economic Development; Environmental Services (including Beaches, Public Spaces, Dog & Horse Control); Local Authority Housing Provision and Maintenance; Roads & Transportation; Water Services (under a Public Services Agreement with Irish Water); Planning; Fire & Emergency Services; Tourism Development & Festivals; Library Services, Arts & Cultural Services (including Archives, Irish Language, Conservation and Heritage); Community Development; Motor Tax & Finance (Rates); Corporate Services (Council Meetings and Administration).

2.3 Key Services

Waterford City & County Council has eight key strategic priorities, as follows:

Economic – develop and implement an effective Economic Plan.

Tourism – Making Waterford a longer stay destination by developing and implementing an integrated branding and communications programme.

Primary Urban Centres – focus on regeneration and improvement in Waterford City, Dungarvan and Tramore and link these three urban centres by Greenway.

Environment – ensuring quality of access to our natural heritage and development of amenities in general.

Heritage & Culture – enhance and promote the natural heritage and cultural assets of Waterford, including the Gaeltacht.

People & Communities – develop and implement an effective Community Plan with increased engagement at all levels.

Our Services – aspire to deliver efficient, effective and equitable services through ambitious annual service plans with appropriate monitoring and reporting.

Communications – develop a Communications Strategy identifying key stakeholders and tools.

2.4 Customers and Clients

We aspire to speak with one voice for Waterford and all its people and be unified in our actions, service delivery and leadership of the City and County :-

- Members of the public, customers and community groups throughout Waterford City & County, including the Gaeltacht of An Rinn & An Sean Phobal
- Applicants for services under various schemes
- Government Departments, State Agencies and other public services
- Business community
- Other local authorities and regional authorities
- County Development Board structures and PPN committees
- Social partners, sectoral interests and Local Development Agencies
- Local and National Media

Chapter 3: Details of services currently being provided in English only or bilingually

Details of services currently being provided in English only or bilingually in Irish and English; **including services in Gaeltacht areas.**

Current Provision of Services		
Services (General)	In English only	Bilingually, in English and Irish
Irish Language Office		All services in Irish only or bilingual
Application Forms	Limited number	The majority are available bilingually
Brochures & information leaflets	English only	Some have small percentage of Irish
Major Policy Documents	Annual Report County & City Development Plans City Heritage Plan County & City Biodiversity Plans	Corporate Plan Arts Plan Customer Service Charter Budget & AFS Library Development Plan County Heritage Plan
Correspondence (letters and e-mails)		When correspondence is received in Irish, it is responded to in Irish
Press releases	Generally in English	All press releases issued by the Irish Office are issued bilingually
Website	English only	Small amount of Irish in Irish Services section of the site
IT systems	Generally in English	Agresso issues bilingual cheques and receipts. Systems such as Agresso and IReg and IPlan are capable of handling the Irish language in terms of names and addresses
Customer Services Desk	Waterford City – English speaking staff	Dungarvan – one Irish speaking staff member
Library Services	Central Library plus Brown’s Road, Portlaw, Tramore, Dunmore East, Tallow, Cappoquin & Kilmacthomas Branch Libraries	Lismore, Dungarvan & Ardkeen Branch Libraries
Arts Service		One of two Arts Officers is Irish speaking
Archive Service		The Archivist can provide a bilingual service

Museum of Treasures/Bishops' Palace		One Irish speaking staff member
Environment Office, Dungarvan		Two Irish speaking staff members work in this Department
Accounts Receivable, Dungarvan		One Irish speaking staff member works in this Department
Housing		One Irish speaking staff member each in Dungarvan & City offices
Motor Tax Office, Dungarvan		One Irish speaking staff member
Roads		One Irish speaking Engineer in each of the following offices: Comeragh Area Office, Dungarvan and Waterford City
Water Services		One Irish speaking staff member in Waterford City and two Irish speakers in Dungarvan Offices
Services in Gaeltacht Areas	In English only	Bilingually, in English and Irish
Waterford City & County Council does not have an office located in Gaeltacht na nDéise		Every effort is made to accommodate Irish speakers through the Council offices in Dungarvan, depending on the availability of Irish speaking staff at any given time
Working with local community development group, Comhlacht Forbartha na nDéise		Irish only service provided by the Council's Irish Officer, who sits on the board of Comhlacht Forbartha na nDéise

Chapter 4: Enhancing the provision of Irish Language Services

The provisions shaded in grey in the table below are mandatory requirements under the Official Languages Act 2003.

Means of communication with the public		Commitment	
Recorded Oral Announcements		<p>The following recorded oral announcements will be in Irish or bilingual:</p> <p>(a) Recorded oral announcements provided on the telephone when the offices of the public body are closed;</p> <p>(b) Recorded oral announcements transmitted by a public address system;</p> <p>(c) Recorded oral announcements created and transmitted by means of a computerised messaging system or a computerised telephone answering system.</p> <p>This provision relates to 'recorded' announcements rather than 'live announcements'.</p> <p>Where a Placenames Order is in force, a public body is required to use the Irish language version of the placename specified in that Order in recorded oral announcements made by it or on its behalf.</p>	Mandatory
Written Communication	Letters and Electronic Mail	All written communication will be responded to in the official language in which it was received.	Mandatory
	Stationery	Headings of stationery, including notepaper, compliment slips, fax cover sheets, file covers and other folders, labels and envelopes are provided in Irish or bilingually.	Mandatory
Signage	Signage	All signage placed by Waterford City & County Council or on its behalf must be in Irish or bilingually, in accordance with the regulations (S.I. No.391/2008).	Mandatory
Publications	Publications	Documents setting out public policy proposals, audited accounts or financial	Mandatory

		statements, annual reports and strategy statements will be published simultaneously in Irish and English.	
	Circulars/Mailshots	Where a public body communicates in writing or by electronic mail with the general public or a class of the general public for the purpose of furnishing information to the public or the class, the body shall ensure that the communication is in the Irish language or in the English and Irish languages.	Mandatory
An Ghaeltacht	Gaeltacht Placenames	The official placenames of Gaeltacht areas will be used by the public body in accordance with the legislation.	Mandatory

Waterford City and County Council will also undertake the following list of actions under each service.

Means of communication with the public		Commitment	Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3
Oral Communication	Reception	Customer Service Desk staff will be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish and will greet customers bilingually. We will ensure at least one member of staff in each of the Customer Care Desks in Dungarvan and Waterford City is proficient in the Irish language and able to deal with Customers through the medium of Irish. All staff will receive training on how to deal efficiently with a member of the public who wishes to conduct their business through Irish. Seeking services in Irish at reception will not cause any undue delay to the customer. Arrangements will be in place to put members of the public in touch speedily with the relevant official(s) responsible for providing the service required through Irish.	Yr 1
	Face to Face/Counter Service	In sections where there are public counters, the availability of staff members in that section who have Irish and are willing to conduct business with the public in Irish will be advertised clearly at the public counter. An up-to-date list of staff members who can	Yr 1

		provide a service through Irish will be made available to the public on our website and at the Customer Service Desks.	
	Switchboard	Customer Service Desk staff will give the name of the public body in Irish and English. Customer Care Desk staff will be trained on how to deal with callers who wish to do their business through Irish, including how to transfer them to Irish speakers in different sections as appropriate. A full list of Irish speakers in each section will be provided to the staff at the Customer Care Desks. Standard guidelines will be developed to deal with callers who wish to speak Irish and they will be distributed to the various sections.	Yr 1
	Telephone communications with the public	The new telephone system for the Council is to include a facility for recorded oral announcements in both Irish and English, with the customer being given the language choice at the start of the process. Members of staff who are willing to provide a bilingual service will have bilingual voicemail messages. Staff will be provided with guidance on handling telephone calls from Irish-speaking members of the general public.	Yr 1
	Recorded Oral Announcements	Nominated Irish speakers in the various sections will have their pre-recorded personal telephone greetings in bilingual format.	Yr 1
	Other	Invitations being issued by the Council will be bilingual, as will Councillors' meeting summonses.	Yr 1
	Information Leaflets/ Brochures	Certain information leaflets and brochures will be available in Irish or bilingually, for example brochures relating to the Gaeltacht/Irish language matters. New Information Leaflets or Brochures produced by Waterford City and County Council will contain an average of 20% Irish language text, the actual percentage to be determined on a case-by-case basis.	Yr 1, 2, 3
	Application Forms	There will be a bilingual or Irish version of the most commonly used application forms in	Yr 1

		each section made available to the public. The Irish version of application forms will be made available in the same outlets as the English version.	
	Other	Details of Councillors who are willing to do business with the public in Irish are published on the Council's website (http://www.waterfordcouncil.ie/en/Council/Your,Councillors/Tramore,-,Waterford,City,West/)	Yr 1
Media	Press Releases	10% of all press releases issued will be issued bilingually. The objective will be to issue this material simultaneously. All press releases pertaining to the Gaeltacht or Irish language issues will be issued simultaneously in Irish or bilingually.	Yr 1, 2, 3
	Media Spokespersons	We will provide and/or upskill a member of staff to liaise with the Irish language media. An Irish speaking spokesperson/s will be available for interviews with the Irish language media.	Yr 1, 2, 3
	Speeches	All Councillors will be encouraged to use some Irish at public engagements (as appropriate according to competency), and support will be provided to them to do so. The CEO will use some Irish at public engagements, and support will be provided to him to do so.	Yr 1, 2, 3
Information Technology	Email	We will publish a dedicated email address for queries in Irish on the website(s) of the public body. Standard email messages such as disclaimers, will be bilingual. It is intended to develop a common template for e-mail signatures to be rolled out to all staff by IT. This template will include bilingual versions of job titles and department headings for staff to use.	Yr 1
	Websites	The static material on the home page and the specified main pages on Waterford City & County Council's main website will be available in Irish. There will be a navigational link from a page in the English version of the website to the relevant page in the Irish version. A system will be devised and implemented in	Yr 2

		<p>order to ensure that the Irish version of material on the website corresponds with the English version.</p> <p>An Irish language page will be developed on the intranet and will include basic guidance regarding the provision of Irish language services and the availability of Irish language resources.</p>	Yr 1
	Computer Systems	<p>Any new IT system being introduced will have the ability to handle the Irish language and this requirement will be included in the tender document.</p> <p>The public body will continue to actively use technology to improve the provision of bilingual services.</p> <p>The Irish Language section of the public body's intranet will be expanded as a support and resource for staff.</p>	Yr 1, 2, 3
	Interactive Services	<p>Any online and interactive services that the public body itself develops will be made available bilingually.</p>	Yr 1, 2, 3
	Other	<p>A percentage of social media posts will be in the Irish language each week.</p> <p>Any social media posts relating to Gaeltacht/Irish language issues will be posted simultaneously in both Irish and English.</p> <p>The Irish language will be a part of all major Festivals and events being organised by the Council, both through its use in signage and publicity material and by the inclusion of Irish language/bilingual events and activities in various festival programmes.</p>	Yr 1
Gaeltacht	Meetings	<p>Where required, meetings held in the Gaeltacht will be conducted in Irish with simultaneous translation to English provided, as appropriate.</p> <p>Contributions in Irish or English will be welcome at public meetings organised by or on behalf of the public body.</p>	Yr 1
	Other	<p>Correspondence with the Gaeltacht community will be in Irish only or bilingual.</p> <p>Staff will adopt the practice that any correspondence being initiated with Gaeltacht organisations such as schools, local community groups etc, should be initiated in Irish.</p>	Yr 1

		<p>The Fire Services Primary School Fire Safety Programme will be delivered in Irish/bilingually to Gaelscoileanna and to Gaeltacht schools.</p> <p>Environment Department education programmes will be delivered in Irish/bilingually to Gaelscoileanna and to Gaeltacht schools.</p>	
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Chapter 5: Enhancing the Provision of Irish Language Services in Gaeltacht Areas

Enhancing the provision of Irish language services in Gaeltacht areas and ensuring that Irish becomes the working language in offices located in Gaeltacht areas by a certain date.

Commitments in Gaeltacht Areas

Description of services in Gaeltacht areas	Commitment	Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3
General	Waterford City & County Council recognises the importance and value of the Gaeltacht community of Co Waterford and will strive to support and protect its unique cultural and linguistic heritage in all Council activities.	Yr 1, 2, 3
Public meetings	Meetings held in the Gaeltacht will be conducted in Irish with simultaneous translation to English provided, as appropriate.	Yr 1, 2, 3
Contact with schools and other public organisations	Any correspondence being initiated with organisations such as schools, local community groups etc, will be initiated in Irish and continue in the language of choice of the organisation concerned.	Yr 1, 2, 3
Community Development	The Council will continue to work closely with Gaeltacht community organisations for the greater good of the local community, specifically by continuing to support the role of the Council's Irish Officer on the board of Comhlucht Forbartha na nDéise.	Yr 1, 2, 3
Roads maintenance	Signage to be in Irish only/bilingual.	Yr 1, 2, 3
Water Services	Signage to be in Irish only/bilingual.	Yr 1, 2, 3
Planning	Planning Applications will be processed and dealt with in Irish whenever requested.	Yr 1, 2, 3
Customer Service	Where available, Irish speaking members of the Council staff will deal with Gaeltacht customers in Irish as required.	Yr 1, 2, 3

Chapter 6: Improving Language Capability

6.1 Recruitment

The recruitment of staff with the appropriate level of competence in the Irish language in each area of work of Waterford City & County Council will be the primary means of optimising the availability of services through Irish. Our recruitment policy, which is subject to the framework of agreed national recruitment procedures, will have regard to the need to improve Irish language capability on an incremental basis.

All new staff will be provided with an induction pack containing a copy of our agreed scheme in order to ensure that they are made aware of our commitments under the legislation.

6.2 Training and Development

The Waterford City & County Council is committed to making available opportunities for staff to attend appropriately accredited Irish language training courses, as resources permit. All staff will be advised of facilities/opportunities to improve their competency in Irish.

		Commitment	Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3
Improving Irish Language Capability	Recruitment	New staff will be provided with an induction pack containing a copy of our agreed scheme.	Yr 1, 2, 3
	Training	<p>Opportunities to develop the Irish language competence of staff will be provided. Appropriate arrangements will be made for the provision of Irish language training and proficiency testing certification for staff in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support staff in maintaining and developing their proficiency in the Irish language, - enhance the capacity of staff to meet their Irish language obligations in the conduct of their duties, and - provide an accredited proficiency testing regime for staff. 	Yr 1, 2, 3
	Participation in language promotion activities /Provision of resources	Staff will be made aware of language resources such as: www.tearma.ie , www.focloir.ie , www.teanglann.ie and www.abair.ie , as well as WinGléacht,	Yr 1, 2, 3

		<p>the electronic version of the Ó Dónaill Irish-English dictionary.</p> <p>Our internal library will ensure that books and other materials in Irish are available as a resource to staff to improve their competence in the Irish language.</p> <p>Access to information on language resources will be facilitated through our intranet and other means.</p>	
	Other	<p>Compliance with our Language Scheme and Statutory Irish Language measures will be included as a Task for Revision in all staff members' Personal Development Plans under the new PMDS System</p>	Yr 2

6.3 Designated Irish Language Posts

The posts listed below have been designated as having an Irish language competency requirement. It is the intention that holders of these posts will have achieved specified accredited standards in the Irish language, commensurate with the responsibilities of the post. When designating these posts, particular consideration has been given to posts located in Gaeltacht areas and to posts located outside Gaeltacht areas but whose customer base consists largely of Gaeltacht and/or Irish language speaking communities.

Title of Post	Location	Gaeltacht/Irish speaking community served	Indication of standard of Irish required (choose from basic, intermediate or advanced)
Irish Language Development Officer	Dungarvan Offices & Waterford City Offices	Gaeltacht na nDéise – An Rinn & An Sean Phobal	Advanced
Clerical Officer, Customer Care Desk	Civic Offices, Dungarvan	Gaeltacht na nDéise – An Rinn & An Sean Phobal	Intermediate
Clerical Officer, Customer Care Desk	City Hall, Waterford City	Waterford City and East of the County	Intermediate

Chapter 7: Monitoring and Review

The implementation of the scheme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by the Corporate Services Section. The contact person for the scheme will be Máire Seosaimhín Breathnach, Oifigeach Gaeilge.

A formal system for monitoring requests for services through Irish will be available and recorded in our Annual Report.

Chapter 8: Publicising of Agreed Scheme

This scheme will be publicised both internally and externally, through a press release initially. A bilingual version of the scheme will be made available on our website and circulated to all staff and appropriate agencies. Other means to publicise the scheme may also be used.

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

- directly informing customers on a proactive basis of the option of conducting business 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 the agreed scheme will be forwarded to the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.

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