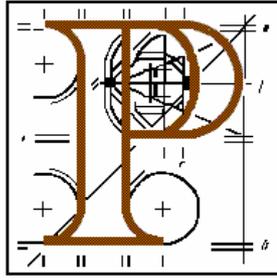


An Bord Pleanála



An Bord Pleanála Irish Language Scheme 2007 – 2010

under Section 11 of

the Official Languages Act 2003

Scéim Teanga an Bhord Pleanála 2007 – 2010

faoi Alt 11

d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003

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Chapter 1

An Bord Pleanála □ Introduction, Overview and Summary of Services.

An Bord Pleanála was established on 1st January, 1977 under the Local Government (Planning and Development Act, 1976). An Bord Pleanála consists of the Chairperson, Board Members, Inspectorate and Administrative staff.

Our mission statement is:

To play our part as an independent body in ensuring that physical development and major infrastructure projects in Ireland respect the principles of sustainable development and are planned in an efficient, fair and open manner.

There are currently 10 Board members. The staffing complement of the Board is currently 15 Management, 49 Inspectors and 96.5 Administrative staff. The Board deals with approximately 6,000 cases each year, the majority of which are planning appeals. The Board's offices are in 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.

The Board's main responsibilities relate to planning appeals, referrals (this is where the Board makes a decision in a particular case whether the matter is or is not development or is or is not exempted development), assessment of local authority infrastructural development proposals including all major proposed road developments. Local authority proposals for the compulsory acquisition of land are also dealt with by the Board. The Board is also responsible for appeals and other issues under the Building Control Act, Water Pollution Acts and Air Pollution Act.

A significant change to the operation of the organisation is the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 which will see the Board directly responsible for certain planning applications and will mean more direct contact with developers and the public than at present. These applications include major infrastructure projects relating to energy (electricity transmission lines and gas infrastructure), transport (road and railway works) and environment. No commencement order(s) have been made for the Act as of yet.

The Board already has a number of obligations on it under Section 135(8) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 concerning the Irish language. These are:

- (a) An oral hearing may be conducted through the medium of the Irish or the English language.
- (b) Where an oral hearing relates to development within the Gaeltacht, the hearing shall be conducted through the medium of the Irish language, unless the parties to the appeal or referral to which the hearing relates agree that the hearing should be conducted in English.

- (c) Where an oral hearing relates to development outside the Gaeltacht, the hearing shall be conducted through the medium of the English Language, unless the parties to the appeal or referral to which the hearing relates agree that the hearing should be conducted in the Irish language.

The Board, under Section 120(1) of the 2000 Act, may also appoint persons to be employees having regard to the need to ensure that an adequate number of staff are competent in the Irish language so as to be able to provide service through Irish.

Furthermore, Section 10 (2)(m) of the 2000 Act provides that a development plan shall include objectives for the protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht including the promotion of Irish as the community language, where there is a Gaeltacht area in the area of the development plan. The Board is bound to have regard to the development plan of the planning authority when making its decisions.

The Board welcomes the preparation of this Scheme as an opportunity to formalise the services it already offers through Irish and to expand on the availability of services through Irish.

Chapter 2

2.1 Preparation of Language Scheme

An Bord Pleanála prepared this Scheme under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003.

Section 11 of the Act provides that, for the purposes of promoting the use of the Irish Language for official purposes in the State, public bodies prepare a statutory Scheme specifying the services, which the public body proposes to provide

- exclusively through the medium of the Irish Language
- exclusively through the medium of the English Language, and
- through the medium of both the Irish and English Languages

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

This Scheme was prepared having regard to the Guidelines under Section 12 of the Official Languages Act 2003 issued by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in September 2004.

An Bord Pleanála published a notice on the 29th April, 2006 under section 13 of the Act, inviting submissions from any interested parties regarding the preparation of the draft Scheme. This notice was also made available on our website. Details of submissions received are included in Appendix 1. The Scheme was prepared taking all relevant submissions from interested parties into consideration. Those submissions and the suggestions of the Management Committee, the Partnership Committee and Official Languages Committee were taken into consideration in the preparation of the Scheme. Included also is the Board experience of the demand for quality services through Irish. The Board is grateful for the thoughts of each person and all organisations that contributed to the preparation of this Scheme.

2.2 Content and objectives of the Language Scheme

The Board recognises that members of the public can express their views and needs better in their preferred language, that enabling the public to use their preferred language is a matter of good practice, and that denying the customer the right to use their preferred language could place members of the public at a disadvantage. With the implementation of this Scheme, the Board is committed to creating a bilingual culture in their dealings with customers and to provide all its services through the medium of Irish in a phased manner over a number of years.

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

The Scheme builds on the language policy that has been operative by the Board for a number of years. This policy provides that:

- Callers to our offices will be able to conduct their business in Irish if they wish.
- Where an appeal or objection is written in Irish, the decision of the Board will be issued in Irish or bilingually.
- Where an oral hearing related to a proposed development within the Gaeltacht, the oral hearing will be conducted through Irish, unless the parties to the appeal agree that the oral hearing should be conducted in English.
- Any correspondence received in Irish will be responded to in Irish in accordance with the provisions of section 9(2) of the Official Languages Act 2003.
- In-house training courses will be provided to staff to encourage staff to increase their knowledge of Irish with the intention of providing a better service through Irish.
- Staff will be facilitated to attend Irish language courses in the Gaeltacht during the summer months.
- Staff will be encouraged and facilitated in attending Irish language courses after work through the reimbursement of fees and the granting of study leave.

It is intended that the Scheme will build on the commitments made in our Customer Service Action Plan 2004 – 2009 concerning Official Languages Equality.

2.3 Commencement Date of the Scheme

This Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The Scheme will commence with effect from **1st of September, 2007** and will remain in force for a period of three years from this date or until a new Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister under section 15 of Official Languages Act 2003, whichever is the sooner.

Chapter 3

3.1 Means of Communications in relation to Services

The Board's main means of communications with appellants/observers/objectors and the general public are through:

- Decisions and correspondence issued in relation to individual appeals, referrals and projects.
- Website.
- National and Local Media.
- Information Leaflets.
- Annual Report and Media Launch.

3.2 Decisions and Correspondence

Where the application relates to development in a Gaeltacht area and where the application, appeal or observation was made in Irish, it is the policy to issue an order bilingually.

3.3 Website

Currently, there is only an English language version of our website. It is the Board's intention to more fully develop an IT capacity within the context of an overall IT strategy. The IT strategy adopted will provide for a fully bilingual website within the lifetime of the strategy.

The Board places the development descriptions of new and decided cases on the website every week. Our current policy is that the development descriptions are placed on the website in the language in which the applications were made.

3.4 National and Local Media

Decisions on major developments or of media interest generally are released to the media following their notification to the parties concerned. Media queries in relation to decisions are dealt with in the language in which they are made.

3.5 Information Leaflets

Information leaflets produced by the Board are produced separately in both languages.

3.6 Annual Report and Media Launch

The annual report is produced bilingually in accordance with the provisions of section 10 of the Official Languages Act 2003. At present, the media launch is held through English with the Chairperson providing interviews through Irish to the main Irish language television and radio news programmes.

Chapter 4

Enhancement of Services to be provided bilingually.

An Bord Pleanála is committed to providing access to its services through the Irish language. As well as the measures listed in the following pages, the Board's aim will be the progressive development of a quality customer service in Irish.

4.1 Brochures/information Leaflets

4.1.1 All new brochures and information leaflets will be bilingual within one document with both languages given equal status.

Target: Ongoing

4.1.2 Existing brochures and information leaflets will become fully bilingual within one document on renewal of stock.

Target: Ongoing

4.2 Written Communications

4.2.1 An Bord Pleanála will continue to welcome correspondence in Irish.

Target: Ongoing

4.2.2 Correspondence received will be acknowledged in the language of the original letter. When further correspondence is required, it will continue in the same language.

Target: Ongoing

4.2.3 Corresponding with the Board in Irish will not cause any undue delay. The aim will be that all correspondence will receive a reply within the target periods set out in the Customer Service Act Plan 2004-2009.

Target: Ongoing

4.2.4 Correspondence following a telephone or face-to-face conversation in Irish will be in Irish unless the caller has indicated otherwise.

Target: Ongoing

4.2.5 Correspondence ensuing from a meeting/telephone conversation where it has been established that the person's preferred language is Irish, will be in Irish, although the meeting/telephone conversation may not have been held through the medium of Irish.

Target: Ongoing

- 4.2.6 Correspondence initiated by the Board with a member of the public or organisation in a Gaeltacht area will be in Irish or may be bilingual if requested or deemed necessary.

Target: Ongoing

- 4.2.7 In the day-to-day delivery of services, standard letters will be available bilingually.

Target: December 2007

4.3 Appeal Forms

- 4.3.1 All planning appeal forms, guides, ready reckoner and associated explanatory material will be bilingual within the one document.

Target: From commencement of the Scheme

- 4.3.2 In exceptional cases where the above proves impractical due to the technicality or the size of the documents, separate Irish and English versions may be made available. Their availability will be simultaneous and both versions will be given equal prominence.

Target: From commencement of the Scheme

- 4.3.3 The Board will make every effort to ensure that the Irish used in forms, guides etc. is easily understood while having regard to accuracy of standard spelling and grammar.

Target: Ongoing

4.4 Press Releases and Statements

- 4.4.1 All press releases and statements connected with the launch of the annual report will be issued bilingually.

Target: Launch of 2006 annual report (in 2007)

Any press release relating to a Gaeltacht area will be issued bilingually.

Target: Ongoing

- 4.4.2 The Board will ensure that an Irish speaking spokesperson, of sufficient authority, will be available for media interviews at the launch of its annual report.

Target: Launch of 2007 annual report (in 2008)

- 4.4.3 Contact names for further information will be given on press release/statements of an employee who will be available to provide that information in Irish.

Target: January 2008

4.5 Publications/Public Access

- 4.5.1 All bilingual publications will be within the same cover in accordance with best practice.

Target: Ongoing

- 4.5.2 Where a publication or a document is being made available through public access, any charge for the document will not be greater than that made for a single language version of the document.

Target: Ongoing

4.6 Website, Online and IT Services

- 4.6.1 Our website, when redesigned, will be fully bilingual, have equal functionality and will be fully interchangeable between both official languages.

Target: By December 2007.

- 4.6.2 Any existing or new interactive service will be fully bilingual. The Board's computer systems, new and existing, will be made compatible with the Irish language.

Target: By April 2009.

- 4.6.3 Any new printers will be fully capable of handling the Irish language.

Target: On publication/acceptance of new tender or February 2008, whichever is the earliest.

- 4.6.4 The Board will actively use technology to improve the provision of bilingual services.

Target: Over the lifetime of the Scheme.

- 4.6.5 The official languages section of the Intranet will continue to be expanded as a support and resource for staff.

Target: Ongoing

4.7 Telephone Communication

4.7.1 All receptionists will greet callers bilingually and arrangements will be in place so that they can put callers who wish to conduct their business in Irish in touch, without delay, with an employee responsible for dealing with their query.

Target: Ongoing

4.7.2 The Board will ensure that any caller, who wishes to conduct their business through Irish, will be able to do so with particular regard being had to sections that most frequently deal with the public. If an Irish speaker is unavailable to deal with the call, the person receiving the call will explain the situation and take the caller's name, phone number and details of the query and will ensure that an Irish speaker returns the call that day. Where this is not possible e.g. due to the lateness of the call, the call will be returned within one working day.

Target: Ongoing

4.7.3 If an Irish speaker is unavailable to deal with a specialised enquiry, the caller will be given the choice of being called back in Irish or continuing the call in English.

Target: Ongoing

4.7.4 A directory of Irish speakers to deal with Irish language calls will be integrated to the internal telephone directory as a guide to staff who wish to transfer calls to Irish speakers. The administrative staff will be identified by an asterisk next to the names on the directory.

Target: Ongoing

4.7.5 An answer phone systems for staff that receive public calls will have a bilingual recorded message inviting the caller to leave a message in either language.

Target: Ongoing

4.8 Reception/Counter Services

4.8.1 A bilingual service will be available to callers to our offices who wish to conduct business in Irish. This will be made known to the public.

Target: Ongoing

- 4.8.2 All callers will be treated on a basis of courtesy and equality and the principles of Quality Customer Services. The choice of language of the caller will be established. If the caller wishes to communicate in Irish and an Irish speaker is unavailable to deal with the caller, the caller will be informed when an Irish speaker able to give the service will be available and will be given the option of (1) calling back when an Irish speaker is available, (2) conducting business through another member of staff providing a translation service or (3) continuing in English.

Target: January 2008

- 4.8.3 Any correspondence, consequent to a reception transaction where the caller's language preference was Irish, will be in Irish.

Target: Ongoing

- 4.8.4 Seeking service in Irish at reception will not cause any undue delay.

Target: Ongoing

- 4.8.5 Staff will readily accept any caller's details in Irish and there will be no attempt to seek to get the caller to change the details to English.

Target: From commencement of the Scheme

4.9 Meeting with Stakeholders

- 4.9.1 Any meeting organised with a stakeholder group from the Gaeltacht or where the group's interest relates to the Irish language or planning and sustainable development issues in Gaeltacht areas will be held bilingually.

Target: January 2009

4.10 Consultation

- 4.10.1 All consultation conducted by or on behalf of the Board will comply with the Scheme.

Target: Two month after the commencement date of the Scheme.

4.11 Corporate Image and Signage

- 4.11.1 An Bord Pleanála will adopt a fully bilingual corporate identity.

Target: Over the lifetime of the Scheme.

4.11.2 All external signage will be bilingual.

Target: January 2008

4.11.3 All signage erected in the offices whether new or replacing existing signage will be bilingual.

Target: January 2008

4.11.4 Any signage at oral hearings relating to developments in a Gaeltacht area held outside the offices will be bilingual.

Target: From commencement of the Scheme

4.11.5 Any public notices required by the Board to be published/erected by the applicant or planning authority in a Gaeltacht area or relating to development or a project in a Gaeltacht area will be in Irish or bilingual.

Target: Ongoing

4.11.6 Our internal library will ensure that an amount of books and other material in Irish are available as a resource to staff to encourage fluency in the Irish language.

Target: Ongoing

4.12. New Policies and Initiatives

4.12.1 New policies and initiatives will be consistent with the Scheme.

Target: Two months after commencement of the Scheme.

Chapter 5

Implementation

The Official Languages Act 2003 states that a public body in preparing a draft Scheme "shall ensure that an adequate number of its staff are competent in the Irish Language so as to be able to provide its services through Irish as well as English". This is to enable the Board to deliver the services it commits to provide bilingually in this Scheme or over a series of Schemes in line with the principles of quality customer services. The Board is committed to providing services that are efficient and of good quality to its Irish-speaking customers. The Board's aim is that the number of its staff competent in the Irish language should be increased and that the level of competency of other staff should be increased to bring about a situation where quality customer service through Irish may be ensured. In consultation with staff, measures will be introduced over the lifetime of the Scheme in relation to training, placing and recruitment of staff for the achievement of the objectives.

5.1 Training

5.1.1 In-house training programmes already in place will be continued and enhanced.

Target: Ongoing

5.1.2 Members of staff will be encouraged to attend appropriate courses aimed at increasing their level of competence in the language.

Target: Ongoing

5.1.3 A number of staff will be identified as having sufficient competency in the Irish language that they could undertake appropriate third level courses in Irish, with the intention that of their being further able to provide quality customer service. Such staff will be facilitated in undertaking the course.

Target: September 2008

5.1.4 In house training programmes concerning oral hearings and the Irish language will continue.

Target: Ongoing

5.1.5 Irish dictionary software will be installed on the PCs of all staff identified as having competency in Irish.

Target: Ongoing

5.1.6 Members and employees who are learning Irish will be encouraged to use it at every opportunity without being deterred by a lack of confidence. To this end, an internal group whose names will be publicised internally will try to conduct their daily business with each other through Irish.

Target: From commencement of the Scheme.

5.1.7 The weekly staff lunches through Irish will continue.

Target: Ongoing

5.2 Staffing Competitions

5.2.1 Additional marks will be awarded in all internal competitions for a demonstrated capability in the Irish language.

Target: From commencement of the Scheme.

5.3 Recruitment

5.3.1 All recruitment competitions will provide that additional marks will be awarded for a demonstrated capability in the Irish language.

Target: From commencement of the Scheme.

5.3.2 Interviews for any post may be conducted in Irish or bilingually on request from the interviewee.

Target: Ongoing

5.3.3 Induction courses will contain a module on the Irish Language Scheme and its implications for quality customer service.

Target: From commencement of the Scheme.

Chapter 6

Monitoring and Review

The Management Committee comprising senior management in the organisation and chaired by the Chairperson of the Board will keep the operation of the Scheme under review. Additionally, the Irish Language Committee will continue to meet as a means of continuing to look at ways to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. Feedback on the operation of the Scheme will be sought from the Partnership Committee.

The day-to-day operation of the Scheme together with ongoing monitoring of the level of demand in the various areas is the responsibility of the line managers.

As part of the monitoring process, the Secretary will make an annual report to the Board on the progress of the various measures against the timetables set out in the Scheme. Following the commencement of the Scheme, the incidents and nature of complaints concerning the commitments made in the Scheme will be recorded and investigated by the Secretary on an ongoing basis.

Chapter 7

Publicising of Agreed Scheme

The contents of the Scheme along with the commitments and the provisions of the Scheme will be publicised to the general public by means of:

- Launch of the Scheme
- Advertisement of the Scheme/Press Release
- Circulation to appropriate agencies and public bodies.
- Inclusion of the Scheme on our website.

Appendix 1.

Irish Scheme of An Bord Pleanála

Summary of submissions received

Number of submissions received =

List of people/organisations that sent submissions

Uimhir	Ainm
1.	Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Bhaile Átha Cliath
2.	Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge
3.	Conradh na Gaeilge
4.	Foras na Gaeilge
5.	Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge

** Nóta: fuarthas aighneachtaí ag tairiscint seirbhíse aistritheoirí.*