



Chester
Beatty

Language Scheme 2022 - 2025

Prepared under Section 15 of the

Official Languages Act 2003

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1. Introduction and Background

This fourth scheme of the Chester Beatty Library, hereafter referred to as the Chester Beatty or CB has been prepared in accordance with Section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003. Section 15 provides for a periodic review of the scheme and the preparation of a new draft scheme.

The Act provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services they provide:

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

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

2. Guidelines and Preparation of the Scheme

Section 12 of the Act provides for the preparation of guidelines by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and their issue to public bodies to assist in the preparation of the draft schemes. This scheme has been drawn up with due regard to those guidelines.

The CB recognises that the public have a right to choose to do business in their preferred language and that they will be facilitated in their dealings with us, whether in English or in Irish. As Irish is the national language and the first official language of the state, the CB is committed to maintaining and improving the delivery of services to the public through the medium of Irish.

This Scheme is predicated on all of the commitments in any previous scheme having been implemented. In the event of commitments in earlier schemes not having been fully implemented to date, this matter has been the subject of discussion with the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.

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

3. Commencement date of Scheme

This scheme has been confirmed by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. The scheme is commenced with effect from 02.02.2022 and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years from this date or until a new scheme

has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to section 15 of the Act, whichever is the later.

4. Overview of the Chester Beatty

Described by Lonely Planet as ‘not just the best museum in Ireland but one of the best in Europe’, the Chester Beatty is the pre-eminent Irish museum promoting the appreciation and understanding of world cultures with holdings of manuscripts, rare books, and other treasures from Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and Asia. An engaging and welcoming space, visitors from Ireland and overseas will find permanent and temporary displays, an intercultural learning programme and a broad variety of public activities for all ages and backgrounds.

The mission statement of the Chester Beatty is to care for, research, share and promote the collections fostering understanding, engagement and curiosity.

Sir Alfred Chester Beatty (1875 – 1968), a successful American mining engineer, was one of the greatest collectors of the twentieth century, and an extraordinary friend to Ireland. His relocation from London in 1950 surprised many, but for a number of years he had been concerned with how he might develop his private passion for collecting into an enduring legacy. Assured of a warm welcome and the necessary official supports, Beatty purchased a site on Shrewsbury Road where he built a library for his collection. It opened officially on 8 August 1953, first for scholars and friends but a year later it opened to the public. In attendance at the inauguration were the Taoiseach (Éamon de Valera), the Minister for Finance (Seán Mac Entee) and the Minister for External Affairs (Frank Aiken).

Soon after his new library had opened, Beatty began to seriously consider how he might ensure its future after his death and in his Will he set up a Trust to ensure it would remain intact, for the benefit of the Irish nation. When he died in 1968, the “Chester Beatty Library” was formally handed over to the Board of Trustees and the Trust continues to run the museum today. Beatty did not leave an endowment, rather his gift was made in the knowledge that it would be supported by an annual grant from the State.

In 2018 the museum celebrated 50 years of Beatty’s extraordinary gift to the Irish people, and it continues his ethos of ensuring that the collections are accessible and engaging for visitors from all over the world. A vibrant National Cultural Institution, the Chester Beatty reaches out to the culturally diverse communities in Ireland. By drawing upon and interpreting the wonderful collections, the museum actively engages with the newest members of our society.

In addition, the Chester Beatty is also a research library for scholars from all over the world.

The Chester Beatty collections consist of more than 6,000 manuscripts on paper, vellum and other media, together with about 4,000 fine and early printed books, and some hundreds of items of decorative arts interest. Amongst the most important treasures of the museum are the biblical and Manichaean papyri, the great collections of Islamic manuscripts (including over 300 complete or fragmentary copies of the Holy Qur'an), and many works of philosophy, liturgy and spiritual belief from China, Japan, Southeast Asia and non-Islamic India. The Christian collections include illuminated manuscripts from Egypt, The Levant, Byzantium, from Western Europe, Ethiopia, Russia and Serbia, and an interesting archive of documents relating to the Christian Missions to East Asia in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The Islamic collections include over 2,700 manuscripts of scholarship, Islamic law, prayer and commentary on the life of the Prophet, medicine, mathematics, science and books of pilgrimage. In addition to those, which are illuminated with abstract ornament, there are the very finely illustrated codices from Persia, Turkey and the Mughal Court of India. Clearly the museum holds within its collections important material bearing on the history of Christianity and of Christian thought, of Islam and Islamic learning and spirituality, and of East Asian traditions including Daoism, Confucianism, Zen Buddhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and many more. The collection is also rich in works of art which do not have a specifically religious character but represent a very important resource for the history of writing and of the book throughout the Old World.

5. Functional Areas of the Chester Beatty

The Chester Beatty functions primarily as an art museum with two floors of exhibition galleries. Visitors enter the museum via the garden at Dublin Castle. The glass-roofed entrance hall is a modern space that links the 18th-century building with newer, purpose-built exhibition galleries. On the ground floor, visitors can enjoy an audio-visual presentation on the life of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty and his great art collection. There are also a lecture theatre, restaurant and shop on this level.

The exhibition galleries are situated on the first and second floors. *Arts of the Book*, contains books from the ancient world including the world famous Chester Beatty Love Poems (c.1160 BC), Egyptian Books of the Dead and beautifully illuminated medieval European manuscripts and fine European printed books, as well as Old Master prints. The exhibition explores the richness of the Islamic manuscript tradition - illustrations and illuminations, calligraphy, and exquisite bindings from across the Middle East and India are on display. Highlights from East Asia include one of the finest collections of Chinese jade books in the world, Japanese picture-scrolls depicting fables and legends, and deluxe woodblock prints. Audio-visual programmes complement the exhibition, helping the visitor to learn more about the arts of the book throughout the world.

The *Sacred Traditions* Gallery is dedicated to the great religions of the world including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. Audio-visual programmes explore the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, the lives of Christ and the

Buddha, and rites of passage – birth, marriage and death – in different belief systems. Outstanding exhibits in these galleries range from great illuminated copies of the Qur’an dating from the 9th to the 19th century AD; ancient papyri, including the famous Egyptian love poems of around 1100 BC; and some of the very earliest Gospel and other New Testament texts, dating to c.200 AD. The Chester Beatty collection of New Testament texts is a fundamental source for early Christianity and the Qur’an manuscripts represent the finest expressions of Islam in calligraphy and ornamental detail. Also on display are fine scrolls and other religious artworks from China, Japan, Tibet, and South and Southeast Asia.

The Chester Beatty also contains a reading room with a large and growing collection of reference books. Visitors (who must first apply for a reader’s ticket) can work in this beautiful room on the first floor of the original Clock Tower building, which incorporates the fine lacquered ceiling in Chinese style that Beatty had originally created for his London home. The mahogany bookcases were made in 1950 by Hicks of Dublin.

6. Context of the Irish Language Scheme 2022 - 2025

The CB is committed to the aim of the Official Languages Act 2003 to improve over a period of time the quantity and quality of services provided for the public through Irish.

A number of commitments were given in the CB’s first, second and third schemes to improve the level of services through Irish and these are outlined in section 6 below. These commitments addressed the areas of Irish language signage, publications, tours, website, e-mail, public announcements and staff training to accommodate visitors who wish to conduct their business through the medium of Irish.

The objective of the fourth scheme is to continue the delivery of these services available in Irish throughout the lifetime of this scheme.

7. Assessment of Irish language services

Publications:

- All Annual Reports are published simultaneously online in bi-lingual format.
- An Irish-language version of the Guide book to the Collections is available for download from the website:
<https://chesterbeatty.ie/assets/uploads/2021/12/Scala-CBL-Leabharlann-LowRes.pdf>
- The museum’s ‘Strategic Plan 2021-2024’ was published online in bi-lingual format.
- The Chester Beatty worked in partnership with Mother Tongues on the publication of their ‘Language Explorers’ workbook, with an Irish language

version available: <https://discover.mothertongues.ie/shop/books/language-explorers-activity-book/>

Signage:

- In 2018, the museum installed a new wayfinding system throughout the building, in adherence to the Regulations under Section 9 (1) of the Act.

Guided Tours:

- Up to circa 2017, a guided tour in Irish was scheduled once a month. However, despite promoting the tour, uptake was low and thus, this has now been reduced to tours in Irish being available on request, subject to Irish language guide being available (all guides are volunteers). *See Digital Museum Guide below*

Digital Museum Guide

- Chester Beatty developed and launched a ‘free to download’ app in 2019 – it contains an audio tour of the exhibitions in 13 languages, including Irish.

Oral Announcements:

- Bi-lingual recorded oral ‘closing soon’ announcements were implemented in 2019. Irish language recording will be added to the automatic evacuation announcement in 2022.

Website:

- A new website was launched in 2018. The following pages are bilingual: Visit Us, Accessibility, The Chester Beatty Story, Collections, Explore the Collections, Support Us, Supporting the Chester Beatty, About Us, Mission Statement
- Further sections will be translated in 2022: Tours, 3D Virtual Tours, Families, Shop, Silk Road Café

Computer Systems:

- All museum computer systems are currently compatible with the Irish language and any new systems being installed will also be compatible. The Chester Beatty’s Collections Management database is compatible with the Irish Language.

Training and Recruitment:

- The museum continues to upskill front-of-house/Visitor Services staff and other staff by continuing to offer a variety of Irish Language courses.
- A knowledge of the Irish language is listed as ‘desirable’ when recruiting Visitor Services Staff.

Information Panels:

- All introductory panels in each section of the Permanent Exhibition Galleries are in bi-lingual format. Any new panels generated for the permanent exhibition galleries are bi-lingual.

Invitations:

- All invitations to exhibition openings are in bi-lingual format.

Email:

- The standard disclaimer on all emails is in bi-lingual format.

8. Commitment to Irish language services 2022 - 2025

The CB continues to offer these bi-lingual services to the public and remains committed to developing enhanced services where possible in the Irish language. In this new scheme 2022-2025, CBL will continue to offer the existing services provided, through the medium of Irish.

9. Monitoring and Revision

The Director and Head of Operations and Administration of the Chester Beatty will keep the effective operation of the scheme under review.

The day-to-day monitoring function will be carried out primarily by the Head of Operations and Administration who will report on the scheme's implementation to the Director and Board of Trustees.

10. Publicising of an Agreed Scheme

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

- Circulation to appropriate agencies and public bodies;
- Website.

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;
- 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.