



Comhshaol, Oidhreacht agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
**Environment, Heritage and Local Government**

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

**Irish Language Scheme**

**2009-2012**

**under Section 11 of the**

**Official Languages Act 2003**

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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. This second Scheme aims to build on the progress made in the provision of services through Irish and bilingually in the Department.

The new 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 first Scheme has been reviewed internally on an annual basis and the results of that process have contributed to the development of this second Scheme.

### **1.2 Review of the operation of the First Scheme 2005-2008**

The first Irish Language Scheme, which commenced in August 2005, set challenging targets for the Department and indicated a significant change in Departmental culture and the general approach to the treatment of Irish language issues.

Over the course of the last Scheme, staff in the Corporate Development Section 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 has been a general and widespread acceptance by staff of the Scheme and of the responsibilities placed on them following its introduction across the Department. The Corporate Development Section (CDS) has been committed to ensuring that staff and managers are frequently reminded of their responsibilities in relation to the Irish language. A range of supports have been developed in order to meet staff requirements and ensure the effective implementation of the Scheme. These have included a series of tailored training sessions 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 CDS 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 Comisín Teanga's office to ensure that complaints and issues of non-compliance were brought to staff's attention and any opportunities for improvements arising from these complaints were undertaken.

### **1.3 Approach to Developing New Scheme**

The Department published a notice on 3 March 2008 under *Section 13* of the Official Languages Act 2003 inviting representations from interested parties in relation to the preparation of this new language Scheme. Ten submissions were received from a range of Irish language organisations and from individual members of the public. These submissions are available to view on the Department's website [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie) or [www.comhshaol.ie](http://www.comhshaol.ie). The Department would like to extend its thanks to all those who contributed to the process.

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

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

This second Irish language Scheme is predicated on all of the commitments in the first Scheme being implemented. In the event of commitments within that Scheme not having been fully implemented to date, this matter has been dealt with by the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga. The objective of this second Scheme is to continue the delivery of these commitments and build on the progress achieved across the Department over the period of the last Scheme. It sets out a commitment on behalf of the Department and staff to develop the extent to which services are currently available through Irish and it identifies areas for future enhancement.

The new Scheme also builds on the principles of Quality Customer Service and will 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 is committed to reporting on progress made annually in its Annual Report.

### **1.5 Commencement date of Scheme**

This Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and is commenced with effect from 20 July 2009. 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 earlier.

## **Chapter 2 Overview of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government**

### **2.1 Mission and Mandate**

The Department's mission, as set out in its *Statement of Strategy 2008-2010*, is to pursue sustainable development.

In pursuing this mission its mandate is to:

- achieve a high quality environment with effective environmental protection;
- address climate change;
- achieve effective conservation of our natural heritage and biodiversity;
- achieve effective conservation of our built heritage;
- protect and improve water resources and the quality of drinking water;
- ensure that our regions and communities are planned and built to respect sustainable and balanced regional development;
- ensure good quality housing in sustainable communities;
- monitor, analyse and predict Ireland's weather and climate;
- support and enable democratic and responsive local government.

The majority of the Department's Dublin-based staff are currently located at the Custom House, Dublin 1 and some other smaller offices throughout the city. Regional offices are located in Ballina, Co Mayo and an advance office under the decentralisation programme has been established in Ardavan, Co Wexford (see below). Staff in the heritage divisions, housing and water inspectorate, and audit service are located throughout the country. Met Éireann is headquartered in Glasnevin in Dublin and has staff in regional locations.

As part of the Government's Decentralisation programme, a new Departmental Headquarters will be opened in Wexford in 2009.

### **2.2 Departmental Customers**

Given the breadth and nature of the Department's mandate, its work impacts on a huge range of people and communities throughout 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:

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

## **2.3 Summary of Services and Activities provided by the Department**

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

### **Environment Division**

#### **Environment Policy Section:**

Responsible for the integration of environmental considerations across a range of different policy sectors under the NDP process, provision of financial support to the EPA and participation in EU and wider international work to address regional and global environmental problems and ensure full compliance with obligations under EU legislation and international conventions. Section also has direct responsibility for policy areas including GMOs, Environmental Technologies and IPPC.

#### **Environment – International and Sustainable Development Section:**

Responsible for coordinating the participation of the Minister in the EU Environment Council; the Department's responsibilities under the European Union (Scrutiny) Act; correspondence and reports relating to complaints about infringements of EU environmental legislation; the EU funding programmes LIFE + and INTERREG IV and matters relating to North/South and British/Irish cooperation in the environmental area. The Unit supports the Department's role in relation to the publication of a renewed National Sustainable Development Strategy; the national input on the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and; to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. The unit also has overview responsibilities in relation to Comhar, the National Sustainable Development Council.

#### **Environmental Radiation Policy and Air Quality Section:**

Supports and implements national and international policy on air quality and the control of environmental noise and nuclear safety matters, including the Government commitment towards the safe decommissioning of Sellafield and the elimination of radioactive discharges to the Irish Sea.

#### **Environment & Heritage Awareness Section:**

Develops and implements policies and measures to enhance public understanding of the value of our environmental and built heritage resources, co-ordinates anti-litter actions and runs the Tidy Towns and related competitions.

#### **National Climate Change Policy Section:**

Develops and implements progressive policy and effective legislation in relation to the national climate change agenda, and the control of ozone depleting substances.

**International Climate Change Section:**

Services Ireland's participation in international climate change agreements/ organisations, specifically the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, and develops national positions on future climate change commitments, in the context of EU and UN negotiations on future actions on climate change.

**Waste Policy - Review and Regulation Section:**

Develops policy and legislation to meet national requirements and ensure compliance with relevant obligations under EU waste Directives.

**Waste Policy - Prevention and Recovery Section:**

Develops and implements national waste prevention and recovery policy based on the principles of efficient use of natural resources and the minimisation of negative environmental impacts, ensures compliance with relevant obligations under EU Producer Responsibility Directives and manages the waste recovery infrastructure programme.

**Heritage Division****Heritage Policy /Architectural Protection Section:**

Key area of responsibility is to develop, promote and implement policies and legislation for the protection of architectural heritage, and to promote best practice in modern architecture.

**National Monuments Section:**

To secure the highest possible protection for Ireland's archaeological heritage, through a range of measures and interventions at both policy and operational levels.

**National Parks and Wildlife Service (Science and Biodiversity) Section:**

Provides information and advice on the conservation and protection of wildlife and habitats, in particular in relation to EU Directives, the licensing of activities under the Wildlife Acts and EU Natural Habitats Regulations and initiates and manages the necessary research to ensure that this advice is well founded and up-to-date.

**National Parks and Wildlife Service (Designated Areas & Legislation) Section:**

Overall responsibility at national level for the implementation of the EU Habitats and Birds Directives and for the implementation, review and updating of Irish nature conservation law.

**National Parks and Wildlife Service (Regional Management, Parks & Finance) Section:**

Promotes and facilitates the efficient and effective delivery by regional management of on-the-ground services related to habitat and species protection through the development and implementation of good governance, and organisational principles and practices. Responsible for managing and developing the State's six national parks and nature reserves.

**Water and Planning Division**

**Water Quality Section:**

Promotes the protection and improvement of the quality of water in the environment e.g. rivers, lakes, groundwater.

**Water Services Investment Programme Section:**

Manages the Water Services Investment Programme contained in the National Development Plan and the Rural Water Programme and Group Water Scheme Sector.

**Water Services Policy Section:**

Manages policy development in the Water Services Sector, including legislation and water services pricing policy.

**Building Standards Section:**

Reviews and updates the 12 Parts of the national Building Regulations and develops Technical Guidance Documents and related materials to facilitate compliance with same. Also has regulatory responsibility in relation to EU Directives and policy initiatives which may have implications for new buildings in Ireland, notably the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the Construction Products Directive.

**Planning and Urban Policy Section:**

Facilitates an effective and streamlined planning consent process under the Strategic Infrastructure Act. Maintains an up-to-date legislative and policy framework to facilitate an efficient, effective, balanced and quality planning system. Develops policy on urban development, including the initiation and ongoing monitoring of any new tax incentive based urban renewal schemes, including implementation and monitoring of the Urban and Village Renewal Programmes. Also, accountable department for much of PEACE III 2007–2013 Programme. Review of the foreshores leasing and licensing functions in line with Government decision to transfer certain foreshore functions to the Department.

**Planning System Section:**

Maintains an up-to-date legislative and policy framework to facilitate an efficient, effective, balanced and quality planning system. Manages overall transposition and implementation of the Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment Directives. Manages the Department's interface with An Bord Pleanála, the Planning Tribunal and the Dublin Docklands Development Authority.

**Spatial Policy Section:**

Leads the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across Ireland, supported by more effective spatial planning, and also manages the Developing Areas Initiative which is targeted at securing better co-ordination and timely delivery of key infrastructure and services in fast growing developing areas in parallel with housing development

<b>Local Government Division</b>
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**Local Government Policy Section:**

Promotes and supports the role of local government (including in relation to policy development, the provision of quality customer service, social inclusion and community



development) and maintains an up-to-date legislative framework for the local government system.

**Local Government Project Development & Motor Tax Section:**

Advances the Government Programme commitments in respect of local government reform; also responsible for policy and legislation in relation to motor tax.

**Local Services**

Responsible for managing the Public Library Capital Programme, dog control legislation and supports the delivery of a range of locally delivered services.

**Local Government Personnel Section:**

Develops Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations policy in local authorities.

**Local Government Finance Section:**

Monitors the finance function in local authorities and develops legislation relating to local authority financial management and procedures.

**Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section:**

Supports local fire authorities in the delivery of fire fighting and rescue services, fire safety and prevention programmes, and planning for and response to Major Emergencies.

**Housing Division**

**Housing Policy, Finance and Social Inclusion Section:**

Ensures coherent housing policy, and supporting finance arrangements, across all sections in the Division and works with other sections on formulating and developing policy relating to housing in Ireland across all tenures, particularly from a co-ordination perspective. Also leads Divisional role in addressing social inclusion issues.

**Affordable Housing and Homeless Policy Section:**

Progresses delivery of affordable housing targets as set out in *Towards 2016* and the NDP 2007-2013, and the implementation of the Government's new homeless strategy, *The Way Home*.

**Voluntary & Co-operative Housing Grants Section:**

Manages and implements, through the local authorities and in co-operation with approved housing bodies, a suite of supports and capital grant measures to ensure delivery of a range of quality social housing options for low income families and special needs groups.

**Traveller Accommodation Section:**

Manages and implements, through the local authorities a range of supports and capital grants for the provision of appropriate and high-quality accommodation for Travellers, the refurbishment of existing accommodation where necessary, the management and maintenance of Traveller specific accommodation and support services.

**Social Housing (Procurement & Construction) Section:**

Manages a multi-annual investment programme for social housing that is able to provide good quality accommodation and associated services for those in housing need.

**Housing Legislation & Programme Development Section:**

Prepares the Social Housing Miscellaneous Bill and provide consultation on Affordable Housing Reports and Development of Policy in relation to Paths to Home Ownership.

**Private Housing Section:**

Promotes the sustainable development of the private housing sector and the goals of quality housing and sustainable communities.

<b>Corporate Services Division</b>
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**Personnel Section:**

Responsible for policies and strategic advice in relation to the organisation, management and administration of the Department's human resources.

**Corporate Development Section:**

Coordinates and supports the strategic management process, Training and Development and internal communications functions in the Department, and manages the Department's accommodation portfolio.

**Departmental Finance and Accounts Section:**

Coordinates the Department's estimates and expenditure.

**Organisation and ICT Section:**

Responsible for the Department's information technology functions and provision of office supports.

**Press and Information Office:**

Responsible for liaising with the media and the preparation and dissemination of Ministerial speeches and press releases.

**Legal Office:**

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

**Franchise Section:**

Responsible for developing and overseeing a modern, efficient, accessible and fair electoral system.

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.

Local Authorities are generally responsible for delivering services within the financial and policy framework set by the Department. However, the following areas of the Department provide services directly to members of the public:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)
- Housing Grants section
- Met Éireann

In June 2007, the Vehicle Registration Section and responsibilities in relation to non-national roads transferred to the Department of Transport.

## **Chapter 3 Summary of Irish Language Services and Improvements planned for 2009-2012**

The Department of the Environment, Heritage 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 last Scheme.

### **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:

- Housing Grants
- Met Éireann
- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)

The National Parks and Wildlife Service provides a service to the public on a regional basis and the Department will ensure that a member of staff continues to be available in each NPWS region to provide a service in Irish to the public. In addition, where particular demand for services in specific NPWS regions is evidenced, enhanced support (in the form of Irish language training etc.) will be facilitated.

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 second Scheme.

The Department provides the policy framework within which local authorities and other bodies under its aegis deliver services and it provides support for initiatives undertaken to support the Irish language in local authorities. An advisory group to promote the use of Irish in Local Authorities, *Comhairle Gaeilge an Rialtais Áitiúil* was established by the Minister (for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government) in accordance with section 68 of the Local Government Act 2001. *Comhairle Gaeilge an Rialtais Áitiúil* is representative of local authority members, County & City Managers, representatives of organisations concerned with the promotion of the Irish language and the Department. In January 2007 the *Comhairle* submitted recommendations to the Minister including a request that the Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB) examine a number of matters through its Irish language committee, the *Fo-Choiste Gaeilge*.

The Fo-Choiste Gaeilge has already undertaken a number of initiatives including an Irish language webpage and discussion board for Irish Officers, a central database of Irish language training providers, activities to increase public awareness of the Irish language and the hosting of a Fo-Choiste Gaeilge seminar aimed at supporting local authorities in fulfilling their obligations in relation to compliance with the Official Languages Act, 2003 and promotion of the Irish language. The Department will continue to support and

facilitate this work through the LGMSB, and it is expected that the Local Government Computer Services Board (LGCSB) will be involved in the future.

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

### **3.2.1 Customer Service**

The Department has prepared a new **Customer Service Action Plan (CSAP)** and **Customer Charter** for the period 2009 onwards. The new Charter continues to reflect the principles of Quality Customer Service and, in this way, ensures that persons who wish to conduct their business in Irish are facilitated. Both documents also endeavour to raise 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 will be made available at our Reception desks and on our website and will be used as a means of promoting awareness of 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 websites [www.comhshaol.ie](http://www.comhshaol.ie) and [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie). The Department will ensure that all publications, including information leaflets and brochures that are produced in Irish or bilingually, will 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 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: [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie), [www.tidytowns.ie](http://www.tidytowns.ie) and [www.met.ie](http://www.met.ie). The Department undertakes to have Irish versions of the static content of these sites available by the end of the Scheme. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**
- (iii) The Department will also 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) The interactive facility which is currently available on [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) will be made available in Irish. There are no other existing interactive services which need to be made available bilingually. **[Within the first year of the Scheme]**
- (v) 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]**

- (vi) The Department will 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 Computer Services Board, LGCSB, which assists local authorities in the development of certain ICT solutions) aware of commitments in this regard. **[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 continue to initiate correspondence in Irish with those who are known to prefer correspondence in Irish. Staff will 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 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 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 ensure that all commonly used application forms, posters and leaflets e.g. in relation to the National Parks, voting, waste management 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 translate 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 25% of all press releases bilingually throughout the period of the Scheme. In choosing which press releases are to be issued bilingually, the Department will ensure that preference is given to press releases involved with Irish language or Gaeltacht affairs as well as pre-planned announcements of significant 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 be made available on the Department's website.

### **3.2.10 Local Government**

The Department will 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 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 provide a service through Irish to members of the public in Gaeltacht areas over the lifetime of the Scheme. In particular, where demand for educational services, e.g. tours in Irish are requested in Gaeltacht areas by members of the public, the Department will provide same where sufficient notice is given. **[From the commencement of the new Scheme]**

### **3.2.13 *Gaeltacht Placenames***

The official Placenames of Gaeltacht areas, as declared by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will be used by the Department.



### **3.3 Improving the Department's Irish Language Capability**

#### **3.3.1 Recruitment & Placement**

The following measures will be put in place 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 publicly advertise competitions for staff to work through Irish (especially in the Gaeltacht and/or serving Gaeltacht communities), when suitable people, identified as needing Irish to perform the role, are not available through general entry level competitions.
- Subject to the other constraints governing staff placement, appropriate placement of staff with proficiency in Irish will be implemented throughout the Department, in particular in Gaeltacht offices, or in offices that will service 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 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 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]**
- 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]**
- 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]**

- 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. The Department will also continue its policy of facilitating staff who wish to avail of Gaeltacht Scholarships e.g. Gaeleagras Schemes. **[From the commencement of new Scheme]**
- A one day Training course will 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 and *focal.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*. The Department will ensure that *at least one* article is in Irish in each edition. In addition, regular information will be included in the 'Weekly Wrap' – the Department's weekly electronic newsletter – in relation to the Irish language. **[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 Corporate Development Section. 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 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 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 both An Coimisinéir Teanga's office and to all of those who made submissions to the Department in relation to the development of this Second Scheme.

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