

National Roads Authority

Scheme 2014 – 2017

Under Section 11 of the
Official Languages Act, 2003



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1. Introduction.

This scheme has been prepared by the National Roads Authority under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act, 2003 (“**the Act**”) which provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services they will provide:

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

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

The scheme has been prepared having regard, *inter alia*, to the provisions of the *Official Languages Act, 2003 (Section 9) Regulations, 2008* (Statutory Instrument No. 391 of 2008). The Regulations concerned (“**the 2008 Regulations**”), provide, *inter alia*, for the use of the Irish language only, or the Irish and English languages together, on stationery, signage of public bodies and in recorded oral announcements.

1.1 Preparation of Scheme.

The scheme has been developed in accordance with Guidelines prepared under Section 12 of the Act by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. In developing a scheme, the Guidelines require that a public body shall have regard to the following matters:

- (a) The underlying level of demand for specific services in the Irish language in the context of positive provision.
- (b) The resources, including human and financial resources, and the capacity of the public body concerned to develop or access the necessary language capability.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 13(1)(a) of the Act, the Authority published notice of its intention to prepare a draft scheme. The notice was published in the *Irish Examiner* and *Foinse*, as well as on the Authority’s website www.nra.ie. The bilingual notice invited submissions in relation to the preparation of the draft scheme from interested parties. Submissions were also invited from the staff of the Authority by way of a memorandum issued by the Chief Executive to each member of staff.

One submission, from *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge*, was received. The submission focused on the priorities that should be included in the Authority's scheme, in particular, the improvement of Irish language ability of our staff, measures to promote the use of Irish, communications/meetings with the public and the use of Irish on our website.

1.2 Objective of the Scheme.

The principal aim of this scheme is to consolidate and improve the Authority's existing policies and practices in relation to the delivery of its services in the Irish language. This reflects the Authority's commitment to the full implementation of the provisions of the Act in carrying out its roles and responsibilities.

1.3 Commencement of Scheme.

The scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and commenced with effect from **14 July 2014**. The scheme 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 Act, whichever is later.

2. Overview of the National Roads Authority.

2.1 Mission and Mandate.

"Improve quality of life and national economic competitiveness by developing, maintaining and operating the national road network in a safe, cost effective and sustainable manner."

Mission Statement

The National Roads Authority's primary function is to secure the provision of a safe and efficient network of national roads (section 17 of the Roads Act, 1993). National roads play a key role in providing access to all regions of the country and connections between the main centres of population. Although they account for less than 6% of the total length of public roads throughout the country, i.e. approximately 5,400 km out of 94,600 km, their significance in serving our economic and social transport needs is reflected in the fact that they carry almost 50% of all road traffic in Ireland.

2.2 Organisation Structure.

Staffing.

The Authority has a total staff complement of 105 (2013). Our headquarters are in St. Martin's House, Waterloo Road, Dublin 4.

Board.

The Board of the Authority may comprise up to fourteen members – thirteen ordinary members and a chairperson – appointed by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. Members are

appointed on the basis of their experience in relation to roads, transport, industrial, commercial, financial or environmental matters, local government, and the organisation of workers or administration.

Details of the current membership of the board are provided on our website, www.nra.ie.

Business Units.

The Authority is organised under five divisional teams, as follows:

- Network Management.
- Corporate Affairs & Professional Services.
- Commercial Operations.
- Regional & Programme Management.
- Finance & Business Support.

Key Stakeholders.

In most cases the planning, design, acquisition of lands/properties and implementation of national road projects are functions that are normally carried out by local authorities in their statutory role as road authority for their respective administrative areas. The Authority has, accordingly, relatively limited direct contact with the general public, relating mainly to queries concerning the national road improvement programme and the Authority's operations generally. The Authority, nevertheless, interacts with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including:

- The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, under whose aegis the Authority operates.
- Various other Government Departments and Agencies/Offices, in particular the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Finance.
- Local authorities.
- Various committees established by the Oireachtas, including the Public Accounts Committee and the Committee on Transport, as well as public representatives at national and local level.
- The general public.
- Consultants, contractors, etc.
- The European Commission.
- Representative bodies such as the Construction Industry Federation, Engineers Ireland, Irish Business and Employers Confederation, Irish Farmers Association, etc.
- The media.

2.3 Level of Service Already Available Through Irish.

The Authority's Customer Charter includes a commitment to make every effort to accommodate customers who wish to conduct their business with us through Irish. In accordance with the Charter, correspondence received in Irish is answered in Irish and NRA publications are, as appropriate, produced in both Irish and English. A range of material is also provided in the Irish language on our website.

This scheme builds on the commitments we make in our Customer Charter by detailing the specific measures and procedures we employ in the conduct of our business in order to meet the requirements of the Official Languages Act, 2003 and the 2008 Regulations.

3. Communications with the Public.

The Authority communicates with the public in a variety of ways, including letters, emails, information leaflets, statutory/informational notices, etc. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, the 2008 Regulations and the Authority's commitment to promote and extend the use of Irish in the course of its business, the Authority's communications with the public during the period of this scheme will be made in accordance with the following paragraphs.

3.1 Written Communications.

3.1.1 Stationery.

All Authority stationery will be in both the Irish and English languages.

The 2008 Regulations introduced a number of specific requirements relating to the use of Irish on the following types of stationery used by public bodies:

- Notepaper.
- Compliment slips.
- Fax cover sheets.
- File/folder covers.
- Labels.
- Envelopes.

Under the Regulations, all such stationery must be available in either Irish only or in both Irish and English.

New bilingual stationery, in conformity with the Regulations, was introduced by the Authority in February, 2009, and is used in all written communications issued by the Authority.

3.1.2 Responding to Correspondence.

All correspondence received in Irish will be responded to by the Authority in Irish.

In accordance with the provisions of the Act, where a person writes to the Authority in Irish (whether by letter, fax or email), the communication is responded to in Irish.

The Authority is committed to ensuring that the level of service provided in Irish is not of a lower standard than that provided in the English language and has retained the services of an approved Irish/English – English/Irish translation company to assist, as required, staff in providing accurate and efficient responses to correspondence received in Irish.

3.1.3 Mailshots.

Authority mailshots will be issued in both the Irish and English languages.

In accordance with Section 9(3) of the Act, unsolicited written communications (e.g. mailshots) issued by the Authority for the purpose of furnishing information to the public are published in both Irish and English.

3.2 By Phone.

Receptionists/switchboard operators are the first points of contact with the public. The policy of the Authority is to ensure that standard Quality Customer Service (QCS) practice applies in this area, so that at the commencement of the scheme:

- Reception/switchboard staff are able to give the name of the organisation in Irish.
- They are at least familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.
- Suitable arrangements are in place so that they can put members of the public in touch, without delay, with the office or officer responsible for offering the service required through Irish, where available.

3.3 Recorded Oral Announcements.

Recorded oral announcements made by the Authority or on our behalf will be in Irish and English.

Under the 2008 Regulations, public bodies are required to ensure that recorded oral announcements made by them or on their behalf are in Irish or in English and Irish by 1 July, 2013. The Regulations relate to recorded oral announcements by telephone, public address system and computerised answering/messaging system.

The Authority does not operate public address or computerised answering/messaging systems. Recorded messages on the Authority's main switchboard are made in both Irish and English.

3.4 Callers in Person.

Every effort will be made to facilitate callers in person who wish to conduct their business with the Authority through Irish.

As stated earlier, receptionists/switchboard operators are the first points of contact with the public. The policy of the Authority is to ensure that standard Quality Customer Service (QCS) practice applies in this area, so that at the commencement of the scheme:

- Reception/switchboard staff are able to give the name of the organisation in Irish.
- They are at least familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.
- Suitable arrangements are in place so that they can put members of the public in touch, without delay, with the office or officer responsible for offering the service required through Irish, where available.

3.5 Website.

The Authority will continue to provide and maintain an Irish language section on our website.

Information regarding the roles and activities of the Authority is provided in the Irish language section of our website. We will continue to develop and improve the range of information available in Irish on our website during the period of this scheme.

4. Press Releases and Media Advertisements.

The Authority will issue 30% of our press releases bilingually from the commencement of the Scheme and this will increase on an incremental basis to 60% over the lifetime of the Scheme.

Advertisements in the written media will be in the Irish language and, as may be deemed appropriate, also in the English language.

5. Signage.

The 2008 Regulations place a duty on public bodies to ensure that signs placed by them or on their behalf at any site (including office premises) after 1 March, 2009 (subject to certain exemptions) are in Irish or in English and Irish. The Regulations also impose specific requirements in relation to the text used, e.g. the text in Irish must appear first, must not be smaller than the English text and be as prominent, visible and legible as the text in English.

The Authority's policy in relation to signage is set out in the following paragraphs.

5.1 Office Signs.

All signs in the Authority's offices will comply with the requirements of the 2008 Regulations within the specified timeframe.

5.2 Road Traffic Signs.

The Authority will continue to implement the Irish language requirements for traffic signs, as set out in the Traffic Signs Manual published by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

For the purposes of this scheme, road traffic signs include the following categories of signs:

- a) **Directional signage.**
- b) **Traffic Information** signs, including road works, safety/warning and tolling.

5.3 Road Scheme Information Signs.

The Authority will ensure that road scheme information signs comply with the requirements of the 2008 Regulations within the specified timeframe.

Road scheme information signs, i.e. signs erected at the sites of major improvement works on the network of national roads that display information about the project, will be provided in either Irish or in English and Irish, in accordance with the timeframes set out in the 2008 Regulations.

6. Publications.

6.1 Corporate Documents.

The Authority will publish simultaneously in both Irish and English the following corporate documents:

- Annual Report
- Audited Accounts/Financial Statements
- Corporate Statement of Strategy
- Policy Statements
- Customer Action Plan
- Customer Charter
- Freedom of Information Manuals.

6.2 Information Leaflets, Brochures and Publications.

The Authority will publish the following information leaflets, brochures and publications simultaneously in both Irish and English:

- NRA Information Leaflets Series
- Seanda (NRA archaeology magazine, published annually)
- Toll information leaflets.

The Authority publishes various information leaflets and brochures with the aim of informing the general public of the Authority's functions and activities in relation to the national roads development programme and associated matters, including road tolling, the environment and archaeology. Any leaflets, brochures or publications that are distributed by mailshot will be issued in accordance with the provisions of Section 3.1.3 of this scheme.

6.3 Road Scheme Documentation.

There is a wide variety of road scheme documentation published by or on behalf of the Authority in connection with road schemes. Such documentation may include Environmental Impact Statements (EISs), statutory notices, public consultation documents/questionnaires, technical documents relating to design and construction standards, guidelines relating to environmental and archaeological assessment etc. The Authority's policy in relation to the use of Irish in such documentation is as follows:

Standards/Guidelines.

This category includes technical documents such as the Authority's Project Management Guidelines and Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, as well as environmental and archaeological guidelines and documentation.

NRA technical documents, including engineering, environmental and archaeological standards, guidelines etc., will be published in English only.

Scheme-Specific Documentation.

This category includes scheme information leaflets/brochures, public consultation documentation, including questionnaires, as well as statutory documentation required under the Roads Act, 1993, as amended (e.g. Environmental Impact Statements, Motorway Schemes, Compulsory Purchase Orders, Toll Schemes, Toll Bye-Laws and Service Area Schemes).

The following road scheme documents will be published in Irish and in English:

- Scheme information leaflets/brochures.
- Public consultation documentation, including questionnaires.
- The Non-Technical Summary volume of Environmental Impact Statements, where the schemes concerned lie either within or in close proximity to a Gaeltacht area.

All other road scheme documents will be published in English only.

7. Training and Development.

The Authority is committed to providing appropriate training and development for our staff to meet the Authority's business needs, including the needs of our customers.

During the period of this scheme the Authority will:

- make available to all staff of the Authority appropriate Irish language training opportunities, including within normal working hours;
- promote the refund of fees scheme as a mechanism for encouraging Irish language training;
- provide advice to staff on the range of relevant Irish language classes available outside office hours (e.g., third-level diploma in Irish, Gaelchultúr, Gael-Linn, etc.);
- include language awareness as part of both induction and customer service training courses so as to ensure that staff understand the context and background to the Authority's Irish language policy and how the policy will affect their work;
- assess all courses undertaken by staff to ascertain how effectively the courses meet the Authority's goals, and
- seek to ensure, as Irish language capability within the Authority develops, that personnel are available to provide Irish language services across the various organisational units of the Authority.

8. Monitoring and Review of Scheme.

Heads of Sections will monitor day-to-day issues relating to this scheme as they arise and provide feedback to the Management Team. A review of the operation of the scheme generally will be carried out during the period of the scheme.

9. Publicising the Scheme.

The scheme will be communicated to our stakeholders and the general public via the Authority's website. A copy of the scheme has been forwarded to Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge from whom the Authority received a submission in relation to the preparation of the scheme.

A copy of this scheme has also been forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

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

10. Help and Advice.

This scheme has been prepared to outline the Authority's policies regarding the use of the Irish language in the context of the Official Languages Act, 2003 and Regulations made under the Act by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Comments and/or requests for further information on the scheme are welcome and should be addressed to the Authority's Programme & Regulatory Unit.

A comprehensive range of documentation and information regarding the provisions of the 2003 Act and associated Regulations is available on the following websites;

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht *www.ahg.gov.ie*.

An Coimisinéir Teanga, *www.coimisineir.ie*.

