



Official Languages Act 2003 Language Scheme 2020-2023

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND:

1.1 Introduction

The **Official Languages Act 2003** provides for the preparation by public bodies of a language scheme detailing the services which they will provide:

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

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

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

1.2 Preparation & Content of the Scheme

In the preparation of the National Transport Authority's language scheme, due regard has been given to the guidelines issued by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. In addition, there has been a comprehensive process of consultation with relevant stakeholders (see Appendix 1).

The National Transport Authority (NTA) is guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on:

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

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

1.3 Commencement Date of the Scheme

This Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It commences with effect from **19 May 2020** and shall remain in force for a period of three years or until a new scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF NTA

2.1 Mission & Objectives

Our Mission is to increase the share of travel by sustainable transport across the country by:

1. Regulating and procuring attractive, high quality and safe public transport services.
2. Securing the development and implementation of an accessible and integrated transport system.
3. Contributing to the effective integration of transport and land use planning policy and investment; and
4. Enhancing the perception and raising awareness of public transport,

in a manner that supports government policies and prioritise and contributes to economic development, environmental sustainability and social cohesion in the State.

Our strategic objectives are set out in our **Statement of Strategy 2018-2022**, which is available in Irish.

2.2 Main Functions

In broad terms, the NTA's current statutory functions can be summarised as follows;

National

- Procure public transport services by means of Public Service Obligation contracts;
- Provide integrated ticketing, fares and public transport network;
- Develop an integrated, accessible public transport information;
- Licence public bus passenger services that are not subject to a public transport services contract;
- Manage the Rural Transport Programme and the successor structure of Transport Coordination Units;
- Provide bus infrastructure and fleet and cycling facilities and schemes;
- Develop and implement a single public transport brand;
- Develop and maintain a regulatory framework for the control and operation of small public service vehicles and their drivers;
- Prepare statutory submissions on Regional Planning Guidelines;
- Collect statistical data and information on transport;
- Enforce EU passenger rights in rail, maritime and bus and coach transport;
- Validate EU authorisations and journey forms in relation to bus and coach travel in accordance with **EU Regulation No. 1073/2009**; and

- Operate as the national conciliation body for electronic toll service providers.
- Regulation of vehicle clamping

Greater Dublin Area

- Undertake strategic planning of transport;
- Invest in all public transport infrastructure; and
- Develop the effective management of traffic and transport demand.

Other Functions

In addition to its statutory functions the NTA also undertakes a number of functions on behalf of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport on a non-statutory basis. The non-statutory functions include:

- Planning and funding of sustainable transport projects in the regional cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford;
- Administration of the Smarter Travel Workplaces and Smarter Travel Campus Programmes;
- Management of the Green-Schools Travel Programme; and
- Provision of accessibility funding to transport operators and other relevant bodies.

2.3 Key Services

Broadly speaking the public services provided by the NTA fall into three main parts set out in the following table. The table also describes the principal users of these services.

Nature of Service	Service Provided	Customers & Clients
Promotion of sustainable transport modes (walking, cycling, public transport)	Development of services in support of sustainable transport (real-time passenger information, National Journey Planner, Cycle Planners, Leap card); Provision of public transport information (e.g. through websites, social media, apps); Promotion of public transport (e.g. through social media, advertising, etc.)	This role directly impacts the travelling public by providing them with up-to-date information about public transport services. Leap card provides a more convenient, secure and cheaper means of paying public transport fares.

Nature of Service	Service Provided	Customers & Clients
Regulation of public transport infrastructure (bus, rail and small public service vehicles)	Secure the provision of public transport services in accordance with the provisions of contracts or regulations. However, it is important to note that public transport services are provided by both public and private transport companies.	This role mainly impacts business users i.e. public transport operators (including small public service vehicle operators) who are required to comply with the relevant requirements.
Provision of sustainable transport infrastructure (walking, cycling, public transport)	Planning and managing delivery of public transport infrastructure projects.	This mainly impacts personnel working in local authorities, transport operators, representative groups. However, the general public has of course an interest in the planning and delivery of public transport infrastructure. This public interest is mainly facilitated through targeted public consultations.

2.4 Customers & Clients

See table above.

CHAPTER 3: SERVICES BEING PROVIDED IN ENGLISH & BILINGUALLY

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

Current Provision of Services;

Services (General)	In English only	Bilingually, in English and Irish
Real-time passenger information displays at bus stop	No.	Yes. The roll-out of RTPI displays at bus stops commenced in late 2010.
On-board announcements	No.	Yes. NTA funding for new buses and the upgrading of the existing bus fleet has facilitated the provision of next-stop announcements (oral and visual) for passengers. These announcements, which identify the bus stops on the bus route in use, are in Irish and English.
Small Public Service Vehicle (SPSV) Information Cards	No.	Yes. SPSV passenger information cards, which provide taxi, hackney and limousine passengers with useful information about their rights and responsibilities, and are required to be displayed in every SPSV as a licensing condition, are in both Irish and English.
Bus stop information	No.	Yes. Currently Information regarding running times on bus stops is available in both English and Irish.
SPSV Information Line	No.	Yes. The SPSV Information Line can be contacted by members of the public as well as industry members. The Line, which is operated by a third party under contract, does have a bilingual contact facility.
Services in Gaeltacht Areas	No.	LocalLink bus services on boarding signage and bus stop information are available in Irish.
Vehicle Clamping	No.	Yes. Both tickets and stickers informing offenders of their fine are displayed in both English and Irish respectively.

CHAPTER 4: ENHANCING THE PROVISION OF IRISH LANGUAGE SERVICES

Means of communication with the public		Commitment	
Recorded Oral Announcements		<p>The following recorded oral announcements will be in Irish or bilingual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Recorded oral announcements provided on the telephone when the offices of the public body are closed; b) Recorded oral announcements transmitted by a public address system; c) Recorded oral announcements created and transmitted by means of a computerised messaging system or a computerised telephone answering system; <p>This provision relates to ‘recorded’ announcements rather than ‘live announcements’.</p> <p>Where a Placenames Order is in force, a public body is required to use the Irish language version of the placename specified in that order in recorded oral announcements made by it or on its behalf.</p>	Mandatory
Written Communication	Letters and Electronic Mail	All written communication will be responded to in the official language in which it was received.	Mandatory
	Stationery	Headings of stationery, including notepaper, compliment slips’, fax cover sheets, file covers and other folders, labels and envelopes are provided in Irish or bilingually.	Mandatory
Signage		All signage placed by the public body or on its behalf must be in Irish or bilingually, in accordance with the regulations (S.I. No.391/2008) .	Mandatory

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

National Transport Authority

The objective of the NTA’s language scheme is to continue the process of providing services directed to the general public through Irish.

However, it is important to acknowledge that some progress has been made already. The previous chapter outlined the significant measures already in place to extend the use of Irish in respect of public transport services which represent a practical and positive way of meeting the demand for services in the Irish language from the public at large.

The majority of the responses to our public consultation appear to support similar further practical measures to extend the use of Irish for public transport users through the provision of bilingual “permanent and oral notices on all transport services” and “website and ticket reservation methods”.

In this regard the key areas in which the NTA plays a role are:

1. Provision of public transport information; and
2. Provision of integrated public transport tickets and supporting service (Leap Card).

Means of Communication with the Public		Commitment	Timeline
Oral/Written Communication	Reception	<p>The NTA does not employ a receptionist. The NTA reception area is manned by security personnel provided by a security firm under a contract with the NTA.</p> <p>A guide to the basic greetings in Irish has been circulated to staff along with a list of Irish speakers within the NTA who are willing to speak to callers to our HQ who wish to converse in Irish.</p> <p>The NTA will provide beginner and advancement Irish courses to both new starters and existing staff to further enhance Irish linguistic skills within the NTA.</p>	Will be continuously upheld
	Face to Face/Counter Service	<p>The NTA does not provide any counter services for the general public.</p> <p>If and when a new counter service is required, provision will be made for delivery of services through both Irish and English.</p> <p>A list of Irish speaking staff members who are willing to converse to the public through Irish will be in circulation.</p>	Ongoing
	Switchboard	<p>Telephone operators are the immediate reference point with the public. We have ensured that they introduce the name of the organisation in Irish (where recorded oral announcements are not already provided).</p> <p>Operators are provided with a</p>	Ongoing

Oral/Written Communication		<p>list of willing Irish speaking staff (where available) that are designated to take calls from Irish language speakers and assist them in identifying the appropriate contact person.</p> <p>Irish language training will be made easily available to any operators interested at both beginner and advancement levels.</p>	
	Telephone Communications with the Public	<p>A circulated list of willing Irish speaking staff is currently available to all staff members who need assistance in conversing with Irish speaking members of the public.</p> <p>Beginner and advancement Irish speaking training courses will be made readily accessible for all members of staff willing to speak to members of the public seeking services in Irish.</p> <p>The NTA will further explore the viability of have Irish speaking staff and training in operation in regards to the Leap Card customer centre.</p> <p>Individual staff members are encouraged to leave telephone voice mail announcements in the Irish language, where practicable.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Immediate</p>
	Recorded Oral Announcements	The NTA will continue funding the provision of bilingual oral	Continue to roll-

		and visual announcements on subsidised public transport services and at real-time passenger information displays.	out programme as funding allows.
	Live Announcements	Not relevant to the NTA.	
	Information Leaflets/Brochures	<p>To uphold and promote that all Public transport timetables, leaflets and brochures distributed by the NTA to the public will be bilingual.</p> <p>The NTA has published and distributed bi-lingual 2nd round network redesign leaflets and Core bus corridors brochures to 29 local areas and 16 corridors through 2019. The NTA also released press advertisements in Irish to promote BusConnects and public consultations in regards to its re-design. We will apply this approach to all future major projects undertaken by the NTA.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Media	Press Releases	<p>A bilingual press release, announcing news developments, industry information or new initiatives will continue to be issued quarterly in both English and Irish language versions, this will be further improved through the timeframe to a bi-weekly issuing.</p> <p>A bilingual press release will be</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

		<p>issued monthly.</p> <p>Corporate Communications will maintain a record of staff that will be in a position to carry out television and radio interviews through Irish. If one is not present the NTA will upskill a member of staff to liaise with the Irish language media.</p>	
	Other – Social Media	<p>With social media continuing to expand itself as an important means of communication with customers in real time, the NTA will examine the demand for Irish language services through social media outlets, such as Twitter and Facebook, NTA will hit a weekly target of at least one post on all platforms in Irish.</p> <p>The NTA will post in Irish once on month on Twitter as it is our main social media platform.</p> <p>NTA will post once a month in Irish across all our social media platforms also.</p> <p>Post once a week across all our social media platforms in Irish.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>By end of Year 1</p> <p>By end of Year 1</p> <p>By end of Year 2</p>
	Email	<p>Identify staff members who can reply to emails in Irish at the same standard that is supplied in English.</p> <p>Security footers on all e-Mails issued from the NTA are</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

		currently both in the Irish and English languages and any further updates to those will be supplied in both languages.	
Information Technology	Websites	<p>The NTA's target of developing the Transport for Ireland website into a bilingual website has been successfully completed. www.transportforireland.ie The website provides information about public transport services to the travelling public, receives about 700,000 visits annually.</p> <p>In regards to transforming the Local Link website to a bilingual platform there's been vast improvements and we hope to have the website completely translated into Irish for service users. (www.locallink.ie)</p> <p>Outline options relating to the conversion of the Leap Card website in to a functioning bilingual site. www.leapcard.ie</p> <p>To follow on the example of www.transportforireland.ie and update www.nationaltransport.ie as a bilingual website</p>	<p>By end of Year 2</p> <p>By end of Year 3</p>
	Information Technology	Computer Systems	Our word-processing systems are currently capable of

		<p>handling Irish. The NTA will ensure that this capability is retained in any future upgrades to our systems.</p> <p>The NTA will invest in Computer-Assisted Translation software (e.g. SDL Trados) for use by the designated Irish Language Officer. Training in the use of this software will be provided to the Irish Language Officer to ensure the maximum use of machine translation (MT) in this service.</p>	<p>By end of Year 2</p>
	<p>Other</p>	<p>Real Time Passenger Information System (RTPI)</p> <p>The NTA will continue to ensure that bilingual information is provided on RTPI displays at bus stops and as the scheme is extended to new areas (subject to the availability of funding).</p> <p>Next stop Announcements</p> <p>The NTA will continue to ensure that automated systems on public transport vehicles which provide passengers with the next stop information will be bilingual.</p> <p>Corporate Publications</p> <p>The NTA's Annual Report, Financial Statements and Statements of Strategy will continue to be published in Irish and English.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

		<p>The NTA also commits to the continued publication in Irish of all its major statutory plans and policies (Transport Strategy, Integrated Implementation Plan and Strategic Traffic Management Plan).</p> <p>All static material on the homepage on the NTA website which describes the NTA's structure, its policy areas and the work of its operators will be available in Irish.</p> <p>Public Consultations</p> <p>Where there is a statutory requirement to consult with the general public on public transport issues the public notice inviting to submissions and the principal consultation document will be published in both Irish and English.</p>	By end of Year 3
Gaeltacht	Rural Transport	All rural transport booking services through Locallink offices in Gaeltacht areas will provide the facility to book a service through Irish.	Ongoing

CHAPTER 5: ENHANCING THE PROVISION OF IRISH LANGUAGE SERVICES IN GAELTACHT AREAS

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

Commitments in Gaeltacht Areas

Description of Service in Gaeltacht Area	Commitment	Timeline
Subsidised Public Transport Services	<p>Local Services are currently an array of select services in Gaeltacht areas in Mayo, Waterford, Galway, Kerry & Donegal.</p> <p>Dual information on all services in Gaeltacht areas available online and offline, including timetables, posters, transport request forms, marketing material.</p> <p>Customer service available to book services in Irish in for passengers living in Gaeltacht areas</p>	<p>By end of Year 2</p>

CHAPTER 6: IMPROVING LANGUAGE CAPABILITY

6.1 Recruitment

The recruitment of staff with the appropriate level of competence in the Irish language in each area of work of the NTA will be the primary means of optimising the availability of services through Irish. Our recruitment policy, which is subject to the framework of agreed national recruitment procedures, will have regard to the need to improve Irish language capability on an incremental basis. All new staff will be provided with an induction pack containing a copy of our agreed scheme in order to ensure that they are made aware of our commitments under the legislation.

6.2 Training & Development

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

		Commitment	Timeline
Improving Irish Language Capability	Recruitment/Induction	<p>The NTA provides job application forms in Irish.</p> <p>When attending induction training, all new entrants are informed of obligations arising for all staff under the Official Languages Act 2003 and commitments made in Departments Irish Language Scheme.</p> <p>NTA will explore possibility of recruiting a dedicated staff member, whose responsibilities would include providing support for Irish language aspects of Authority's work.</p>	<p>In effect</p> <p>By end of Year 1</p> <p>By end of Year 3</p>
	Training	The NTA will offer	Ongoing

		structured Irish language training courses to staff members. This will be done with a view to ensuring that Irish language skills are distributed throughout the organisation.	
	Participation in Language Promotion Activities/Provision of Resources	We will continue to participate in Irish language promotions such as Seachtain na Gaelige through social media, press releases, events for staff, etc.	Ongoing

Irish Language Capability

Having regard to Government policy for enhanced provision of services in Irish, the NTA will continue to, identify any posts for which Irish language competency is an essential requirement. Every effort has been made to fulfil these requirements having regard to recruitment, promotion and training policies, as appropriate. This enables the NTA to plan and prioritise the incremental improvement of services in Irish in a more strategic manner. The NTA is currently providing these requirements through;

- Designated Irish language officers, who can liaise with customers and business through the medium of Irish.
- Posts updates and new information about the Authority in both English and Irish.
- Provides Irish language training for staff members currently for beginners, but is committed to provide advance courses.
- Offers job application forms in both English and Irish.

CHAPTER 7: MONITORING AND REVIEW

The implementation of the scheme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by Heads of Sections who will provide feedback to the NTA Management Team. The contact person for the scheme will be Dermot O’Gara.

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

CHAPTER 8: PUBLICISING OF AGREED SCHEME

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

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

- Directly informing customers on a proactive basis of the option of conducting business with us through Irish, for example, by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the Irish language services that are available;
- Prominently listing these services on our website;
- Signifying on selected guidelines, leaflets and application forms that these documents are also available in Irish, unless presented bilingually;
- Giving equal prominence to Irish and English language materials.

A copy of the agreed scheme will be forwarded to the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.

APPENDIX 1 – CONSULTATION PROCESS

In accordance with the provisions of **Section 13(1)(a)** of the 2003 Act, the NTA published a bilingual notice of its intention to prepare a draft scheme on 16 September 2015 in the Irish Independent and Tuairisc.ie. The notice invited submissions in relation to the preparation of the draft scheme from interested parties by 19 October 2015. Requests for submissions were also issued on the NTA's Twitter and Facebook pages.

In total 11 separate responses were received. Of these 10 suggested the use of Irish for every service starting with those most frequently used especially permanent and oral notices on all transport services, as well as for websites and ticket reservations. The remaining submission suggests that the scheme should focus initially on translating press releases and websites as well as developing a bilingual public relations function which would be able to engage directly with Irish language media. These inputs have been considered in the preparation of the draft scheme.

The CEO also sent an email to NTA staff inviting them to make submissions. This was supplemented by an online survey of staff to gather information about the demand for Irish from service users, number of Irish speakers, etc. in the NTA.

The response to the survey was good. In total 50 responses were received. The main results of the survey are as follows:

- 7 staff members dealt with a query in Irish in the last 12 months;
- Most staff have only a rudimentary knowledge of Irish or none at all;
- 18 staff expressed definite interest in receiving Irish language training; and
- 15 staff indicated that would be prepared to consider becoming a contact point for Irish language queries if appropriate training was provided.
- A number of responses suggested that the NTA's service through Irish could be improved mainly through the provision of Irish language training and provision of Irish language versions of NTA websites.