

Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin Nósanna Imeachta an Pholasaí Dhátheagachais Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Bilingualism Procedures

1. TITLE

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Bilingualism Procedures

2. STATEMENT

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is committed to the protection and encouragement of the Irish Language. The Council recognises the Irish Language is an expression of cultural wealth and there is a need for the Council to promote Irish in order to safeguard and strengthen it.

3. AIM

The procedures will build on the Council's commitment to celebrate diversity by

1. The delivery of equality of opportunity for all who avail of and / or provide Council services using progressive realisation*
2. To fulfil Council's obligations as contained in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*
3. Comply with its statutory requirements under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998)*

4. PRINCIPLES

The procedures apply to all Council business and functions and are intended to deliver linguistic equality for all who avail of and / or provide Council services (using progressive realisation).

The procedures will:

- a) Enable everyone who receives or uses Council services, or contributes to the democratic process, to do so through the medium of Irish or English, according to personal choice
- b) Ensure and promote the use of Irish in the internal administration of Council, in its dealings with other public bodies and bodies that provide services to the public in the Council District
- c) Ensure members of the public, Council members, management and employees can express their views and needs better in their preferred language
- d) Ensure that enabling the public to use their preferred language is a matter of good practice and customer care and not a concession
- e) To ensure members of the public and employees can use their name and address in Irish
- f) To ensure the right of employees to use Irish within the workplace and that of members of the public to use Irish within Council buildings

The Council objectives regarding the Irish Language will be delivered through the following procedures:

5. IDENTITY

5.1 Corporate Identity

Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin Nósanna Imeachta an Pholasaí Dhátheagachais Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Bilingualism Procedures

The corporate identity, Council image and reputation are all part of the Council's brand. The logo of the Council will be consistent and projected as a primary vehicle for customer contact on all printed material.

Guidance on adopting and using the bilingual corporate identity, as detailed in the Council's Corporate Brand Guidelines, will be issued to staff, designers and others who reproduce the Council's written material.

The title of Council reflects the Council's commitment to promoting the Irish language and should always be bilingual with the Irish language above the English and when side by side the Irish Language should be to the left of the English.

5.2 Signage / Visibility / Exhibitions

The Council will continue to apply Dual Street Name and Street Naming and Numbering policies (which are currently under review). An index of dual-language street names will be maintained and updated. Certain exemptions will apply e.g. safety warnings at quays / harbours which will be dealt with under progressive realization.

A phased implementation plan will be devised for the erection of English and Irish internal and external signage on Council owned properties;

Irish will be incorporated into some display material. Marketing of exhibitions to include Irish using progressive realisation.

6. COMMUNICATION

6.1 Reception

Guidance will be offered to receptionists and telephonists, through the provision of a 'courtesy code', allowing them to respond appropriately to enquiries in Irish.

6.2 Mail and Email

Written communications received in Irish will be responded to in Irish within an agreed timescale. Guidance provided to staff on how to deal with written communications in Irish. Bilingual strap line to be included on Council emails.

6.3 Telephone

Guidance will be given to staff on how to deal with calls from Irish speakers. When no Irish speaker is available calls received in Irish will be returned by an Irish speaking member of staff or outside source where that is the preference of the caller.

6.4 Internal / External Forms

Irish versions of all internal documentation, with the exception of technical/ long documents which will be dealt with using progressive realisation, will be made available to the public and staff on request.

7. COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

7.1 Council will work to ensure people attending Council meetings are able to contribute through

Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Nósanna Imeachta an Pholasaí Dhátheagachais
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Bilingualism Procedures

- 7.3 the medium of Irish, using progressive realisation and where prior notice has been received Council will provide interpretation facilities using progressive realisation when requested to do so.
- 7.3 When English and Irish presentations need to be made, simultaneous translation services will be made available to employees who have no knowledge of the Irish language supported by Irish speaking members of staff
- 7.4 Council will establish a budget for delivery of the policy and to follow normal Council business processes i.e. Council sections to include costs / expenditure in yearly estimates and business plans.
- 7.5 According to need and as resources allow, information leaflets, flyers and other Council literature should be available to the public in English and Irish format where appropriate.
- 7.6 According to needs and as resources allow forms will be produced in English and Irish format.

8. PUBLICATIONS

8.1 Printed Material

The Council's main documents will be provided in bilingual format e.g. Corporate Plan, Annual Report and incorporate Irish in non-Irish publications. Irish language versions of materials will be made available to ratepayers upon request.

8.2 Website

The Council's website will include an English and Irish format with the Irish language text updated in line with the English text where possible. Those pages receiving most user traffic, for example main front pages, will be available initially in English and Irish format. Headings of dynamic sections will also be of English and Irish format

9. RELATIONS

9.1 Public Relations

Council will use the Irish language in a range of printed material to increase the visibility of the language e.g. Irish or bilingual versions of selected press releases to be made available.

9.2 Media Relations

Council will issue press releases issued in Irish for the Irish Language media and where possible provide a bilingual spokesperson. Press releases will be selected for translation on the basis of qualitative criteria.

10. PRESENTATIONS

10.1 Public Speaking

Council representatives at civic events will be permitted to use Irish in their presentations and public speaking where advance notice has been provided. Provision of simultaneous interpretation services will be made where resources allow.

10.2 Events

**Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Nósanna Imeachta an Pholasaí Dhátheagachais
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Bilingualism Procedures**

Council will ensure when planning all festivals / civic celebrations consideration is given to the opportunity to promote the Irish language as a component part of these events. Council will support Irish language and cultural activities by facilitating events within Council buildings and venues using progressive realisation.

11. COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES / STAFF

11.1 Training

Council representatives will be provided with training opportunities in the Irish language the level and type of training required to be identified through the Performance and Development Review process

11.2 Personal Development Review (PDR)

Staff training requirements in the Irish language will be identified as part of the Performance and Development Review process.

12. PROCEDURE OWNER

Edwin Curtis
Director of Strategic Planning and Performance

13. CONTACT DETAILS REGARDING THESE PROCEDURES:

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Tel: 02830313233

14. PROCEDURE AUTHORISATION

Governance Committee Authorised on

Council Authorised on

15. PROCEDURES EFFECTIVE DATE

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Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Nósanna Imeachta an Pholasaí Dhátheagachais
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Bilingualism Procedures

Appendix 1

Definitions

Progressive Realisation

The Council will take steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realisation of the Bilingual Procedures using affordable resources.

This is known as the principle of "progressive realisation". It acknowledges that some of the rights (for example public speaking through the medium of Irish) may be difficult in practice to achieve in a short period of time and be subject to resource constraints, but requires the Council to act as best it can within its means.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages:

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) is a European treaty (CETS 148) adopted in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe to protect and promote historical regional and minority languages in Europe.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).

The statutory duties under Section 75 require public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and also to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations

The Good Friday Agreement (Belfast Agreement)

The Good Friday Agreement or Belfast Agreement was signed in Belfast on 10 April 1998 (Good Friday) by the British and Irish governments and endorsed by most Northern Ireland political parties. The concord was endorsed by the voters of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in separate referenda on 23 May 1998.

St Andrews Agreement

The St Andrews Agreement was an agreement between the British and Irish Governments and the political parties in relation to the devolution of power to Northern Ireland. The agreement resulted from multi-party talks held in St Andrews, Fife, Scotland from 11 October to 13 October 2006, between the two governments and all the major parties in Northern Ireland. It resulted in the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the formation (on 8 May 2007) of a new Northern Ireland Executive.

Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin Nósanna Imeachta an Pholasaí Dhátheagachais Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Bilingualism Procedures

Appendix 2

Linkage to wider policy and legislation

These procedures relate directly to the following:

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages states that policies, legislation and practice are to be based on the following objectives and principles:

- the recognition of the Irish language as an expression of cultural wealth;
- the respect of the geographical area of the Irish language in order to ensure that existing or new administrative divisions do not constitute an obstacle to the promotion of Irish;
- the need for resolute action to promote Irish in order to safeguard the language;
- the facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of Irish, in speech and writing, in private and public life;
- the maintenance and development of links between groups using Irish and other groups in the State employing the Irish language in identical or similar form, as well as the establishment of cultural relations with other groups in the State using different languages;
- the provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of Irish at all appropriate stages;
- the provision of facilities enabling non-speakers of Irish living in the area where it is used to learn it if they so desire;
- the promotion of study on and research into Irish at universities or equivalent institutions;
- the promotion of appropriate types of transnational exchanges (i.e. cross border exchanges)

Article 10 of The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages refers specifically to Administrative Authorities and Public Services and the relevant principles designed to guide them:

- To ensure that users of Irish may submit oral or written applications to the administrative authority;
- To allow the administrative authorities to draft documents in Irish;
- To use Irish in debates in their assemblies, without excluding, however, the use of the official language(s) of the State;
- To use or adopt, if necessary in conjunction with the name in the official language(s) of traditional and correct forms of place-names in Irish.

With regard to public services provided by the administrative authorities or other persons acting on their behalf, the Council must undertake to:

- To allow users to submit a request in Irish.

**Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Nósanna Imeachta an Pholasaí Dhátheagachais
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Bilingualism Procedures**

- To provide translation or interpretation as may be required;
- To allow the use or adoption of family names in Irish at the request of those concerned.