

Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin

Straitéis na Gaeilge 2024-2027

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Irish Language Strategy 2024-2027



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1. Introduction

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council recognises the Irish language as an integral part of the heritage, identity and cultural life of the district. We have a strong, vibrant, ever increasing Irish Language community living, working, visiting and socialising in the Council area.

The Council remains committed to and will actively promote the objectives set out in our Bilingualism Policy and have put in place the necessary structures to ensure that the Irish language and Irish language community has a sustainable future.

The Council also acknowledges the introduction of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 and Council's need to prepare for the language standards a future Irish Language Commissioner may create.

Building upon our Irish Language Strategy 2020-2023, we have developed an Irish Language Strategy for the period 2024-2027 which sets out how the Council will continue to:

- increase the use of Irish language within its functions;
- facilitate the use of the Irish language when communicating with the public and relevant stakeholders; and
- promote and encourage the development of the Irish language across the Council area.

2. The strategic framework – mission, vision and values

Council's mission is twofold:

- To mainstream the use of Irish Language in the internal administration of Council, and in its dealings with other public bodies and the community.
- To embed equality of opportunity standards, address barriers of access to information and services, promote the development of the Irish Language, and to give leadership in meeting the evidenced needs of existing and emerging Irish language communities within the District.

Our Council's vision for the Irish Language Strategy 2024-2027 is:

- To establish a sustainable environment which supports and enables the use and development of the Irish language in public, personal, economic and community life.

In pursuing our mission, we will be guided by the five values outlined within the Council's Corporate Plan 2023-27:

- **Collaborative:** We will work in partnership with others;
- **Responsive:** We will listen and respond openly and positively to the views of everyone;

- **Engaging:** We will involve residents and staff in identifying needs and improving our services;
- **Sustainable:** We will modernise and transform our services in developing the district for current and future generations; and,
- **Transparent:** We will make our decisions and resource allocation openly and decisions will be informed by objective evidence.

In addition to these values, we will seek to be active and progressive in our mission.

3. Strategic objectives

The two strategic objectives of the Irish Language Strategy 2024-2027 are as follows:

Strategic Objective 1: To facilitate, enable and encourage the development of the Irish Language within Newry, Mourne and Down District Council as an organisation and within the District.

Strategic Objective 2: To effectively engage with the Irish Language Community to strengthen community capacity, encourage collaboration, co-operation and identify appropriate funding opportunities.

4. The delivery framework

4.1 The associated action plan to deliver upon the two strategic objectives sets out:

- **Positive actions:** the detail and anticipated scale of the action.
- **Performance Measures:** demonstrating how effectively the strategy is achieving its anticipated outcomes.
- **Outcomes:** what will change as a result of the proposed action.
- **Responsibility:** identifies the relevant responsibility in relation to a given action.
- **Timeframes:** when the action will be delivered.

The actions complement the Council's Corporate Plan, and Bilingualism Policy to facilitate and encourage the promotion and use of both the Irish language and the English language in the Council area through:

- Progressively realising greater access to information and services;
- Increasing Irish language community capacity, civic engagement and participation, and encouraging partnership-working;
- Improving sustainability and viability of the Irish language community sector; and,
- Developing connectivity between Irish language communities and the

- Statutory and Voluntary sectors;
- Appropriate budget allocation, monitoring, evaluation and review.

5. Structure and governance

Council's Irish Language Unit is responsible for implementation of the Irish Language Strategy. The Unit is part of the Corporate Policy Section within the Council's Corporate Services Directorate.

The Council's Irish Language Strategy Cross Party Working Group has a pivotal role in considering and discussing the implementation of the Irish Language Strategy. The Irish Language Strategy Cross Party Working Group does not have decision making powers, it makes recommendations only. Recommendations arising are tabled at the Council's Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

6. Monitoring and review

Six-monthly reports on progress will be prepared for consideration by the Irish Language Strategy Cross Party Working Group.

The Irish Language Strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure actions and the associated budget remain relevant and appropriate.

Strategic objective 1		To facilitate, enable and encourage the development of the Irish Language within Newry, Mourne and Down District Council as an organisation and within the District.		
Positive action	Performance measure	Outcome	Responsibility	Timeframe
1.1 Provision of core Irish language Services of Irish Language Unit (ILU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation & interpretation • Advice & support • Research re: Signage / Street and development naming • Updating of placenames resource • Programme to raise awareness and understanding of Irish language • Irish Language Week programme (Seachtain na Gaeilge) 	Delivery of core Irish Language services to Council, all Departments and Services and our community. Irish language and Irish Language Unit positively promoted and addressing perceptions around the language Increased awareness of Bilingualism Policy, Procedures and Guidelines	Irish Language Unit (ILU)	Ongoing core work of ILU
1.2 Develop and administer clear system and/or guidelines for translation of corporate documentation, signage etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of e-learning package for staff • Online presentation on Teams explaining process including suggested timeframe • Creation of ILUtranslations@nmandd.org • Acquisition and application of translating software • Engage with the Department for the Communities' Irish and Ulster-Scots central translation hub for the public sector 	Increased awareness of translation process Positive impact on relations with other departments through good communication Increased efficacy and accuracy in translation process Building relationships within the Council and with government departments	Irish Language Unit (ILU) IT Learning & Development Team (HR)	Jan 2024
1.3 Develop and promote eLearning tool on language awareness and Council's Irish Language Strategy, Bilingualism Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for employees	Uptake of Information / training sessions regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language awareness • best practice examples across the organisation Minimum of 2 workshops per annum re Bilingualism Policy & associated	Improved understanding of the practical application of Council's IL Bilingualism Policy, Procedure and Guidelines for Employees Improved communication and continuity across the organisation	ILU Learning & Development Team (HR) Communication & Marketing Department	Ongoing Review of Bilingualism Policy, Procedures and Guidelines

<p>Review Bilingualism Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for employees</p> <p>Raise awareness and promote practical application of NMDDC Brand Identity Guidelines (in conjunction with Communication & Marketing Department's Corporate Approach)</p>	<p>Procedures and Guidelines for Use of Irish in Council</p> <p>Reviewed Bilingualism Policy</p> <p>Revised Bilingualism Policy Procedures</p> <p>Revised Guidelines for employee in relation to the use of Irish Language in Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</p>	<p>Irish Language Unit promoting the Irish language across Council services / addressing barriers of access</p> <p>A consistent approach to the promotion of the Irish language across Council's services</p> <p>A consistent standard of service provision, in line with the Corporate Brand Identity Guidelines</p>		<p>due Jan 2025</p>
<p>1.4</p> <p>Mainstream Irish language within strategic and business plans and operational arrangements with particular focus on front-facing services.</p> <p>Development of a corporate outreach programme to improve understanding of and encourage positive attitudes towards the Irish Language.</p>	<p>Number of meetings with Directorates / Service areas</p> <p>Details of amendments / Number of prioritised programmes</p> <p>Meetings with DEA Officers</p> <p>Number of outreach engagements</p>	<p>Progressive realisation of mainstreaming bilingualism within Council functions</p> <p>Increased visibility and promotion of the Irish language at service delivery level</p> <p>Improvement in positive attitudes and understanding regarding the Irish Language</p>	<p>ILU</p> <p>Shared responsibility within relevant Directorates / Service Areas</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>1.5</p> <p>Development and maintenance of functioning bilingual website and social media platforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration of information • Prioritising, moderating and updating Irish language content on Council's website and 	<p>Functioning bilingual website and social media platforms operational</p> <p>Number of bilingual (Irish / English) social media posts on Council's channels</p> <p>Number of posts informing community</p>	<p>Progressive realisation of Council's bilingual website and social media platforms</p> <p>Functioning and meeting needs of Irish language communities in District and beyond</p> <p>Increased visibility of the Irish</p>	<p>ILU</p> <p>Shared responsibility within relevant Directorates / Service Areas</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> social media platforms • Addition of Irish Language Unit tab to existing website with info on ILU and services and link to strategy, relevant info • Regular publicity campaigns on Council's social media 	of existing Council services available through Irish	<p>language</p> <p>Increased awareness of Council website's current language tools (including Google Translate and the ReachDeck Toolbar)</p>		
1.6 Development of Programme of Events in conjunction with Comms and Marketing, Museums, Community Centres, Arts Centres	Promotion of content and events in advance of event dates	<p>Increased visibility of IL on website and social media platforms</p> <p>Attracting people into Council venues to enjoy Irish language / bilingual events</p>	ILU Museums Comms & Marketing Arts & Events Team Community Engagement	Ongoing
1.7 Prepare for the implementation of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 and the fulfilling of Council's legislative commitments.	<p>Meetings with Irish language leading bodies – regular communication with Conradh na Gaeilge regarding progress of legislation</p> <p>Meetings with IL officers from other local Councils to discuss and inform our own preparation of a plan of action</p>	Council preparedness for language standards developed by the Irish Language Commissioner when appointed	ILU / Corporate Policy Conradh na Gaeilge Other local Council	Ongoing
1.8 Six-monthly monitoring reports for consideration by the Irish Language Strategy Working Group	Monitoring reports completed	Monitoring, review and evaluation of Irish Language Strategy	ILU / Corporate Policy	Six-monthly during period of strategy

<p>1.9 Irish language capacity building / training for employees and Elected Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR to establish an Irish Language Professional Development pathway for employees and Elected Members; • On-going developmental support to Council departments on implementation of Council's Bilingualism Policy and associated Procedures • Traditional and e-learning approach • Funding obtained from central training budget • With pilot scheme of 10 employees to begin and progressing to a larger group 	<p>Irish Language Skills training offered as a professional learning and development opportunity – as pilot programme initially, progressing to wider uptake</p> <p>Meetings with HR to progress and determine budgetary source</p> <p>Numbers of attendees</p> <p>Development of an e-learning package</p>	<p>Enhanced employee skills and knowledge base</p> <p>Employees better equipped to implement bilingualism policy and mainstreaming of IL within Council functions as well as through community engagement roles</p>	<p>ILU HR Training & Development Officer IT</p>	<p>Delivered and reviewed annually during period of strategy</p> <p>April 2024 or earlier</p>
<p>1.10 Objective justification principles with regard to Irish language skills applied as part of all Recruitment and Selection processes</p>	<p>Number of posts which identify Irish Language as an essential or desirable criterion</p>	<p>Enhanced employee skills and knowledge base</p> <p>Improved service for Irish speaking community</p>	<p>HR / ILU / Corporate Policy</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>1.11 Continue mapping the Irish Language Community Infrastructure</p>	<p>Integration of Irish language infrastructure map for Irish language community development</p>	<p>Enhanced knowledge of Irish language community infrastructure</p>	<p>ILU / Community Engagement</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

	Work with Evidence & Research Team to develop infographic mapping the IL Community Infrastructure along with placenames mapped out bilingually	Improved equality of opportunity for residents accessing Irish language services from across the community		
1.12 Review of Irish Language Strategy 2024-2027	Four-year review of Irish Language Strategy	Monitoring, review and evaluation of Irish Language Strategy 2024-2027 and development of new Irish Language Strategy	ILU / Corporate Policy	November 2026 – April 2027

Strategic objective 2		To effectively engage with the Irish Language Community to strengthen community capacity, encourage collaboration, co-operation and identify appropriate funding opportunities.		
Positive action	Performance measure	Outcome	Responsibility	Timeframe
2.1 Through the approach of “Active Offer”, improve and enhance awareness of Council’s services amongst the Irish Language Community	Number of relevant services promoted	Increased awareness of Council services available through the Irish Language	ILU Shared responsibility within relevant Directorates / Service Areas	Ongoing
2.2 Facilitate continued development of Fóram an Dúin agus Oiriaila (Down and Oriel Forum)	Number of Forum meetings Number of people and/or groups in attendance Number of committee members with specific roles	Increased community engagement on critical issues such as provision of activities for young people Increased sustainability of Irish language community organisations Increased visibility and awareness of the role, projects and contribution of the Irish language community sector	ILU	Ongoing

<p>2.3 Implementation of Irish Language Financial Assistance programme .</p>	<p>Number of applicants</p> <p>Number of successful applicants</p> <p>Number of participants in successful projects – liaise with Programmes Unit</p>	<p>Irish Language community renewal and development, and positively engaging the Irish Language through financial assistance to support:</p> <p>a) Projects / initiatives that encourage Irish language community capacity building, mentoring and volunteering. It is envisaged that this scheme will inspire better developed Irish language communities to partner with newer or developing language communities to share resources and build better networks and encourage volunteering.</p> <p>b) Community engagement projects /initiatives to build positive relations, raise awareness and understanding, address perceptions and promote respect for the Irish language.</p>	<p>Programmes Unit</p> <p>ILU</p>	<p>Annually</p>
<p>2.4 Promote non-Council funding opportunities for Irish Language groups</p>	<p>Number of non-Council financial assistance opportunities promoted</p> <p>Number of online / in-person information sessions / presentations with IL groups</p>	<p>Provision of support to potential applicants of non-Council funding streams</p> <p>Sharing of information re. funding streams</p> <p>Increased capability of IL groups to access funding</p>	<p>ILU</p> <p>External funding bodies</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<p>2.5 Implementation of Irish Language Bursary Scheme</p> <p>Development of Electronic Management System</p>	<p>Number of applications</p> <p>Number of successful applicants</p> <p>Amount awarded</p> <p>Duration of time taken to process applications and claims</p>	<p>Individuals assisted to improve IL skills through bursaries for IL courses, including Gaeltacht colleges, intensive courses and relevant third level course modules.</p> <p>Modernising ILBS application system</p>	<p>ILU</p> <p>IT</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>January 2024</p>
<p>2.6 Education sector engagement, both directly and through liaising with Cumann na bhFiann (IL youth-focussed group)</p>	<p>Number of schools engaged with</p> <p>Number of students participating in workshops</p> <p>No. of IL youth clubs forming</p>	<p>Positive relationships maintained with education sector</p> <p>Contribution to voluntary sector through promotion of opportunities to students</p>	<p>ILU</p> <p>Education sector</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>2.7 Development and promotion of Irish Language Events and Media Content</p>	<p>Number of events</p> <p>No. of series of video content shared annually and archived online</p> <p>No. of Council venues used for events</p> <p>No. of views & shares on social media</p>	<p>Increased visibility of IL content online</p> <p>Positive impact on community through IL awareness and sharing of themes depicted in content</p> <p>Effective promotion of content through screenings; Q&A sessions</p> <p>Increased use of Council facilities</p>	<p>ILU</p> <p>Museums and relevant facilities</p> <p>IT</p> <p>Comms & Marketing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>