

Introduction

The Language Plan for the West Kerry Gaeltacht has been prepared for public consultation, prior to being submitted to Údaras na Gaeltachta before final submission for approval to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. There are nine sections in the proposed plan which is written entirely in Irish.

The following is a brief summary of each section:

Section 1: The Language Planning Process

This section provides an insight into the background of the process and the plan - i.e. 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 and the Gaeltacht Act 2012. The Gaeltacht Act 2012 has given statutory effect to the implementation of the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030, and under the Act, a language planning process was instigated and a language plan was prepared at community level for each Gaeltacht district. Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne was selected as the Lead Organisation in the preparation of the Language Plan in the West Kerry Gaeltacht. After a lengthy process of public consultation and research, the plan has now been prepared for submission. Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne will have seven years to implement the plan. The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in conjunction with Údarás na Gaeltachta will periodically review the implementation of the plan during the seven-year period.

Section 2: The Lead Organisation

This section contains information about the Lead Organisation: Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne.

Section 3: An Overview of the Language Planning Area

This section gives an overview of the current state of the area, including topography, population size and density, services, organisations and education in the area. It delineates survey data on the Irish language from Census 2011 and Nuashonrú ar an Staidéar Cuimsitheach ar Úsáid na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht (2015). The data indicates that there are 1,727 persons (three years and older) living in the electoral districts of Cill Chuáin, Cill Mhaolchéadair, Márthain, Dún Úrlann agus Dún Chaoin for whom Irish is the preferred language of daily use (Category A). There are 4,987 persons (three years and older) who live in other areas of the peninsula where Irish competes with English as the dominant language of the whole community / family. In these areas (Category B / C), Irish is still strong at an institutional level but is very weak or non-existent as the language of the household.

Section 4: An Overview of the Preparation of the Plan

This section gives a brief description of the importance of public participation in the process of preparing the plan and of the research carried out in its preparation.

Section 5: Research Results

This section presents the results of some primary quantitative and qualitative research conducted in the course of preparing the plan on current use of, and attitudes to the language. As with previous research studies conducted in the Gaeltacht, the research shows that while the attitudes to Irish and to the maintenance of the Gaeltacht are very positive, urgent planning is needed to arrest the decline of the language. The natural richness of language has attenuated. The community can no longer produce natural organic language and while Irish is used at an institutional level (e.g. schools, community organisations), English has become the default language of communication and socialisation among young people.

Section 6: Language Plans/ Initiatives

This section details the plans proposed by community groups, committees, organisations and individuals in the course of the preparation of the plan. These initiatives are designed to bolster, maintain, enrich and strengthen language use in Irish speaking households and to create and extend Irish speaking networks in the Gaeltacht. The aim of these initiatives is to increase the number of daily fluent / native speakers of the language and to ensure and strengthen the institutional support Irish needs if it is to survive as a living, organic community language. It is hoped that each organisation, public institution, state and voluntary sector involved will adopt an integrated approach to achieve this target. It is expected that the process, with measures implemented across all areas of language planning along with community development and public awareness will impact significantly on the local community and individuals to choose Irish as the language of home and community. It is also envisaged that the local community with state support will promote the language in the voluntary sector and business and public and social services through Irish will be made widely available. More importantly, it is expected that implementation of the plan will create a stronger support network for the use of the language and to enrich the use of the language by daily speakers in the Language Planning Area.

The initiatives are set out according to the following domains or areas:

1. Family Support Services / Language and Childcare Services;
2. The Education System (including Early Education Services and Preschool);
3. Learning opportunities outside the education system;
4. Youth Services and Services for other age groups (Adult and Community);
5. The Business Sector, Economic and Industrial Development and Cultural Tourism;
6. Community Organisations and Cooperatives;
7. The Media;
8. Community Services;
9. Planning and Physical Development / Local Government;
10. Social Services and Recreation.

The main areas are described briefly here and initiatives are listed under each area.

6.1. Family Support Services / Language and Childcare Services

The starting point of any language plan is to aim to achieve intergenerational transmission in the home. This is the very kernel of language planning. Research shows us that at the moment there are insufficient Irish language speaking families in the West Kerry Gaeltacht to sustain a viable, organic language community in to the future and that there are also serious obstacles and challenges facing Irish speaking families. It is clear that measures are needed in this area to increase the number of families raising children through Irish and to better support those who are already doing so.

The initiatives proposed here plan to:

1. sustain and develop the Family Support Centre in Baile an Fheirtéaraigh and throughout the Language Planning Region;
2. develop and extend the Tús Maith services provided by Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne;
3. develop a structure for training, fostering language awareness and establishing models of best practice for crèche and childcare practitioners;
4. establish a co-operative initiative between the HSC and Tús Maith (Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne) to run the "Community Moms" scheme (currently provided through English) through the medium of Irish in the West Kerry Gaeltacht;
5. develop a strategy to promote and foster language awareness at the level of the individual family. This will be done in conjunction with the pre-school services and the local schools.

6.2. The Education System (including Early Education Services and Preschool)

Education is critical in language planning and the language link between the family and the school is extremely important and needs to be carefully and consistently fostered, developed and monitored. Children in Irish speaking families require high quality Irish medium education to develop and enrich their language, since it is of crucial importance to ensuring socialisation (play and fun) through Irish as well as ensuring natural language development for the next generation.

The DES has developed a policy "Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta (2016)" to ensure that quality Irish-medium education Irish is available in primary and post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht. This policy, which will be implemented from September 2017 specifies that integration will be necessary between the application of policies in education and the implementation of the language measures in the language plan centering on language in the home.

The initiatives proposed here plan to:

1. employ a Language Planning in Education Executive to support the primary schools and the post-primary school in implementing the new policy for education in the Gaeltacht;
2. establish a forum for managers and practitioners in Irish medium preschools to share ideas and best practice in early education in the Gaeltacht- an interactive website;
3. develop and promote language awareness and integrated language support for parents;
4. support primary schools in their application for Gaeltacht school status in line with the new policy for education in the Gaeltacht;
5. establish a form for best practice for principals and teachers in Gaeltacht primary schools;
6. promote Continuing Professional Development for primary school teachers in the West Kerry Gaeltacht;

7. establish a policy and programme for language enrichment for native/home speakers of Irish;
8. establish a new campaign/ competition for social use of Irish outside the school context for classes in the Gaeltacht primary schools;
9. develop an exchange/linkage programme with schools in other Gaeltachtaí;
10. support the revision of Scéim na gCuntóirí Teanga (Visiting Language Assistants Scheme) in primary and post-primary schools;
11. increase language enrichment programmes in the primary and secondary schools;
12. develop teaching and learning resources in the West Kerry dialect;
13. establish working partnership between the DES, COGG, agus Aonad Pleanála Teanga Chiarraí Thiar (CFCD) to implement the Policy for Gaeltacht Education in Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne;
14. consolidate and develop the language policies and language supports in Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne;
15. develop extra supports for native/home speakers in Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne;
16. integrate the language policy of Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne with the language policy of other institutions / associations / organizations / youth clubs, sports and recreation infrastructures in the West Kerry Gaeltacht;
17. establish co-operation between primary and post-primary schools regarding best practice in Gaeltacht education;
18. establish co-operation between UCC, /CCC/KETB regarding the establishment of approved university courses in the West Kerry Gaeltacht (courses in literature and culture, a semester in the Gaeltacht);
19. develop further Gaeltacht courses for students of primary /post-primary teaching in conjunction with the universities and colleges of education;
20. to establish a language plan in conjunction with SHU (Sacred Heart University), Connecticut, US.

6.3. Learning opportunities outside the education system

Since the aim of this plan is to strengthen networks of language use and language enrichment for native speakers and to increase the number of daily speakers, it is clear that a solid infrastructure for learning the language is required. It is also important to connect the learners with the language community after the structured classes and courses. If the language plan creates and reinforces a need to use the language, then automatically, there will be greater demand in the community for classes to learn the language. These measures aim to develop a phased programme of adult education courses through Irish.

The initiatives proposed here include plan to:

1. introduce phased structured language learning opportunities in the West Kerry Gaeltacht (linked to TEG or equivalent);
2. develop an adult education and continuing education programme for the local community through the medium of Irish.

6.4. Youth Services and services for other age groups (Adult and Community)

Services and supports for youth are extremely important in any Gaeltacht area. If the structures and the opportunity for young people to meet socially through Irish outside the school are unavailable, then English will be the default language of socialisation for young people. If there is a deficit in socialisation experience through Irish, English will become the dominant language of social relationships. The deficit in support services for young people in the West Kerry Gaeltacht has been manifest for some time. Schools explain

how difficult it is to promote Irish in school where social supports and services are lacking outside the school. It is essential that the language supports be made available across other age groups to enrich the language through social networks and services. It is essential that language supports be available across other age groups who use social network and to strengthen and enrich for language for people of all ages in the community, including adult public services.

The initiatives proposed here plan to:

1. create a new integrated structure for youth services/employ a youth worker in the Gaeltacht;
2. establish a new music and drama company through Irish for young people;
3. establish chat rooms/ online network/forum for young people;
4. to develop services for adults through Irish-extending the programme of social events;
5. to develop home services and day care services including a day care centre in conjunction with Comharchumann Sailearna and Comharchumann Ghaoth Dobhair.

6.5. The Business Sector, Economic and Industrial Development and Cultural Tourism

Parallel to the necessary planning for the language is the need for economic planning. Section 3.3 of the plan shows that there are many local economic and infrastructural challenges that need to be addressed. Without focusing on the problems relating to the lack of growth in the population of the community (compared to national growth), a drop in the number of children in primary / secondary, the flight of young people to cities, the lack of community regeneration; it is difficult to talk about language vibrancy. There is need for sustainable employment, business opportunities, physical infrastructure and socially satisfactory and affordable housing to keep people in the area in the first instance. If the language is not central to economic planning, the language plan will not be successful.

The initiatives proposed here plan to:

1. convene a conference/ initiate research on the business development opportunities in coastline Gaeltacht areas;
2. initiate a new language policy scheme for companies who are located in the Gaeltacht;
3. re-establish and develop Corca Dhuibhne Ag Caint;
4. to create an App to provide information to tourists on services through Irish;
5. develop Comhar Creidmheasa an Daingin as a model of good practice for businesses in language planning;
6. Cultural Tourism: Professional research on the benefits of Irish;
7. develop the Cultural Tourism initiatives and products of Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne.

6.6. Community Organisations and Cooperatives

In any language plan it is very important to integrate the work of all stakeholders at community level and at state level. Local community involvement is crucial to the success of this language plan could be implemented effectively.

The initiative proposed here plans to:

1. implement a new structure for partnership between Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne and community organisations and cooperatives.

6.7. The media

The presence of Irish in the media is extremely important in language planning.

The initiatives proposed here plan to:

1. set up communication/media camps for sixth class/young people to introduce them to media processes and production;
2. arrange inter-school radio production competitions.

6.8. State and public services

At present, some state services are available only through English to Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht. The language plan needs to address this.

The initiatives proposed here plan to:

1. request and ensure that all state services be through Irish;
2. ensure that religious services through Irish are available.

6.9. Planning and Physical Development / Local Government

Kerry County Council provides local government services for the County Kerry (Gaeltacht communities included) and serves as the County Planning Authority. KCC is obliged to prepare and review its development plan every six years. The Kerry County Development Plan 2015- 2021 currently applies to physical planning and development for the Gaeltacht.

The initiatives proposed here plan to:

1. implement the language clause in social and private housing planning (Development and Planning Act 2000);
2. develop a scheme that supports the provision of activities through Irish for young people in the Gaeltacht.

6.10. Social Services and Recreation

As mentioned earlier, there is a deficit in the provision of social and recreational services, particularly in the area of youth services. Many clubs / sports and recreation associations operate exclusively through English in the area. The initiatives in this plan aim to address this deficit.

The initiatives proposed here plan to:

1. establish and support a language policy for sport and leisure organisations in the West Kerry Gaeltacht;
2. organise a course in Irish for sport/leisure trainers/managers;
3. promote Irish at local festivals;
4. develop and sustain An Lab in Dingle as a centre for culture and arts for the Irish language community
5. establish a social club for adults through the medium of Irish.

Section 7: Costs and Funding

This section presents the total estimated costs related to the implementation of general measures and initiatives outlined in Section 6.

Section 8: Publicity and Language Awareness

This section shows how public interest in, and awareness of the language planning process have been fostered in the course of preparation of the plan and outlines initiatives to foster public awareness of the plan and invite ownership of it using all media.

Section 9: Implementing and Monitoring

This section shows how the lead organisation will monitor the implementation of the plan.