

A Guide for
Local Authorities
on the use of Irish



An Grúpa Stiúrtha An Roinn Comhshaoil

An Grúpa Stiúrtha



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Department of the Environment
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Foreword

IT IS NOW almost ten years since the Grúpa Stiúrtha issued its initial recommendations on the use of Irish in the activities of local authorities. Since then authorities have made substantial progress in promoting the Irish language and in facilitating those who wish to use Irish in their business with authorities.

These new guidelines build on the experience which has been gained in the interim period and, in particular, they take account of the recommendations in *Expanding bilingualism in Irish society*, published in 1993 with the approval of the Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht.

As is apparent from the new guidelines, there is scope for local authorities to extend further the use of Irish in their services and activities, and I would like to wish them well in that endeavour.

I congratulate the Grúpa Stiúrtha on the production of this updated document, and on the good work they are doing in assisting local authorities in making provision for the use of Irish.

Brendan Howlin TD
Minister for the Environment

Preface

THE Grúpa Stiúrtha is pleased to be able at last to offer its new guidelines to local authorities and to the public. The Grúpa's original recommendations, published in 1986, though gratifyingly well received, were from the outset seen to be in need of revision. But the necessary revision, in rapidly changing conditions and circumstances, proved more elusive than was perhaps first envisaged. However, I am confident that the work is now sufficiently complete, not only to stand public scrutiny, but to be of some assistance to those for whom it is primarily intended.

The contents and thrust of the document were determined in discussions within the Grúpa Stiúrtha, and in dialogue with local authorities as represented at our annual conferences. As chairman, I am grateful to all members of the Grúpa, past and present, for their constant support and good counsel, to all who have participated in our annual conferences, and to the officers of the Department of the Environment and of Bord na Gaeilge who have ensured organization and direction in our endeavours. Above all, I wish to express my gratitude to the Minister for the Environment for his gracious approval of the publication of this revised document.

Máirtín Ó Murchú
Cathaoirleach an Ghrúpa Stiúrtha

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1 Introductory

1.1 Matters of history and organization

FROM the beginning of recorded history continuously until the nineteenth century, the Irish language was the first language of the majority of the people of Ireland. It is consequently the language in which a significant part of Ireland's cultural heritage is recorded, and in which much of its topography is named. It is the language which, predominantly, the Irish people still associates with its distinctive ethnic identity.

A rapid language shift in the nineteenth century, compounded by a massive decline in the largely Irish-speaking rural population, has, however, made English the dominant language in modern Ireland. English is, as a result, the principal language of government, public administration, education, wider communication, and everyday life. Very few, if any, of the present population lack competence in it. On the other hand, in the 1991 *Census of Population*, 1,095,830 people aged three or over claimed to know Irish. This represented 32.5% of the total. The corresponding figures for 1981 were 1,018,413, or 31.6%, and for 1971 were 789,429, or 28.3%. While census figures thus portray a continuing improvement in the position of Irish, they do not distinguish different degrees and types of competence, nor different levels of use. But they can, in that regard, be partially augmented by the findings of various social surveys. From such surveys it would appear that about 5% of the population have a high active competence in Irish; a further 10% have a medium active and high passive competence; a further 15% have a minimal active but good passive competence; probably another 20% or more have a minimal passive competence. Thus it would seem that no more than a small fraction of those whose competence in Irish is in fact very limited actually claim in the census returns to know it. In effect, as a global measure of Irish-language competence, the census figures may be regarded as reliable.

1.1.1 *An Ghaeltacht*

The *Gaeltacht* is in a special position with regard to competence in Irish and its use. In the *Gaeltacht* areas, traditional Irish-speaking communities have survived the upheavals of the nineteenth century, though they are now increasingly under pressure again. In 1991, the total population of the officially recognized *Gaeltacht* areas was 83,268, and of this number, 56,469, or 71.0% of those aged three or over, were returned as Irish-speaking.

1.2 Provisions for the maintenance of Irish

ONE of the motivations which led to the establishment of an independent Irish State in 1922 was the desire to acquire the autonomy thought necessary to redevelop the distinctive cultural and linguistic identity of the Irish people. The Irish language was central to this aim, and in the *Constitution of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Éireann) Act, 1922*, Article 4 asserts that the 'National language of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Éireann) is the Irish language, but the English language shall be equally recognized as an official language'. This affirmation is ambiguous in that 'national' and 'official' are

not equivalent terms. The defect is rectified in the *Constitution of Ireland 1937*, Article 8, where the prescription on language is expressed with more analytical precision:

1. *The Irish language as the national language is the first official language.*
2. *The English language is recognized as a second official language.*

Both constitutions may be said to agree in prescribing a bilingual State in which Irish was to be restored to a position of high status. Neither constitution attempts to describe the detailed language conventions which should apply, but such detail is hardly a matter for constitutions. In any case, the advances to be made by modern sociolinguistics in the description and classification of multilingual societies were still far in the future. At the outset, idealism and commitment were sufficient to ensure that critical provisions began to be made: the teaching of Irish was universally promoted throughout primary and secondary education; competence in Irish became a requirement for employment in the Public Service; bilingual usage was introduced in public forms, signs, and notices. But with the passage of time, as early enthusiasm gave way to routine, it began increasingly to be felt that there was need for an objective basis on which the language policy of a constitutionally bilingual State might be renewed and sustained in the face of continual social and economic change. Eventually, therefore, *An Coimisiún um Athbheochan na Gaeilge* was set up in 1958 and reported in 1963; *Comhairle na Gaeilge* was appointed in 1969 to advise the Government on language policy and, between 1971 and 1974, published a number of sociolinguistic policy documents; in 1975 *Bord na Gaeilge* was informally established, and in 1978 constituted by Act of the Oireachtas (*Bord na Gaeilge Act, 1978*) as the official agency of State for the promotion of the Irish language and for the advice of Government on Irish-language matters:

The Board shall . . . have the general functions of developing, co-ordinating, reviewing and assisting measures and procedures relating to the Irish language (Section 3.3).

1.3 The Grúpa Stiúrtha and Local Authorities

FOLLOWING an approach from Bord na Gaeilge, the Minister for the Environment in 1979 established the *Grúpa Stiúrtha*, under the aegis of the Department of the Environment, to provide advice and co-ordination for Local Authorities in their reinstatement of a definitive policy in support of the Irish language. The Minister subsequently determined that the role of the Grúpa is long-term and, more recently, directed that it be provided with additional resources and administrative support to enable it more effectively to carry out its functions.

1.3.1 The role of the Grúpa Stiúrtha

The role of the Grúpa Stiúrtha is:

- To maintain a liaison with local *Coistí Gaeilge* on all matters relating to public policy on Irish. To assist in this purpose, the Grúpa will designate one of its members as Liaison Officer.
- To arrange for guidance to local *Coistí Gaeilge* on written Irish, terminologies, translations etc. The Grúpa is concerned that all permanent legends and texts produced by public authorities maintain the standards of grammaticality and literacy which are the accepted norm in English.
- To act as medium for the distribution of information on Irish-language matters, as far as possible to ensure uniformity of progress, and to assist in the development of new policies and ideas.

1.4 The scope of the Grúpa Stiúrtha's recommendations

IN FULFILLING the task assigned to it by the Minister, the Grúpa Stiúrtha must naturally concentrate on the more structured aspects of Local Authorities' communications, and its recommendations broadly cover the following domains:

1.4.1 Written communication; notes on place-names

It is the Grúpa's considered view that all public signs, notices, and forms emanating from Local Authorities should be in an attractively designed BILINGUAL format which treats Irish with the same professional care as English. All such communications should signal that Irish no less than English is part of our public linguistic environment, and that high standards are recognized and applied in the case of Irish as well as English, and particularly in ensuring that the Irish forms of place-names are spelled correctly in accord with the official standard.

It is especially important, as an expression of confidence in our distinctive cultural tradition, that place-names which are part of our Irish-speaking heritage should be treated with comprehension and esteem.

A NOTE ON TRADITIONAL PLACE-NAMES

Place-names may be an object of great local pride, and the Grúpa advises that public usage should reflect an awareness of this, particularly where a place-name has more than one traditional expression. *Aonach Urmhumhan*, for example, is an elaborate form, carrying connotations of age-old prestige, and some may object to the official use of the more simple Irish expression *An tAonach*. But a seventeenth-century poet had no qualms about using the still more simple *Aonach*, in describing Eoghan Rua Ó Néill's victorious advance: *do bhain sé giodar as Biorra is as Aonach* 'he caused commotion in Birr and in Nenagh'. Simple forms of place-names, such as *An tAonach* or *Aonach* in the present instance, are frequent in traditional Irish usage and, where they have existed, are normally the base from which the anglicized form derives, e.g. as in the form *Nenagh*.

For a number of place-names up to three different expressions may be distinguished in Irish usage:

- **A simple functional form**

A simple functional form consists of a single noun, e.g. *Aonach*, *Caiseal*, *Corcaigh*, *Doire*; or of a defined noun, e.g. *An tAonach*, *An Chathair*, *An Gort*, *An Ros*. Where they exist, such simple functional forms are normally those recommended for ordinary use by the Ordnance Survey (see *Gazetteer of Ireland*, 1989), and are used on road signs etc. They are also, as stated, long established in the Irish-speaking tradition; Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh (†1387), for example, wrote *i gCaiseal*, *go Caiseal*, *i dtimcheall Caisil* etc.

- **A distinctive form**

A distinctive form distinguishes a specific place from all others which share with it the simple descriptive noun: *Corcaigh Mhór Mhumhan*, *Caiseal Mumhan*, *Cathair Dhúin Iascaigh*, *Doire Cholm Cille*, *Gort Inse Guaire*, *Ros Eo*. Each of these designates a specific place: a specific *Corcaigh* (two in *Gazetteer*), a specific *Caiseal* (five in *Gazetteer*), a specific *Cathair* (thirteen in *Gazetteer*), a specific *Gort* (fourteen in *Gazetteer*), a specific *Doire* (twenty-two in *Gazetteer*), a specific *Ros* (twenty-nine in *Gazetteer*), and so on.

- **A rhetorical or poetic form**

Some place-names have an elaborated expression which has been long established in the Irish literary tradition, e.g. *Corcaigh na gCuan* or *Corcaigh na Long*, *Caiseal na Rí* or *Caiseal na Slua*. These may be termed rhetorical or poetic forms; only a small number of place-names have widely-known variants of this type.

Most place-names have just a single functional form. This form may be simple, e.g. *Beantraí*, *Biorra*, *Ceatharlach*, *Luimneach*, *Mala*, *Sligeach* etc., or may to varying degrees be elaborate, e.g. *Béal Átha na Sluaighe*, *Cill Chainnigh*, *Dún na nGall*, *Loch Garman*, *An Sciobairín*, *Trá Lí* etc. Whether simple or elaborate, these are all unique functional forms and pose no problem. But, where a place-name has distinctive and poetic variants in addition to its functional form, the Grúpa recommends that conventions for the public recognition of all variants be permitted to develop. For example:

- The simple functional form (e.g. *Caiseal*), having comparability of treatment with the established anglicized form, should continue to be used in signposting, letterheads, notices etc.
- The distinctive form (e.g. *Caiseal Mumhan*) might be used for embellished signs, for example on the main approaches to a town etc.

- The poetic form (e.g. *Caiseal na Rí*) might be used on logos, banners etc.

A NOTE ON NEW PLACE-NAMES

In the creation of new place-names, e.g. in areas of urban development, the Grúpa recommends that note be taken of *Irish versions of street, road and estate names: guidelines* published by An Coimisiún Logainmneacha (1992), the essentials of which were presented by Liam Mac Mathúna to the Grúpa's 1989 conference in Gaoth Dobhair, and published subsequently as *Ar dtimpeallacht logainmneacha inniu agus amárach* (Coiscéim 1990). Another important publication by An Coimisiún Logainmneacha is *The place-names of Ireland in the third millenium* (1992). The Grúpa recognizes that these publications in the main confine themselves to general principles, but useful guidance on the application of such principles had already been made available to Local Authorities in circular letter F.2/86 issued by the Department of the Environment on 3 February 1986, with further advice being added in a circular issued by the Ordnance Survey Office on 23 October 1986. These circulars are reproduced in *Irish versions of street, road and estate names* (1992) 13–16; see also § 2.1 below.

1.4.2 Local Authority Proceedings

The Grúpa Stiúrtha recommends that Local Authorities should constantly strive to communicate to their elected members, and to their staffs, that there is the fullest support and encouragement for those who are able and willing to use Irish in the conduct of all aspects of the Authorities' business. It is clear that this aim is not as amenable to exact prescription as the formal provisions which have been recommended for bilingual usage in forms, permanent notices, signs etc. (§§ 2.1–2.3 below). Much depends on individual competence and enthusiasm, and on the attitude of more influential public representatives, but most Authorities have now established their own committees to advise on how local language requirements are most effectively met. Many indeed have produced their own guidelines, as was envisaged in the Grúpa Stiúrtha's original *Moltaí* (1986). Whatever schemes are adopted, the essential object is to communicate in the conduct of Authorities' affairs, not only that bilingualism is a normal and natural societal condition, but that the cultivation of Irish–English bilingualism is public policy in Ireland.

1.4.3 General communication with the public

Finally, the Grúpa Stiúrtha recommends that Authorities endeavour to ensure that all communications with the public, verbal or written, can be equally in Irish as in English. This may not always be easy, for want of the right person in the right place at the right time, but the Grúpa trusts that Local Authorities will do their utmost to implement the recommendation in the *Expanding bilingualism in Irish society* (Bord na Gaeilge 1993: 2) that:

. . . at least one officer with high bilingual competence should be available in each State office to offer service to the public and the name of the officer, his/her location and the services available from him/her should be prominently displayed. . . .

For the Grúpa, the essential object is, as far as possible, to communicate to members of the public that they can without disadvantage or embarrassment choose to use Irish rather than English in their dealings with the Authority. Most Authorities have now designated an Irish-language Officer (*Oifigeach Gaeilge*) and have set up a Committee for Irish (*Coiste Gaeilge*) to assist in the achievement of this objective. (For the role of telephonists / receptionists see § 2.8.3 below.)

1.5 The role of the local Coistí Gaeilge

THE PRIMARY role of the local Coiste Gaeilge is thus to assist the Authority in making adequate provision for the use of Irish. This is a permanent role, and the Grúpa recommends that each Authority maintain as active a Coiste Gaeilge as resources permit, and that its membership include both councillors and staff. The Grúpa would urge that the Coiste Gaeilge be accorded sufficient status within the Authority to ensure that it has access to all relevant information and that all reasonable recommendations from it are heeded.

More specifically, the role of the local Coiste is:

- as approved by the Authority, and in consultation with management, to supervise and advance the implementation of an effective Irish-language policy
- to maintain a regular liaison with the Grúpa Stiúrtha on all Irish-language matters
- to identify and promote further provisions for Irish which might specifically suit the circumstances of a particular Authority
- to devise and recommend schemes for the assistance of staff members who wish to improve their competence in Irish
- to help ensure that the Authority's support for Irish is understood by the public

The Minister and the Grúpa Stiúrtha appreciate and unreservedly commend the commitment which elected members and staffs of Local Authorities have consistently shown in appointing *Oifigigh Ghaeilge* and *Coisti Gaeilge* and in their support more generally for Irish-language policies. In particular, the Grúpa Stiúrtha is confident that good progress has been made in redefining the bilingual conventions which it is appropriate for Local Authorities to implement: new bilingual designs for road signs have been agreed and are being progressively put in place; various new bilingual forms are being introduced; the Minister for the Environment has introduced a car-registration formula which gives due recognition to Irish and, more recently, a modern multilingual driving licence has been launched; Local Authorities have begun to set out their own conventions for letterheads, notices, etc. in their development of a bilingual environment.

1.5.1 Gaeltacht areas

The Grúpa also recommends that Authorities whose areas include regions of the Gaeltacht make a special effort to maintain active Coistí Gaeilge with a particular brief to ensure that the status of Irish is fully reflected in all of the Authorities' affairs.

2 Specific Recommendations

As endorsed at the Grúpa Stiúrtha's annual conferences

2.1 Place-names, letterheads, and emblems

IN ROAD SIGNS (DIRECTIONAL SIGNS, INFORMATIVE SIGNS) AND IN OTHER PUBLIC NOTICES, THE IRISH VERSION OF PLACE-NAMES SHOULD BE DISPLAYED IN A DESIGN WHICH REFLECTS A RESPECT AND APPRECIATION FOR OUR IRISH-SPEAKING HERITAGE.

On the forms of traditional place-names, see especially § 1.4.1 above. The legally recognized forms of place-names in the Irish language are determined on the advice of the Place-names Commission under the *Place-names (Irish forms) Act, 1973*. For current conventions on the format and presentation of place-names in traffic signs, the Department of the Environment circular TC3/94, 'Use of Irish on traffic signs', should be consulted; this circular is fully in accord with the views of the Grúpa Stiúrtha.

In *Moltat* (1986), in commending the new signs being introduced on main roads, the Grúpa Stiúrtha had in mind the format in which the Irish appeared in roman lettering and the English in block capitals, on a green background for main roads. This format was subsequently replaced by a format in which the Irish appeared in slant letters, with the English as before in block capitals, on a lighter green background on main roads. The Grúpa discussed this newer format with the relevant section of the Department of the Environment, and established that the slant of the Irish lettering would not exceed 15° from the perpendicular. The Grúpa then commended the newer design to delegates at the 1988 conference (seminar), and obtained support for its general application throughout the country.

Signs relating to national monuments, places of historic or scenic interest, or to any publicly funded facets of the heritage or tourist industries, should treat Irish place-names, and otherwise follow a bilingual format, in a manner consistent with the conventions adopted in general road signs. The Grúpa Stiúrtha, and delegates at the 1991 conference, have taken the view that notices which have been erected to mark the boundaries of tourist regions are important public signs, not advertisements or promotional signs, and should follow the bilingual conventions of other public signs and notices. Following discussions with a delegation from the Grúpa Stiúrtha, Bord Fáilte has affirmed that it now also accepts this view (see also § 3.1.1 below).

On the Irish forms of street-names, of the names of housing estates etc., see § 1.4.1 above. The Grúpa in addition draws Authorities' attention to the following recommendation contained in circular F.2/86, 'Naming of streets and roads, numbering of houses and use of Irish', from the Department of the Environment:

Local Authorities should use a bilingual format for name plates for new housing areas and for name plates in older housing areas when they are due for replacement if an English only format is used at present. In selecting a name for a housing scheme, established local names should be used in preference to names which have no local connotation. In doing so, Local Authorities would ensure that historic placenames are preserved and not allowed to fall into disuse.

LETTERHEADS SHOULD GIVE FULL RECOGNITION TO THE IRISH LANGUAGE. PREFERABLY, THE AUTHORITY'S NAME AND ADDRESS SHOULD BE STATED BILINGUALLY AND IN AN ATTRACTIVE FORMAT.

The Grúpa Stiúrtha recognizes that in general high standards are already being attained in this regard. It urges only that there continue to be a conscious commitment to maintaining them.

EMBLEMS SHOULD IF POSSIBLE INCORPORATE AN IRISH LEGEND AND, WHERE INTENDED FOR FREQUENT USE, THE POSSIBILITY OF BASING LOGOS ON AN IRISH-LANGUAGE TEXT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.

2.2 Public notices, road-warnings, and regulatory signs

IT HAS been agreed that Authorities should aim to introduce an attractive bilingual format for the following:

- DIRECTIONS AND NOTICES in public reception areas and Council chambers
- NOTICES in car parks and public amenities
- LEGENDS on Authority plant
- WARNING AND INSTRUCTIONAL SIGNS on roads
See Department of the Environment circular TC3/94.
- TEMPORARY ROAD SIGNS, e.g. diversion notices
See Department of the Environment circular TC3/94.
- NAMES OF AUTHORITIES on notices of EU-funded projects
See Department of the Environment circular TC3/94.
- NAMES OF AUTHORITIES in advertisements, publications, on cheques etc.
- AGENDAS for Council meetings
- LEGENDS, NOTICES, FORMS, CARDS in the Public Library service
See § 2.5 below.

2.3 Forms

THE Grúpa Stiúrtha fully supports the policy enunciated in the *Expanding bilingualism in Irish society* (Bord na Gaeilge 1993: 3) 'that forms for use by the public should be fully bilingual'. In particular, the Grúpa recommends that forms which are regularly used by members of the public should be produced in an integrated, i.e. item by item, bilingual format, in which Irish and English texts are differentiated by typeface, but not primarily by size or by legibility. The Grúpa feels that in present circumstances, in which the number and design of forms continue to change, it is impractical to attempt a definitive list of those which ought especially to be bilingual. The general principle is, however, that any form, e.g. *Register of electors: application for registration*, which must be used by large numbers of the public should be produced in an elegant bilingual format.

The Grúpa recognizes that this important principle applies to forms produced centrally by the Department of the Environment as it does to forms produced locally by individual Local Authorities themselves. With regard to the latter, the Grúpa appreciates that some Authorities have made excellent progress in designing bilingual forms and bringing them into use. By their initiative these Authorities have established models for others to follow.

The Grúpa urges Authorities to ensure a high standard of Irish literacy in their production of all such bilingual forms. Any approximation, merely to show cause, should not be felt acceptable.

2.4 Annual Reports

SECTION 50 of the *Local Government Act (1991)* requires Local Authorities to publish annually an account of their activities. The resultant ANNUAL REPORTS are both an important source of information and an effective means of communicating with the public. In regard to the Irish language, they afford an opportunity to Local Authorities to make public statements on policies and progress, and to reaffirm their support for the Irish-language heritage and associated cultural identity.

In September 1994, the Grúpa Stiúrtha issued the following guidelines on this function of Local Authorities' annual reports:

1. Information which might be included:

- Short affirmation of language policy
- Membership of the local Coiste Gaeilge
- The local Coiste's programme of action and a brief account of its achievements during the year
- Specific reference to Irish-related matters in relevant sections, e.g. Arts, Library Services etc.

2. Use of Irish:

- The cover to have a bilingual design
- Photographs to have bilingual captions
- Bilingual signage to be saliently represented in photographs
- Bilingual section headings and index
- Some Irish to be used in the introduction and, as far as possible, in other sections
- Irish not to be associated with cultural topics only, e.g. Arts, Library Services, etc.; reports might, for example, include a summary in Irish of the principal contents

2.5 Library Services

THE public library service can make an important contribution to increasing the visibility of Irish:

- It is recommended that all signs and posted instructions be in an attractive bilingual format; and that the texts of membership cards, receipts, reminders, etc., should also as far as possible be bilingual.
- To the extent that libraries are being computerized, and that computers are used to print out receipts, notices, or other communications to the public, the Grúpa

Stiúrtha urges that arrangements be made at the outset to ensure that software is adapted to meet the conventions of written Irish through provision for accents, appropriate rules for hyphenation and word-breaks etc., and that all standard printout communications be produced bilingually.

- As a rule, it is the practice of public libraries to maintain supplies of government forms and information leaflets. It is recommended therefore that library services endeavour to ensure that Irish versions of such materials always be available, and that they request the production of bilingual versions of any documents for which they find that there is a reasonably high demand.

It is the experience of some libraries that adult readers make the best use of Irish books if the stock is kept on separate shelving, but fully classified according to the conventions used in the library generally. The Grúpa Stiúrtha recommends that this arrangement be considered by all libraries.

On the other hand, it has been found that books in Irish for children attract most attention if they are kept together with English-language books in a CHILDREN'S CORNER.

Similarly, it has been found to be more effective to display Irish-language journals in the general JOURNALS' SECTION.

The Grúpa Stiúrtha recognizes that the marketing of Irish-language books and journals is inadequate and that libraries may not readily receive information on new publications. It is recommended, therefore, that libraries arrange to be on the distribution list for *An Léitheoir*, an information bulletin published quarterly by Bord na Gaeilge and distributed free. *Ais*, Bord na Gaeilge's book-distribution agency, can also provide advice on publications in Irish.

Finally, where libraries organize educational programmes, literary competitions etc., the Grúpa Stiúrtha urges that due recognition be given in them to our Irish-language heritage and, wherever possible, programmes relating specifically to Irish be organized. So, too, where a public library provides special services or programmes for schools, it is recommended that it pay particular attention to the needs of any Irish-medium schools in its area.

2.6 Arts and heritage

THE Grúpa Stiúrtha recommends that Local Authorities, in their support for the heritage industry, be especially mindful of the historical and contemporary position of the Irish language, as set out in the *Expanding bilingualism in Irish society* (Bord na Gaeilge 1993: 4):

It is desirable that the Irish language should have an appropriate place in centres and projects concerned with the display and celebration of our culture and heritage.

While a knowledge of Irish has been no more than an optional requirement in the appointment of Arts Officers, and Authorities must obviously define their own needs

as they judge best, the Grúpa Stiúrtha believes that it should be a recognized part of any Arts Officer's brief to be fully informed of the significance of the Irish-language heritage, both as a cultural resource and a living tradition.

2.7 Local media

IDEALLY, councillors and officials who use Irish when contributing to Council business, or otherwise in the conduct of Authority affairs, should be assured of the same degree of notice from the local media as they might have expected had they used English.

The Grúpa Stiúrtha therefore urges local media to develop effective conventions for reporting statements made originally in Irish. With goodwill on both sides, satisfactory arrangements might be negotiated between the Local Authorities' Irish-language committees and the editorial staffs of local newspapers or of local radio. Many local papers do in fact at present treat equally copy submitted in Irish or English by local correspondents.

The Grúpa Stiúrtha believes that it would help local media to maintain such equality of treatment if Authorities made available bilingual releases of statements which they felt might properly receive coverage in Irish or in English and ought not to be overlooked.

The Grúpa Stiúrtha also believes that a better spirit of collaboration would be fostered if invitations were given to reporters and editorial staff from the local media to attend Irish-medium functions, courses etc., being organized for Authority members and staff.

The Grúpa urges that Local Authorities whose areas include Gaeltacht regions adopt a definitive policy of gradually increasing their use of Irish in Council business and of developing arrangements to ensure that contributions in Irish receive proportionate coverage in the local media.

2.8 Use of Irish with the public

2.8.1 Personal names and language choice

The Grúpa recommends that the forms of personal names should not be subject to arbitrary alteration during the administrative process and, in particular, that the Irish forms of surnames and Christian names, when used by members of the public, should never be changed by Local Authority staff to the associated English forms; *Seán Ó Conaill* should not be altered to *John O'Connell*, nor vice versa.

On the other hand, the Grúpa recommends that administrative staff should not, from the form of surname alone, draw conclusions about its bearer's language preference. *Seán Ó Conaill* may not necessarily prefer to receive communications in Irish only; he may particularly not wish to obtain Irish forms which are less effectual, or less intelligible, than the corresponding forms in English. Where forms or notices are not bilingual, language preference should as far as possible, and to the extent that it may be judged necessary, be determined by direct enquiry.

2.8.2 Correspondence

The Grúpa recommends that Authorities should strive to ensure that correspondence initiated in Irish by members of the public be continued in Irish.

The Grúpa also recommends that Authorities should ensure that members of the public who lodge complaints about the language chosen in communication with them be treated in a conciliatory manner.

2.8.3 Conversational Irish and ceremonial Irish

The Grúpa urges that Authorities endeavour to cultivate a bilingual climate in which councillors, staff, and members of the public would feel free, in any situation, to speak Irish without embarrassment. The Grúpa believes that a particularly effective contribution to the cultivation of such a climate is made by receptionists who can give the name of the Authority in Irish and in English when responding to telephone calls, and of even greater benefit is an ability at least to continue in Irish for simple exchanges such as transferring the caller to the requested section or staff member. The Grúpa therefore recommends that Authorities ensure that telephonists/receptionists have at least sufficient competence to name the Authority in Irish and maintain a brief conversation.

The Grúpa recommends that Authorities should seek to identify fixed speech acts, e.g. public prayers, introductions to meetings, concluding formulae, in which, as permitted by local sensitivity, Irish might be the normal medium.

3 Organizational matters

3.1 Aspects of legislation and procedures

THE USE of Irish forms of place-names in road signs is set out in *Road Traffic (Signs) (Amendment) Regulations, 1988* (SI No. 292 of 1988), made under the *Road Traffic Act, 1961* (No. 24).

The use of Irish in vehicle registration plates is set out in *Road Vehicle (Registration & Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations, 1990* (SI 287 of 1990).

3.1.1 Tourist attraction signs

The procedures followed in the provision of tourist attraction signs are as follows (and see § 2.1 above):

- Bord Fáilte proposes to a Local Authority that it wishes to 'sign' a particular route, area, or attraction
OR
a Local Authority asks Bord Fáilte to consider such a project.
- Both parties agree, and Bord Fáilte draws up general specifications for the project.
- The Local Authority assents to the specifications.
At this stage the Local Authority should ensure that bilingual conventions and other requirements will be followed, and that it is satisfied with all details of the proposed project. In this regard, attention should be paid to the criteria set out in circular letter PD 12/14 issued by the Department of the Environment in September 1988.
- Bord Fáilte draws up the detailed project programme, including the design of signs, the lettering to be used on them, their content, number, and placings.
- Bord Fáilte submits the detailed programme to the Local Authority for approval. This is the last opportunity for the Local Authority to ensure that all its requirements are being met.
- Bord Fáilte makes a contract for the manufacture of the signs as approved. Bord Fáilte is responsible for the performance of the contract.
- Bord Fáilte supplies the finished signs to the Local Authority for erection by the Local Authority. The maintenance of the signs is then the responsibility of Bord Fáilte.

3.2 An Grúpa Stiúrtha

IN JULY 1979, the Minister for the Environment established the Grúpa Stiúrtha as an agency which would assist Local Authorities in making provision for the use of Irish. Members of the Grúpa are appointed by the Minister. From 1979 to 1995 appointments were not for a fixed term.

In 1994, the Minister confirmed the mandate of the the Grúpa Stiúrtha and arranged to strengthen it organizationally and provide it with additional resources:

- It now has a specific budgetary provision and has a designated location and staff within the Department of the Environment.
- Its members are appointed for a fixed term: five years for the Cathaoirleach and three years for other members.
- As recommended in the earlier *Moltaí*, a member of the Grúpa has been designated Oifigeach Caidrimh / Liaison Officer.

3.2.1 Current membership of the Grúpa Stiúrtha

The Minister for the Environment has appointed the following to the Grúpa Stiúrtha for the period beginning on 1 September 1995 (date of first appointment in parentheses):

CATHAOIRLEACH 1995–2000: Máirtín Ó Murchú (1983), School of Celtic Studies

LEAS-CHATHAOIRLEACH 1995–98: Riobard Mac Góráin (1979), Gael-Linn

OIFIGEACH CAIDRIMH 1995–98: Proinsias de Priondargást (1983), Limerick Corporation

MEMBERS 1995–98: Brendan Aherne (1990), Department of the Environment; Antóin Mac Cionnaith (1979), Tipperary NR; Seamus McConville (1987), *Kerryman*; Seán Mac Fhionnlaoich (1990), Tipperary NR; Mícheál Mac Giolla Eoin (1995), Donegal; Fionnbarr Ó Callanáin (1979), Institution of Engineers of Ireland; Roibeard Ó Ceallaigh (1995), Meath; Dónal Ó Donnchú (1995), County Galway; Peadar Ó Flatharta (1995), Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge; Phyllis O'Halloran (1995), County Limerick; Seán Ó h-Uigín (1991), Cork City (~ Limerick); Dónal Ó Néill (1987), IMPACT; Séamus Puirseil (1995), Bord na Gaeilge; Aileen Pyne (1995), County Cork.

SECRETARY: Dominic Ó Briain (1993)

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Conor Ó Raghallaigh (1994)

BORD NA GAEILGE OFFICER: Éamonn Ó hArgáin (1993)

3.2.2 Past members

The following have served on the Grúpa Stiúrtha in the past: J. Behan (1985–86), Secretary; T. Bellew (1979–83), Louth; M. Boyce (1982–90), Carlow; B. Breathnach (1979–85), Department of the Environment; Noel Dillon (1979–95), Cork (~ Wexford); J. Doyle (1986–91), Secretary; R. Haslam (1979–84), Limerick; S. Keating (1979–81), Galway; E. Kenny (1983–88), Mayo; J. Kirwan (1991–93), Secretary; S. McManus (1979–83), Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland; F. Matthews (1986–90), Department

of the Environment; V. Millar (1981-87), LGPSU; F. Moloney (1979-90), Donegal; G. Ó Broin (1981-84), Secretary; M. O'Callaghan (1979-87), *Roscommon Herald*; N. Ó Conchubhair (1979-83), Galway; Pádraig S. Ó Donghaile (1979-95), Kilkenny; Mícheál Ó Gruagáin (1981-93), Bord na Gaeilge officer; P. Ó Muirgheasa (1984-90), Dublin; L. Ó Murchú (1979-82), Cathaoirleach; Mícheál Ó Núnáin (1991-94), Clare; J. Ryan (1979-81), Secretary; T. Troy (1979-85), Department of the Environment.

3.3 Annual conferences (seminars)

THE Grúpa Stiúrtha, with the support of Bord na Gaeilge, and under the auspices of the Department of the Environment, has held the following seminars, or consultative conferences:

YEAR	DATE	LOCATION	GUEST SPEAKER
1981	15–16 May	An Cheathrú Rua	—
1982	21–22 May	Baile an Fheirtéaraigh	John Hume MEP
1983	20–21 May	Baile an Fheirtéaraigh	The Hon. E. J. Benson
1984	19–20 Oct.	An Cheathrú Rua	Dafydd Orwig
1987	25–27 Sept.	Gaoth Dobhair	John Hume MEP
1988	30 Sept.–1 Oct.	Westport	Richard Haslam
1989	29–30 Sept.	Gaoth Dobhair	Senator Éamon de Buitléir
1990	28–29 Sept.	Gaoth Dobhair	Mary Finan
1991	27–28 Sept.	Gaoth Dobhair	Dr P. Ó Muircheartaigh
1992	2–3 Oct.	Gaoth Dobhair	Professor D. Ó Corráin
1993	1–2 Oct.	Gaoth Dobhair	Professor G. Ó Tuathaigh
1994	30 Sept.–1 Oct.	Gaoth Dobhair	Dr Miquel Strúbell
1995	29–30 Sept.	Gaoth Dobhair	Dr Christopher McGimpsey

4 REFERENCES

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- Mac Mathúna, L. *Ár dtimpeallacht logainmneacha inniu agus amárach* (Baile Átha Cliath 1990).
- Placenames Branch of the Ordnance Survey. *Gazetteer of Ireland / Gasaitéar na hÉireann* (Baile Átha Cliath 1989).