

# STREET NAMES: GUIDELINES

# IRISH VERSIONS OF STREET, ROAD AND ESTATE NAMES: GUIDELINES

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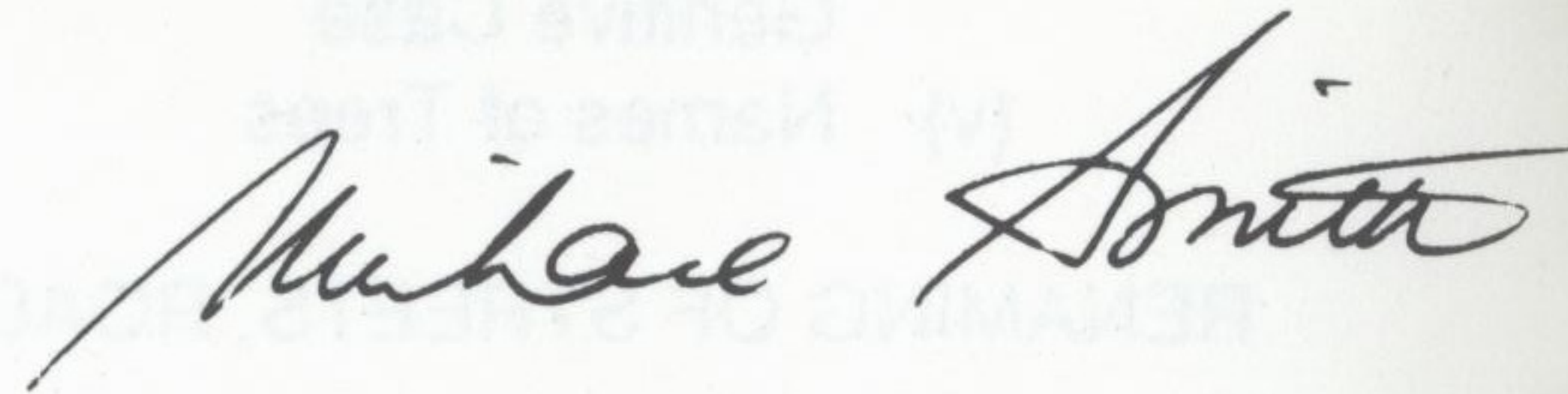
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## PREFACE

Placenames have important functions both as links between the people of Ireland and their physical environment today and as links between them and former generations. Accordingly, the Placenames Branch of the Ordnance Survey is engaged in continuous research towards ascertaining the correct Irish language forms of the names which we have inherited. But it is also necessary to attend to the dynamic aspect of the naming of new roads, streets and districts in the country's towns and cities, and to ensure that the new names relate to the physical environment and local history. Similarly, we should also make sure that due care is taken with the Irish language versions of these urban names, both by spelling them correctly and by entering them accurately on nameplates.

It, therefore, gives me pleasure to welcome this bilingual booklet, which provides authoritative guidelines for the naming of streets, roads and estates in Irish. I am particularly pleased that this work is the result of cooperation between a subcommittee of An Coimisiún Logainmneacha and the Corporation and County Council of Dublin, in the first instance, and subsequent consultation with all Local Authorities in the state, thus rendering it as comprehensive and reliable as possible. I trust that the beneficial effect of these guidelines will soon be evident on nameplates throughout the country.



Minister for the Environment

## INTRODUCTION

Is maith mar a beartaíodh go rachadh Bardas agus Comhairle Chontae Bhaile Átha Cliath agus na Comhairlí Áitiúla i gcomhairle le coiste de chuid an Choimisiúin Logainmneacha féachaint le treoirleite a cheapadh a chuideodh le córas ainmniúcháin sráideanna, bóithre agus eastát a thabhairt chun foirfeachta.

Aithnítear go coitianta gur cuid thábhachtach dár n-oidhreacht na logainmneacha, sa mhéid gur léiriú iad ar ghnéithe den stair, idir pholaitiúil, shóisialta agus chultúrtha. Ní lú an tábhacht a bhaineann le sráidainmneacha is le hainmneacha eastát tithíochta.

Tá dualgais áirithe ar na húdaráis áitiúla i leith an ainmniúcháin seo, dualgais a gcuireann an dátheangachas lena ndeacrachtaí. Fadhb eile is ea claonadh a bheith uaireanta ann aithris a dhéanamh ar nósmaireacht a tháinig i dtreis faoi réimeas iasachta agus faillí a dhéanamh ar ainmneacha dúchasacha.

Is mian liom thar ceann an Choimisiúin Logainmneacha comhghairdeas a dhéanamh le Bardas agus Comhairle Chontae Bhaile Átha Cliath agus leis na Comhairlí Áitiúla as an saothar éifeachtach fadradharcach a rinne siad leis an leabhrán seo a sholáthar.

TOMÁS DE BHALDRAITHE  
Cathaoirleach,  
An Coimisiún Logainmneacha.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of An Fochoiste Sráidainmneacha ["The Streetnames Subcommittee"] of An Coimisiún Logainmneacha ["The Placenames Commission"] are very grateful to all those who helped them to draw up these Guidelines. Much assistance was received from the Local Authorities throughout the country who communicated their opinions on the draft of the Guidelines sent to them in 1990. They express their thanks to the Ordnance Survey and to its Director, Commissioner James V. Rogers. Helpful advice was received from the staff of the Placenames Branch of the Ordnance Survey. An Fochoiste Sráidainmneacha is also grateful to Art Ó Maolfabhail, Secretary of An Coimisiún Logainmneacha, for his constant assistance and to Ciarán Ó Coigligh, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, who provided some material.

Thanks are due to Mr Frank Feely, City and County Manager, and to the officers of Dublin Corporation and County Council who have been closely involved in the preparation of this work. We are indebted to Mr Peter Morley and Mr John Reilly of the Roads and Traffic Department, Dublin Corporation, for their understanding cooperation during this period. An Fochoiste Sráidainmneacha, on behalf of An Coimisiún Logainmneacha, wishes to thank Dublin Corporation and Dublin County Council especially, as it is these Local Authorities which have financed and arranged the printing of these Guidelines. Go gcúitítear a saothar leo!

Liam Mac Mathúna (Chairman)  
Breandán S. Mac Aodha  
Bearnárd Ó Dubhthaigh

## AIM OF THE GUIDELINES

These Guidelines constitute a standard system of rendering Irish language street, road and estate names. Particular attention is paid to the process involved in providing Irish language versions of street names.

### ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

#### (1) Irish/English and English/Irish Lists

Complete and up-to-date lists or indexes (both Irish/English and English/Irish) are necessary if this work is to be consistent within the area of a particular authority, not to mention at national level. These lists should accompany street maps as soon as possible, in order that this task be efficiently concluded.

#### (2) (i) Basic Generic Elements

The following is a standardized list of the basic generic elements:

Alley	Scabhat
Apartments	Leithlanna
Arcade	Stuara
Arch	Áirse
Avenue	Ascaill
Bank	Bruach
Bar	Barra
Bohereen	Bóithrín
Boulevard	Búlbhard
Bow	Bogha
Brae	Brí
Bridge	Droichead
Buildings	Foirgnimh
Close	Clós
Colonnade	Colúnra
Coppice	Rosán
Copse	Rosán
Cottages	Iostáin

Court	Cúirt
Crescent	Corrán
Croft	Croit
Cross	Crosaire
Dale	Gleanntán
Dell	Gleannán
Demesne	Diméin
Dene	Fothair
Diamond	Diamant
Dingle	Cumairín
Dock(s)	Duga(i)
Downs	Mulláin
Drive	Céide
Dunes	Dumhcha
Dwelling	Teaghais
Estate	Eastát
Extension	Síneadh
Farm	Feirm
Field	Gort
Flatlets	Mionárasáin
Flats	Árasáin
Gardens	Gairdíní
Garth	Goirtín
Gate	Geata
Glade	Ceapach
Glebe	Gléib
Glen	Gleann
Grange	Gráinseach
Green	Faiche
Grove	Garrán
Guard	Garda
Haggard	lothlainn
Hall	Halla
Hamlet	Gráig
Harbour	Calafort
Heath	Fraoch
Heights	Arda
Hill	Cnoc
House(s)	Teach (Tithe)

Inns	Óstai
Island	Oileán
Junction	Gabhal
Lands	Fearann
Lane	Lána
Lawn	Plásóg
Lodge	Lóiste
Lott(s)	Scair(eanna)
Maison(n)ettes	Teaghaiseáin
Mall	Meal
Manor	Mainéar
Mansions	Árais
Mardyke	Mairdíog
Market	Margadh
Mart	Marglann
Mead	Móinéar
Meadow	Cluain
Mews	Eachlann
Moor	Móinteán
Mount	Cnocán
Orchard	Úllord
Oval	Ubhchruth
Parade	Paráid
Park	Páirc
Passage	Pasáiste
Path	Cosán
Penthouse	Díonteach
Place	Plás
Pound	Póna
Promenade	Promanáid
Quarter(s)	Ceathrú
Quay	Cé
Rise	Ard
Road	Bóthar
Row	Rae
Shambles	Seamlas
Side	Taobh
Slip	Caolbhealach
Spinney	Roschoill

Square	Cearnóg
Steps	Céimeanna
Strand	Trá
Street	Sráid
Terrace	Ardán
Third	Trian
Tower	Túr
Track	Raon
Vale	Gleann
Valley	Gleann
View	Radharc
Village	Sráidbhaile
Villas	Bailtíní
Walk	Siúlán
Way	Bealach
Wood(s)	Coill(te)
Yard	Clós

## (2) (ii) Adjectival Elements

The following is a standardized list of adjectival elements:

Back	Cúl-
Circular	Cuar-
Cross-	Cros-
East	Thoir
Eastern	Oirthearach
First	An Chéad
Front	Tosaigh
Great	Mór
Inner	Laistigh
Little	Beag
Lower	lochtarach (or íocht.)
Main	Príomh-
Middle	Láir
Military	Míleata

New	Nua
North	Thuaidh
Old	Sean-
Outer	Lasmuigh
Rear	Cúil
Second	An Dara
South	Theas
Third	An Tríú
Upper	Uachtarach (or Uacht.)
West	Thiar
Western	Iartharach

The above lists are based on the principle that, as far as possible, there should be one Irish version corresponding to each English version.

## (3) Typographical Conventions

The typographical conventions should be decided:

e.g. *Bóthar Bhaile na nGabhar* or **BÓTHAR BHAILE NA nGABHAR**

Neither of the following should be used:

*Bóthar Bhaile Na nGabhar* or **BÓTHAR BHAILE NA NGABHAR**

## (4) Checking System

An efficient checking or "proof-reading" system must be in place at every stage of the process from the penning of the Irish version through the typing procedure to the engraving on a nameplate.

## (5) Local Background Information

Considerable information is required about the background of the name to be translated: e.g., one cannot deal with *Green* in *Green Heights* without the translators knowing whether the colour, "green", a patch of land, "a (fair-green)", or the surname, *Green*, perhaps locally "Mac Grianna, Ó hUaithnín", is being referred to.

Similarly, clarification is needed in the case of *Clare* in *Clare Road* in Drumcondra, Dublin. For example, if the translators knew that this name was in the middle of an estate with island names (such as *Achill*

Road, Valentia Road), they would choose either *Bóthar Chléire* or *Bóthar Chliara*, depending on whether Oileán Chléire/Cape Clear, County Cork or Cliara/Clare Island, County Mayo is intended and would not furnish *Bóthar an Chláir*, based on the name of the county. Of course, *Clare Street*, beside Trinity College, Dublin, has quite a different origin.

This is the reason that the assistance of a local expert or society is needed. See the comprehensive explanation set out below in the Appendix, Section (ii) **Official Circulars**, extracted from Ordnance Survey Office, "*Circular F 2/86 from the Minister for the Environment (Translation)*", 3 Feabhra, 1986 [3 February 1986]; 23 October 1986.

## (6) Grammar

### (i) Dealing with Irish Surnames

The great majority of surnames which occur in placenames are in the genitive case. Therefore, they are subject to the usual rules governing the genitive case, as well as the bye-rules governing proper names. Compare the following examples, which are based on reference books cited on p. 18:

McDermott Tower	Túr Mhic Dhiarmada
McGrath Road	Bóthar Mhic Craith
Fitzpatrick Street	Sráid Mhic Giolla Phádraig
Egan Cottages	Iostáin Mhic Aogáin
O'Connell Street	Sráid Uí Chonail
Griffith Park	Páirc Uí Ghríofa
Hession Heights	Arda Uí Oisín
Walsh Parade	Paráid an Bhreatnaigh
Power Terrace	Ardán de Paor

### (ii) Dealing with Non-Irish Surnames

They are left in the form and spelling of English, or of the foreign language, i.e. without phonetic transliteration into Irish. The first consonant is not lenited.

e.g.	Churchill Terrace	Ardán Churchill
	Petrie Road	Bóthar Petrie

It is recommended that names such as *Cúirt Bhearscail* (Verschoyle Court) and *Bóthar Fuitbhort* (Whitworth Road) not be created for streets in the future.

### (iii) First Names

#### Saints' Names:

If the saint in question is Irish (or an important non-Irish one), the name is usually lenited and put in the genitive case. It is not preceded by *Naomh*, nor followed by *Naofa*. Note:

St. Brigid's Park	Páirc Bhríde
St. Colmcille's Drive	Céide Cholmcille
St. Patrick's Crescent	Corrán Phádraig
St. Peter's Avenue	Ascaill Pheadair

If the saint is not Irish, *San* is normally placed before the saint's name, which remains unchanged. Note:

Andrew Street	Sráid San Aindrias
St. Sylvester Villas	Bailtíní San Sailbheastar

However, in all cases, *Naomh* may be placed before the saint's name, which remains unchanged.

e.g.	St. Catherine's Green	Faiche Naomh Caitriona
	St. Mark's Estate	Eastát Naomh Marcas

It will be readily appreciated how important it is for the translators to know whether it is a saint or a person of another category, for example, the son or daughter of the builder, who is being commemorated by a street name.

### (iv) The Question of Leniting Placenames in the Genitive Case

- (a) Irish language placenames are lenited.
- (b) Foreign placenames are neither lenited nor inflected.

e.g.	(a) Merrion Square	Cearnóg Mhuirfean
but	(b) Claremont Court	Cúirt Claremont

### (v) Names of Trees

These are regularly put in the genitive case, singular, preceded by the definite article:

e.g.	Oak Park	Páirc na Dara
	Elm Gardens	Gairdíní an Leamháin
	Sycamore Grove	Garrán an tSeiceamair
	Willow Road	Bóthar na Sailí



## RENAMING OF STREETS, ROADS

Although it would be possible to completely rename streets and roads in accordance with the principles formulated above, it would be far better to retain the names which have been created under a different system. They now bear a certain historicity and the Irish-speaking public are used to them. It would be enough to engage in renaming in cases where an error was made originally. Of course, names on all new nameplates should be spelled in accordance with today's standard system. Therefore, there would be no need for changes such as:

e.g. Drury Street                      An Bóthar Beag > Sráid Drury  
Ely Place                              Plás Íle > Plás Ely

It is to be noted that a name is definite if it contains the article:

e.g. High Street                      An tSráid Ard  
North Earl Street                  Sráid an Iarla Thuaidh  
Cathedral Street                  Sráid na hArdeaglaise  
Tara Street                          Sráid na Teamhrach

Old versions of spelling, or of a placename, will need to be brought up to date gradually, too:

e.g. Merrion Court                      Cúirt Mhuirfean  
    (Cúirt Mhuirbhthean)  
Drumcondra Road                  Bóthar Dhroim Conrach  
    (Bóthar Dromconrach)

## APPENDIX

### (i) The Legal Position

The text of acts and official regulations bearing directly on the Irish language versions of the state's placenames are given below:

*Road Traffic (Signs) Regulations, 1962, Statutory Instrument No. 171 of 1962, Part II, Regulations with respect to Traffic Signs Pursuant to Section 95 of the Act:*

3. (2) Place-names shall be shown in Roman letters in Irish and in English and where the spelling of a place-name is the same in both languages one inscription only need be shown on the sign.

This was amended by the substitution of the following for section 3. (2):

*Road Traffic (Signs) (Amendment) Regulations, 1970, Statutory Instrument No. 164 of 1970:*

(2) (a) Subject to the provisions of sub-paragraph (b), place-names shall be shown in Roman letters in Irish and in English and where the spelling of a place-name is similar in both languages an Irish inscription only need be shown on the sign.

(b) In an area determined to be a Gaeltacht area by order under section 2 of the Minister and Secretaries (Amendment) Act, 1956 (No. 21 of 1956) the names of places in such an area shall be shown in Irish only.

*Road Traffic (Signs) (Amendment) Regulations, 1988, Statutory Instrument No. 292 of 1988:*

(2) (a) Subject to the provisions of sub-paragraph (b), place-names on all informative signs provided after 1st January, 1989 shall be shown in italic letters in Irish and in Roman letters in English and where the spelling of a place-name is similar in both languages an Irish inscription in italic letters only need be shown on the sign.

The Houses of the Oireachtas passed *An tAcht Logainmneacha (Foirmeacha Gaeilge), 1973 / Place-Names (Irish Forms) Act, 1973, (Number 24 of 1973)*, the long title of which is:

*An Act to Authorise the Minister for Finance to Specify for the Purposes of Law forms of Place-Names in the Irish Language and to Provide for Other matters Connected with the Matter Aforesaid. [21st November, 1973.]*

After the Minister for Finance has received and considered advice from An Coimisiún Logainmneacha ["The Placenames Commission"], he may make an order declaring "X" to be the equivalent in the Irish language of a specified placename, provided that that order be laid before each House of the Oireachtas within a certain time and not annulled by resolution. The legal position is set out as follows:

3. (1) A word or words, declared by the Minister in a place-names order to be the equivalent in the Irish language of a place-name specified in the order, shall be construed in a legal document as having the same meaning and the same force and effect as the place-name so specified unless the contrary intention appears.

This legal recognition was given to the Irish versions of place-names provided by the Ordnance Survey in *Ainmneacha Gaeilge na mBailte Poist, 1969*, by Statutory Instrument No. 133 of 1975 entitled *An tOrdú Logainmneacha (Foirmeacha Gaeilge) (Uimh. 1) (Postbhairte) 1975*. ["The Placenames Order (Irish Forms) (No. 1) (Post-Towns) 1975"].

## (ii) Official Circulars

There is also official direction with regard to the creation of new road and other names, issued to each County Manager, County Borough Manager, County Secretary and Town Clerk, cf.:

*An Roinn Rialtais Áitiúil, "Logainmneacha dúchasacha a choinneáil in ainmniú bóithre nua srl." (F. 241/3 F. 11/27), 14 Iúil, 1977 [The Department of Local Government, "The retention of native names in the naming of new roads etc." (F. 241/3 F. 11/27), 14 July, 1977]:*

I am directed by the Minister for Local Government to state that the Placenames Commission has written to him expressing its concern at instances where, on development of areas for housing or other purposes,

historic local names have been allowed to fall into disuse through failure to give these names to the roads and streets of the newly developed area. The Commission is anxious that historic placenames in these areas should be given a new lease of life by being assigned to the new roads and streets and that they should not be suppressed in favour of other names which have no local connotation.

The Minister shares the Commission's concern for the preservation of the old names and he appeals to local authorities, therefore, to make a special effort to ascertain the traditional names associated with each area being developed with a view to their use in the naming of roads and streets.

The Government's attitude has been further clarified since then. The Department of the Environment issued the following circular entitled "*Naming of Streets and Roads, Numbering of Houses and use of Irish*" (F. 2/86), 3 Feabhra, 1986. [3 February, 1986.]:

I am directed by the Minister for the Environment to state that complaints continue to be received regarding the naming of streets and roads, the numbering of houses and the provision of suitable name plates in built up areas. He is anxious that streets and roads in new housing areas should be named and houses numbered as soon as practicable in the construction phase....

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.

Local authorities should make available the official Irish version of names of streets, roads and residential areas to ensure that the Irish forms of address can be used in the addressing and delivery of mail without causing undue difficulty to the postal services. Special care should be taken to ensure that the Irish versions of street and placenames are correct as regards spelling and grammar.

The Minister has been assured by the Placenames Commission that their services are available to local authorities for advice as to the correct Irish version of placenames.

The Ordnance Survey Office clarified the manner in which it could best provide this assistance in its circular entitled "*Circular F 2/86 from the Minister for the Environment (Translation)*", 3 Feabhra, 1986 [3 February 1986]; "*Second request*", 23 October 1986:

Actually, this advice will come from the Placenames Office in the Ordnance Survey, advised by the Placenames Commission. Because of the local nature of many of the names to be dealt with, however, local knowledge would be required to supplement the research conducted by the Placenames Office. This Office, therefore, requests your authority to nominate a person (or society) having the appropriate knowledge of the history and traditions of the area which is subject to the authority, as well as competence in the Irish language. As a first step, this person or society should provide provisional Irish forms of the names in question based upon that knowledge.

It is particularly desirable that the person(s) nominated by the authority should give careful consideration to the following:

- (i) the elements in local names which themselves represent placenames (these should be listed and their location indicated);
- (ii) appropriate information regarding local surnames (for example, in the case of a name such as Green St., it is not immediately clear whether Green here represents (a) a green/fairgreen etc., (b) the colour, or (c) a surname, and, if a surname, what the correct Irish form would be: *Ó hUaithne*, *Ó hUaithnín*, *Ó Glaisne*, *Mac Glaisín*, *Mac Giolla Ghlais*, *An Graoineach*, *An Grian(n)ach*, *Mag Reannacháin*, or even *Ó Fathaidh* -- local knowledge is indispensable in such cases;
- (iii) Knowledge not readily available outside the area in question, e.g. unusual words and phrases, historical incidents, local traditions etc.

The Placenames Office, with the assistance of the Translation Section of Oireachtas Éireann in relation to terminology, will use the provisional Irish forms and, the information which the authority provides, as a basis for establishing suitable Irish name-forms.

### (iii) Recommendations Made by the Steering Group for the promotion of Irish in the Local Authority Service

When the Steering Group for the promotion of Irish in the Local Authority Service published its booklet, *Moltaí. Recommendations*, in 1986 it set out its objectives, in the words of its Chairman, Professor Máirtín Ó Murchú, in his Preface:

... the Grúpa Stiúrtha feels that to be effective its recommendations must in the first instance concern the establishment of a firm foundation of organizational provisions,  
(*Ibid.*, p. 12)

The Grúpa Stiúrtha affirmed the importance it itself attached to placenames, as regards "Directional signs (informative signs)":

Place-names are the most salient contemporary evidence of the community's Irish-speaking past and should accordingly be treated with respect and pride in road-signs and other public notices. The Irish version should be displayed to the best possible effect.

... In general, the Grúpa Stiúrtha commends the design of the new road-signs but for the longer term, recommends that consideration be given to examining the feasibility of developing a new design, which, while retaining its visual effectiveness and legibility, would give more prominence to Irish.

In the case of signs indicating national monuments, places of historic/scenic interest etc., the Grúpa Stiúrtha feels that it is clearly desirable that such signs be consistent in design and content with ordinary road signs.  
(*Ibid.*, pp. 13-4)

Of course, these recommendations concerning placenames formed part of comprehensive recommendations pertaining to the use of Irish in many other areas of contact between local authorities and the public. These were letterheads; emblems and logos; public notices; road-warnings and directions (regulatory signs); forms; and conventions for language use: personal names and language choice, particularly in correspondence.

#### (iv) The Planning System

Steps are being taken by local authorities to give the creation of estate, street and road names a structured position in the planning system. In this way, they are trying to implement the directions of the Minister for the Environment and the wish of the Placenames Commission, as these are expressed in the various above-mentioned circulars.

An Fochoiste Sráidainmneacha of An Coimisiún Logainmneacha is strongly of the opinion that builders, local historians, placename experts and public representatives should all be participants in the creation of the new names. The placename environment is too important to all the public for it to be left in the hands of one particular group. There need be no appreciable difference between the naming process for local authority housing estates and for those privately built.

An Fochoiste Sráidainmneacha recommends that provision be made (by means of a post-graduate scholarship, or in some other way) for the publication of a booklet with a wide choice of suitable Irish/English names, which would be appropriate for new housing estates, names which would form links with the topographical and historical backgrounds and which would be acceptable to modern-day residents.

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## OFFICIAL ADDRESSES

An Coimisiún Logainmneacha, An tSuirbhéireacht Ordanáis, Páirc an Fhionnuisce, Baile Átha Cliath 8.

Bord na Gaeilge, 7 Cearnóg Mhuirfean, Baile Átha Cliath 2.

Brainse Logainmneacha na Suirbhéireachta Ordanáis, Páirc an Fhionnuisce, Baile Átha Cliath 8.

Steering Group for the promotion of Irish in the Local Authority Service, Department for the Environment, Custom House, Dublin 1.