

## Polasaí Gaeilge | Irish Language Policy

Meán Fómhair | September 2015

### Cúlra | Background:

Is é Conradh na Gaeilge fóram daonlathach phobal na Gaeilge agus saothraíonn an eagraíocht ar son na teanga ar fud na hÉireann uile agus timpeall na cruinne.

Is í príomhaidhm na heagraíochta an Ghaeilge a athréimniú mar ghnáth-theanga na hÉireann.

Ó bunaíodh é ar 31 Iúil 1893 tá baill an Chonartha gníomhach ag cur chun cinn na Gaeilge i ngach gné de shaol na tíre, ó chúrsaí dlí agus oideachais go forbairt meán cumarsáide agus seirbhísí Gaeilge.

Tá Conradh na Gaeilge roghnaithe ag Foras na Gaeilge, an foras uile oileánda ag feidhmiú ar son an dá Rialtas thuaidh agus theas leis an nGaeilge a chur chun cinn, mar cheann de na sé cheanneagraíocht atá maoinithe acu leis an nGaeilge a fhorbairt ar oileán na hÉireann. Go príomha, tá Conradh na Gaeilge roghnaithe le tabhairt faoi chosaint teanga, ionadaíocht agus ardú feasachta ar an Ghaeilge.

Tá 180 craobh agus iomaí ball aonair ag Conradh na Gaeilge, agus bíonn baill uile an Chonartha ag saothrú go dian díograiseach chun úsáid na Gaeilge a chur chun cinn ina gceantair féin. Tá breis eolais faoi obair an Chonartha le fáil ag [www.cnag.ie](http://www.cnag.ie).

Conradh na Gaeilge is a democratic forum for the Irish language community. The organisation works on behalf of the Irish language throughout the island of Ireland and around the world.

The main aim of the organisation is to see Irish used as the ordinary language in Ireland.

From its establishment on the 31st July 1893, members of Conradh na Gaeilge have been active in promoting the Irish language in every aspect of this country's life, from legal matters, to education, to developments in the media and Irish language services.

Conradh na Gaeilge has been appointed by Foras na Gaeilge, the all island body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language, as one of the six lead organisations funded to develop the Irish language across the island. Primarily, the role of Conradh na Gaeilge is to protect the language, and to act as representatives and to raise awareness of the language.

There are 180 branches and many individual members of Conradh na Gaeilge. All members of Conradh na Gaeilge work hard to develop the use of Irish in their own areas. More information about the work of Conradh na Gaeilge is available at [www.cnag.ie](http://www.cnag.ie).

## Intreoir | Introduction:

Cuireann Conradh na Gaeilge fáilte roimh an deis seo aighneacht a chur isteach maidir leis an dréacht Pholasaí Gaeilge do Cheantar Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí. De réir daonáireamh 2011, tá eolas de chineál éigin ag 14.54% den daonra i gceantar Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí. Tá an figiúr seo i bhfad níos airde ná an 11% den daonra ó thuaidh ar fad a bhfuil eolas de chineál éigin acu ar an Ghaeilge, rud a léiríonn láidreacht phobal na Gaeilge sa cheantar. Ba chóir don láidreacht seo a chur san áireamh agus pleanáil á dhéanamh do sholáthar seirbhísí sa cheantar Comhairle.

Is iad spriocanna an pholasaí seo ná:

- Prionsabail agus próis trédhearcach a bunú leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun tosaigh, a chosaint agus a fheabhsú ar leas na gcónaitheoirí agus na gcuairteoirí sa cheantar
- Leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun tosaigh, a chosaint agus a fhorbairt sa cheantar tríd imeachtaí cuí áitiúla atá dleathach agus atá ionadaíoch ar stair agus ar chultúr an cheantair, ar a gcónaitheoirí agus ar a gcuairteoirí.

Conradh na Gaeilge welcomes this opportunity to make a submission on the draft Irish language policy for the Fermanagh and Omagh District. According to the 2011 census, 14.54% of the population in the Fermanagh and Omagh District have some knowledge of the Irish language. This figure is notably higher than the 11% of the population of the north as a whole who have some level of Irish, which reflects the strength of the Irish language community in the area. This growing strength should be taken into consideration by the council when planning for the provision of Irish language services in the Council area.

The aims of the policy are:

- To establish a transparent set of principles and procedures for promoting, protecting and enhancing the Irish language and culture for the benefit of the District's residents and visitors
- To promote, protect and enhance the Irish language and culture within the District through appropriate local actions that are lawful and that reflect fairly on the history and culture of the District, its residents and visitors.

- Le rannpháirtíocht cuí ag cónaitheoirí, custaiméirí agus ag cuairteoirí a éascú le háiseanna agus le seirbhísí na Comhairle, de réir a gcuid riachtanais Gaeilge, taobh istigh de na háiseanna atá ar fáil.
- Le deiseanna a fhorbairt do chónaitheoirí, chustaiméirí agus do chuairoteoirí úsáid a bhaint as an Ghaeilge agus iad ag baint úsáid as áiseanna agus as seirbhísí de chuid na Comhairle.
- Le freagra cuí a thabhairt do phobail Gaeilge áitiúla i bhforbairt agus in imeascadh na teanga i saol sibhialta príomhshruthaithe.

Tá sé mar aidhm ag na pointí agus ag na moltaí seo a leanas cur le haidhmeanna an pholasaí seo agus le cinntiú gur féidir leis an Pholasaí Gaeilge sa cheantar riachtanais phobal na Gaeilge i gceantar Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí a chomhlíonadh.

- To facilitate appropriate engagement with Council facilities and services by residents, customers and visitors, according to their Irish language needs and within the available resources.
- To develop opportunities for residents, customers and visitors to use the Irish language when accessing the Council's facilities and services.
- To respond appropriately to local Irish language communities in the development and integration of the Irish Language and Culture into mainstream civic life.

The following points and recommendations are aimed at contributing to the aims of this policy and to ensuring that the Irish Language policy in the area can effectively meet the needs of the Irish language community in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area.

## Úsaid na Gaeilge | Use of Irish Language:

De réir paragraf 4.5 den pholasáí, *“(The Council will) Afford Elected Members the opportunity to use and access the Irish language whenever appropriate, while respecting other’s identities and being mindful of the Council’s corporate responsibilities.”*

Níor chóir go gcaitear le teanga na Gaeilge ar bhealach ar bith mar rud gur féidir cur isteach ar fhéiniúlacht dhuine ar bith eile, agus níl aon drochthionchar aici ar fhreagraí

Corparáideacha na Comhairle. Ba chóir go mbeadh deiseanna curtha ar fáil d’fheisirí tofa úsáid a bhaint as an Ghaeilge gan aon imní go n-amharcfar air seo mar rud éigin a chuireann isteach ar fhéiniúlacht dhuine ar bith eile.

Scríobh an Coimisiún Comhionannais ina n-aighneacht ar an chomhairliúchán ar Bhille na Gaeilge ná:

*“The Commission considers that the use of minority languages, particularly Irish or Ulster Scots languages in Northern Ireland for common or official purposes would normally and objectively be considered to be a neutral act that would not be discriminatory.”<sup>1</sup>*

Paragraph 4.5 of the policy states that it will: *“Afford Elected Members the opportunity to use and access the Irish language whenever appropriate, while respecting other’s identities and being mindful of the Council’s corporate responsibilities.”* The use of the Irish language should in no way be regarded as something which is disrespectful to another’s identity, and has no negative impact on the Council’s corporate responsibilities. Elected Members should be provided with opportunities to use and access the Irish language without the concern that this could be construed as having an adverse impact on anyone else’s identity. The Equality Commission wrote in its submission to the consultation on a Bill for the Irish Language that:

*“The Commission considers that the use of minority languages, particularly Irish or Ulster Scots languages in Northern Ireland for common or official purposes would normally and objectively be considered to be a neutral act that would not be discriminatory.”<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Coimisiún Comhionannais, *Freagra an Choimisiún Comhionannais um Thuaisceart Éireann ar Comhairliúchán an Roinn Cultúr, Ealaíonn agus Fóilíochta ar Thógraí ar Bhille na Gaeilge*, Bealtaine 2015, lth 3

<sup>2</sup> Equality Commission, *Response by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to the Consultation by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure on Proposals for an Irish Language Bill*, May 2015, page 3

De réir an Choimisiún ba chóir caitheamh le húsáid teanga ar bith mar ghníomh neodrach. Níl aon bhealach ann go dtiocfadh le húsáid na Gaeilge, nó teanga ar bith eile, i bhfoirm labhartha nó scríofa, cur isteach ar fhéiniúlacht duine ar bith eile, nó go gcuirfeadh sé isteach ar fhreagraí Corparáideacha na Comhairle. Níl rud ar bith i gconradh áitiúil, Eorpach nó idirnáisiúnta a thacaíonn leis an dearcadh gur féidir le húsáid teanga ‘drochthionchar’ a imirt ar dhuine ar bith. Cruthaíonn pointe 4.5 sa cháipéis caveat nach bhfuil de dhíth ach gur féidir a úsáid le srian a chur ar úsáid na teanga ag feisire tofa ar bhealach atá míréasúnta. Ní féidir na fáthanna atá luaite anseo sa chaipéis a úsáid le srian a chur ar úsáid na Gaeilge. Le paragraf 4.5 a chur i bhfeidhm tá aistriúchán comhuaineach de dhíth i seomra na comhairle le cinntiú nach bhfuil ar fheisirí an méid atá le rá acu a aistriú iad féin, rud éigin a bhaineann ón méid ama labhartha atá acu.

The Commission considers that the use of any language should be regarded as a neutral act. There is no way in which the use of the Irish language or indeed any other language, whether in verbal or written form, could have a negative impact on another’s identity, nor is it something which could interfere with the Council’s corporate responsibilities. There is nothing in local, European or International Treaties or Covenants that support the view that the use of language can or could have an ‘adverse impact’ on anyone. The inclusion of point 4.5 in the policy document unnecessarily makes caveats which could be used to restrict elected member’s use of Irish in an unreasonable manner. Neither of the reasons given here are reasons to restrict the use of the language. The implementation of paragraph 4.5 necessitates the use of simultaneous translation in council chambers so that members can use the language without having to translate their contributions themselves, something which reduces the available time they have to speak.

## Dea-chaidrimh | Good Relations:

Is é ceann de na spriocanna sa pholasáí ag paragraf 4.4 ná *‘Enhance good relations within the District through the promotion of the Irish language.’* Ar a bharr sin, déanann paragraf 9.2 agus 9.3 nascanna idir an Polasaí Gaeilge leis an Pholasáí Dea-chaidrimh agus an Stráitéis Comhionannais de chuid na Comhairle. Roimhe seo, rinneadh iarrachtaí argóintí comhionannais nó dea-chaidrimh a úsáid in éadan cur chun cinn na Gaeilge, rud éigin atá in éadan spriocanna na bpolasaithe seo. Nuair a trasnaíonn na polasaithe seo lena chéile, ba chóir go mbeadh seo déanta leis an pholasáí Gaeilge a láidriú ar bhealach a thacaíonn le haidhmeanna na bpolasaithe eile, mar gheall go mbeidh cur i bhfeidhm pholasáí Gaeilge láidir ag cloí leis na haidhmeanna seo cheánna féin. Níor chóir go mbeadh úsáid a bhaint as an Pholasáí Dea-Chaidrimh nó an Stráitéis Comhionannais le srian a chur ar réimse oibre nó ar chur i bhfeidhm an pholasáí Gaeilge, go háirithe mar gheall nach bhfuil aon sainmhíniú dleathach ar ‘Dea-Chaidrimh anseo agus mar gheall nach bhfuil an Ghaeilge clúdaithe faoin reachtaíocht chomhionannais reatha, .i. Alt 75. Tá an polasaí seo bunaithe ar na cearta atá ag pobal na Gaeilge i dtaca le comhairlí áitiúla, agus mar gheall air sin níor chóir go gcuirfeadh réimsí oibre eile isteach air seo.

One of the stated aims of the policy at paragraph 4.4 is to *‘Enhance good relations within the District through the promotion of the Irish language.’* Furthermore, paragraphs 9.2 and 9.3 link the Irish language policy to the Council’s Good Relations Strategy and to the Equality Strategy. In the past, attempts have been made to use good relations or equality arguments against the development or promotion of the Irish language, something which is directly contradictory to the aims which these policies are trying to achieve. Where the Irish language policy intersects with these policies this should be in order to strengthen the Irish language policy in a way in which supports the aims of the other policies, as the full implementation of a robust Irish language policy will already be contributing to their aims. Neither the Good Relations Strategy nor the Equality Strategy can be used as a mechanism by which to limit either the scope or the implementation of an Irish Language Policy. Especially given that ‘Good Relations’ has no legal definition here and that the Irish language isn’t covered by existing equality legislation, namely Section 75. This policy is based upon the rights which the Irish language community has in relation to local councils, and therefore should not be impacted due to other agendas.

## Oifigeach Gaeilge | Irish Language Officer:

Leis an pholasáí seo a chur i bhfeidhm go héifeachtach tá gá le Oifigeach Gaeilge lán-aimseartha a fhostú le cinntiú go bhfuil comhordú agus pleanáil ceart á dhéanamh ar na pointí gnímh ar fad sa Phlean Feidhmithe. Bheadh cuid mhór freagracht i gceist leis an ról seo agus mar sin bheadh duine éigin de dhíth atá cáilithe tionscadail a bhainistiú agus teagmháil a dhéanamh le pobal na Gaeilge agus leis an mhórphobal le cinntiú go bhfuil cur i bhfeidhm an pholasáí ag comhlíonadh na riachtanais atá acu.

Ar a bharr seo, níor chóir go mbeadh aistriúchán ar ábhar na Comhairle atá le déanamh tugtha don Oifigeach Gaeilge. Tá gá le aistritheoir proifisiúnta le hábhar na Comhairle a aistriú, agus bheadh barraíocht i gceist le hiarr air seo ón Oifigeach Gaeilge ar bharr a gcuid dualgais féin, mar bheadh sé seo ag baint ó na freagrachtaí agus na dualgais a bheadh ag an duine sin. Tá sé tábhachtach fosta go gcuirtear Oifigeach Gaeilge in ionad 'Forbairt Phobail' sa 'Roinn Comhionannais' agus nach gcuirtear isteach le 'Cultúr agus Oidhreacht' iad. Is obair fhorbairt phobail é an obair atá á dhéanamh ag grúpaí Gaeilge ar an talamh i gceantar Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí agus ba chóir go gcaitear leo dá réir, gan trácht ar an teanga atá in úsáid acu.

The effective implementation of this policy will necessitate the employment of a full-time Irish Language Officer to ensure that the co-ordination and planning of all activities and action points within the Implementation Plan are properly carried out. This role would involve a great deal of responsibility and so would require someone qualified to manage projects and to engage with the Irish language community and the wider community to ensure that the implementation of the policy is meeting the community's needs.

In addition to this, the translation of council materials which is to be carried out should not immediately be assigned to the Irish Language Officer. The translation of council material requires the skills of a trained 7or aise7nal, and to ask this of an Irish Language Officer in addition to their own duties would be to make unrealistic demands of them and to detract from the other duties and responsibilities which that person will have. It is also important that the Irish language Officer is placed within 'Community Development' or the 'Equality Department' and not within 'Culture and Heritage'. The work being done by Irish language organisations on the ground in the Fermanagh and Omagh area is community development work and should be treated accordingly, regardless of the language they use.

## Oiliúint | Training:

De réir paragraf 6.3 den pholasaí beidh oiliúint curtha ar fáil le feacht a ardú faoin Pholasaí Gaeilge i measc bhall foirne le cur i bhfeidhm éifeachtach a chinntiú. Ba chóir go mbeadh an oiliúint seo curtha ar fáil do ghach ball foirne de chuid na Comhairle, ní amháin le cinntiú go bhfuil siad ar an eolas faoin pholasaí agus faoin bhealach le plé le hiarratais nó fiosrúcháin as Gaeilge, ach fosta le feacht a ardú fud fad na Comhairle faoi cén fáth an bhfuil Polasaí Gaeilge á chur i bhfeidhm i dtús báire. Bheadh sé ina bhuntáiste do ghach duine, idir bhaill foirne agus úsáideoirí seirbhísí dá mbeadh tuiscint ann faoin ról atá le himirt ag an Ghaeilge agus cén fáth gur mhaith le pobal na Gaeilge na seirbhísí seo a fháil, comh mhaith le eolas ginearálta maidir le dátheangachas nó ilteangachas. Bheadh Conradh na Gaeilge sásta tacaíocht a thabhairt i soláthar an oiliúna seo.

Mar chuid de iniúchadh ar scileanna teanga atá le déanamh, luaite i Roinn C, ba chóir ceist a chur ar na baill foirne ar mhaith leo a gcuid Gaeilge a fheabhsú le cuidiú leo plé le hiarratais agus fiosrúcháin ó Ghaeilgeoirí. Ciallaíonn sé seo go mbainfear an úsáid is fearr as an saineolas atá istigh sa Chomhairle cheánna féin le riachtanais phobal na Gaeilge a chomhlíonadh.

Paragraph 6.3 of the policy states that training will be provided for raise awareness of the Irish Language Policy among staff to ensure its effective implementation. This training should be provided to all council staff in order to not only make them aware of the policy and of the ways in which enquiries or requests in Irish should be dealt with, but also to increase awareness right across all areas of the council as to why the Irish Language Policy is being implemented in the first place. It would benefit all involved, both council employees and service users if there was an understanding of the role that the Irish language has to play in this and why the Irish language community wishes to avail of these services, as well as general information on bi and multilingualism. Conradh na Gaeilge would happily assist the Council in delivering training of this nature.

As part of the audit of the language skills which is to be undertaken, mentioned in Part C, the employees should also be asked whether they would like to improve their own Irish language skills in order to enable them to deal with requests and enquiries from Irish speakers. Doing so will mean that the expertise which already exists within the Council can be best utilised to meet the needs of the Irish language community.



## Acmhainní | Resources:

Deir paragraf 5.2 den pholasaí *“The Council will provide appropriate support for this policy through the provision of finance and the deployment of staff.”* Tá sé riachtanach go gcuireann an Comhairle na hacmhainní cuí ar fáil do chur i bhfeidhm ceart an pholasaí seo le cinntiú go mbaineann sé a gcuid aidhmeanna amach. Más rud nach bhfuil go leor áiseanna dírithe ar chur i bhfeidhm an pholasaí seo is cinnte go mbeidh teip air. Sa bhliain airgeadais 2014-2015, níor chaith an iar-Chomhairle ar an Ómaigh ach 0.4% (£53,130.47) dé chaiteachas iomlán ar thionscadail Gaeilge, agus chaith Comhairle Ceantar Fhear Manach níos lú arís, £14,714.43 dá chaiteachas iomlán. Léiríonn sé seo go soiléir go bhfuil aon argóint ag rá go bhfuil a dóthain áiseanna ag pobal na Gaeilge cheánna féin go hiomlán gan bhunús.

Istigh sa Chairt Eorpach do Theangacha Mionlaigh agus Réigiúnacha, tá prionsabal neamh-chúlchéimniú. Mar gheall air seo, ní féidir na háiseanna agus na cearta atá ar fáil d’íocóirí ráthaí a ísliú, ní mór iad a mhéadú. Ba chóir go mbeadh sé seo mar thúsphointe sna hathbhreithnithe agus na huasdátaithe ar fad atá luaite i bparagraf 10.2 de pholasaí, agus ba chóir go mbeadh na hathbhreithnithe seo dírithe ar fheabhas a chur ar na seirbhísí atá ar fáil trí Ghaeilge, in áit iarracht a dhéanamh iad a bhaint nó á réasúnú.

Paragraph 5.2 of the policy states that *“The Council will provide appropriate support for this policy through the provision of finance and the deployment of staff.”* It is essential that the council provides the necessary resources for the proper implementation of this policy in order for it to fully achieve its aims. A failure to ensure that sufficient resources are dedicated to the implementation of this policy would be to set it up for failure. In the 2014-2015 financial year the former Omagh Council dedicated only 0.4% (£53,130.47) of its overall budget to Irish language projects, and the Fermanagh District Council dedicated even less, £14,714.43 of its overall spend. This clearly shows that any arguments which state that the Irish language community already has sufficient resources are entirely without basis.

The European Convention on Regional and Minority Languages contains within it a principle of non-regression. Due to this, the available services and exercisable rights which rate payers can access through Irish can never decrease, only increase. This should be the starting point of the routine scrutiny and updates that are referred to in paragraph 10.2 of the policy, and that these reviews should be directed at enhancing the availability of services through Irish as opposed to rationalising or removing them.

Agus machnamh á dhéanamh ar chur i bhfeidhm an Pholasaí Gaeilge, ba chóir aird a thabhairt ar an toradh eacnamaíochta agus sóisialta ar infheistíocht atá le feiceáil trí thionscadail agus trí himeachtaí Gaeilge. Ní féidir neamhaird a dhéanamh ar an mhéid a chuireann na tionscadail seo le pobail áitiúla, agus b'fhiú go mór staideár eile a dhéanamh orthu, mar atá á dhéanamh ag Comhairle Lár Uladh. I suirbhé a choimisiúnaigh Conradh na Gaeilge agus a rinneadh ag Millward Brown i mí Eanáir 2015, d'aontaigh 46% de dhaoine ó thuaidh gur féidir leis an Ghaeilge cur go dearfach le forbairt eacnamaíochta na hoileáin, agus creideann 37% de dhaoine ó thuaidh gur GUD í an Ghaeilge do ghnó. Léiríonn na figiúirí seo na buntáistí eacnamaíochta a bhaineann le húsáid na Gaeilge a mhéadú agus a spreagadh i gceantar Chomhairle Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí.

### **Seirbhísí as Gaeilge | Services in Irish:**

D'aimsigh suirbhé Millward Brown atá luaite thuas go n-aontaíonn 54% de dhaoine ó thuaidh gur chóir go mbeadh seirbhísí ar fáil trí Ghaeilge do dhaoine ar mhaith leo iad a úsáid. Ar a bharr seo, i sraith fócasghrúpaí a rinneadh mar chuid den tuairisc seo, dúradh nuair atá seirbhís ar fáil trí Ghaeilge nach bhfuil ar chomhchaighdeán le seirbhís atá ar fáil trí Bhéarla go mbaineann sé seo an rogha teanga ó dhaoine. Nuair atá seirbhís ar fáil trí Ghaeilge ba chóir go bhfuil sé ar fáil gan mhoill nó gan coinníollacha breise.

At all times when considering the implementation of an Irish language policy, attention should be given to the economic and social return on investment which is seen through Irish language activities and projects. The positive contribution that these projects make to local communities cannot be overlooked and would be worth a separate study, similar to that undertaken in the Mid Ulster Council. In a survey commissioned by Conradh na Gaeilge and carried out by Millward Brown in January 2015, 46% of people in the north agreed that the Irish language can make a positive contribution to the economic development of the island and 37% of people in the north consider the Irish language as a unique selling point for businesses. These figures illustrate the economic benefits associated with increasing and encouraging the use of the Irish language in the Fermanagh and Omagh District council area.

The Millward Brown survey referenced above found that 54% of people in the north agreed that services should be available through Irish for those who wish to avail of them. In addition to this, a series of focus groups as part of the same report found that the provision of a service through Irish which isn't of equal standard to that provided in English is effectively removing a viable option from people. When a service is available it should be so without any delay or additional conditions.

Tá sé ráite sa pholasáí “*(The Council will respond positively and appropriately to those who choose to engage with the Council through the medium of Irish.*” Níor chóir go mbeadh aon difear ann idir an tacaíocht nó na seirbhísí atá ar fáil do dhaoine a dhéanann rogha teagmháil a dhéanamh leis an Chomhairle trí Ghaeilge agus do dhaoine a dhéanann seo trí Bhéarla. Le cinntiú go bhfuil fíor-rogha ann teagmháil a dhéanamh leis an Chomhairle trí Ghaeilge, caithfidh na seirbhísí bheith ar chomhchaighdeán agus ar fáil comh tapaí leis na seirbhísí atá ar fáil trí Bhéarla, agus níor chóir go bhfuil aon chéimeanna breise le glacadh ag daoine ar mhaith leo seirbhísí a fháil trí Ghaeilge leis seo a dhéanamh.

Deir an polasaí fosta “*(The Council will introduce a dedicated voice messaging service for those who choose to leave a message in Irish.*” Tá sé tábhachtach nach bhfuil aon mhoill air seo mar gheall ar rogha duine éigin Gaeilge a úsáid agus iad ag déanamh teagmháil leis na Chomhairle. Dá mbeadh moill nó deacrachtaí ag daoine agus iad ag déanamh teagmháil leis an Chomhairle trí Ghaeilge, chuirfeadh sé seo as do dhaoine é seo a dhéanamh sa todhchaí, agus b’fhéidir go mbeadh tionchar aige seo ar dhaoine eile fosta. Go bunúsach, ciallaíonn sé seo nach mbeadh fíor-rogha Gaeilge ann ar chor ar bith mura bhfuil cinnteacht ann go bhfuil an seirbhís ar chomhchéim leis an seirbhís Béarla.

The policy states that the council will “*Respond positively and appropriately to those who choose to engage with the Council through the medium of Irish.*” The services and assistance received by ratepayers who have chosen to engage with the Council through Irish should be in no way different to the services or assistance which would have been received through English. In order to ensure that a real option to engage with the Council through Irish exists, the services available must be of equal standard and timeliness as those available through English, and it should also be ensured that no additional steps should have to be taken by those who wish to access services through Irish in order to do so.

The policy also states that the council will “*Introduce a dedicated voice messaging service for those who choose to leave a message in Irish.*” It is important that there is no undue delay caused by a person’s decision to use Irish when making contact with the Council. If a situation were to arise where people experienced delays or other difficulties when making contact with the Council through Irish, this would deter them from doing so in the future, and possibly deter others from doing likewise. Essentially, this means that the Irish language option wouldn’t be a realistic option at all if care is not taken to ensure that this service is on equal par to the English language service.

## Suíomh Idirlín | Website:

Tá sé ráite sa pholasáí go mbainfidh an Comhairle úsáid as Google Translate le suíomh dátheangach a chur ar fáil. Tá suíomh dátheangach lárnach le cinntiú gur féidir le daoine teacht ar seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge. Áfach, tá cinnteacht ann anois nach bhfuil Google Translate éifeachtach mar seirbhís aistriúcháin. Nuair a mbaintear úsáid as Google Translate le suíomhanna a aistriú i gcásanna mar seo, bíonn míchruinneas sa ghraiméar, focail nach bhfuil ann nó atá mícheart agus bíonn mearbhall agus míthuiscint ginearálta ann. An toradh air seo ná nach mbíonn leagan Gaeilge den tsuíomh ar fáil ar chor ar bith, ach meascán den dhá teanga, lán le botúin, rud éigin nach mbeadh inghlactha le leagan Béarla den tsuíomh. Bheadh droch-chuma ar íomha na Comhairle mar gheall air seo. B'fhearr i bhfad dá mbeadh ábhar an tsuímh aistrithe agus aistritheoir proifisiúnta. Ní bheadh barraíocht costais air seo, mar bheadh an chuid is mó den ábhar ar suíomh na Comhairle statach, agus mar sin is beag uasdátú a bheadh de dhíth air seo i ndiaidh é a dhéanamh don chéad uair, agus bheadh preasráitis, óráidí agus eolas eile atá le huasdátú níos minice déanta mar chuid den aistriúchán reatha a bheadh á dhéanamh mar chuid de na seirbhísí a bheadh ar fáil, mar atá luaite thuas.

The policy states that the Council will make use of Google Translate as a way of providing a bilingual website. A bilingual website is central to ensuring that services can be accessed through Irish. The use of Google Translate, however, has proven to be entirely ineffective as a translation service. When Google Translate is used to translate website in cases such as this, it leads to inaccuracies in grammar, missing or incorrect words and will generally cause confusion and misinterpretation. The overall result is that this version of the website is not an Irish language version at all, but a poor mixture of the two languages, riddled with mistakes, and something which wouldn't be accepted in an English version of the website. This would reflect poorly on the image of the Council. It would be much preferable if the actual content of the website were to be translated by a professional translator. The cost of this work would not be prohibitive, as the majority of the content on the Council's website is static and would therefore rarely need updating once initially completed, and the press statements, speeches and other information which would require frequent updating would be part of the translation work which would be undertaken as part of ensuring access to services through Irish already, see above.

## Comharthaíocht Dátheangach | Bilingual Signage:

Caithfear an próiseas ar iarratas a dhéanamh ar chomharthaíocht dátheangach bheith iontach soiléir, le cinntiú go bhfuil cónaitheoirí a bhfuil suim acu iarratas a chur isteach ábalta é seo a dhéanamh. Deir an polasaí “(The Council will) Provide bi-lingual versions of street names, in English and Irish, on request, provided residents can show community consensus on this.” Caithfear an próiseas atá i gceist le comhdhearcadh an phobail a léiriú a bheith leagtha amach go soiléir, agus níor chóir go bhfuil barraíocht dualgais ar chónaitheoirí leis seo a dhéanamh. Má tá barraíocht oibleagáidí ar chónaitheoirí le comhlíonadh sula ndéantar machnamh ar a n-iarratas do chomharthaíocht dátheangach, cruthaíonn sé seo bacanna, agus cuireann sé seo srian ar chomharthaíocht dátheangach a chur suas, fiú nuair atá éileamh áitiúil soiléir ann. Ina teannta sin, tá sé neamhréalaíoch má tá freagra de dhíth ó ghach teach i gceantar áirithe ar cheist chomharthaíocht dátheangach, agus mar sin bheadh comhairliúchán atá bunaithe ar líon na dtithe i gceantar ar bith míchothrom. In áit sin, tá próiseas comhairliúcháin de dhíth a thugann aird ar na freagraí a thagann isteach, mar is léiriú níos soiléire é seo ar dhearcthaí an phobail ar chomharthaíocht dátheangach i gceantar ar bith. Go bunúsach, tá an chuid is mó de na ‘freagróirí’ ní na ‘cónaitheoirí’ de dhíth leis an phróiseas seo a dhéanamh níos fusa agus le comharthaíocht dátheangach a éascú in áiteanna ina bhfuil éileamh ann.

The process for making requests to have bi-lingual versions of street names must be very clear, so that residents who are interested in making a request of this nature are in a position to do so. The policy states that the council will “Provide bi-lingual versions of street names, in English and Irish, on request, provided residents can show community consensus on this.” The process involved in showing community consensus must be clearly laid out, and the actions which residents must take in order to do this should not be unduly onerous. Imposing a range of obligations on residents to fulfil before their request to have bi-lingual signage can be considered and granted creates unnecessary barriers, which can prevent residents from achieving bi-lingual signage even where there is clear local demand. In addition, it is unrealistic to expect that any area will receive an answer on the question of bilingual signage from each and every household in a given area, and so a consultation which requires a certain amount of responses in favour based on the number of dwellings in an area would be unfair. Instead, a consultation process which then takes into consideration the responses actually received will give a more accurate indication of the views of the community on bilingual signage in that particular area. In short, a majority of ‘respondents’ and not a majority of ‘residents’ would make the process much easier to navigate and would facilitate the erection of bilingual signs, where demand exists.

## Conclúid | Conclusion:

Is bunús maith é an Polasaí Gaeilge seo le tógáil air le cinntiú go ndéantar freastal ceart ar riachtanais phobal na Gaeilge sa cheantar.

Tá sé riachtanach go ndéantar measúnú leanúnach ar chur i bhfeidhm an pholasaí seo le meicníochtaí in áit leis na céimeanna atá in áit a fheabhsú nuair a aithnítear bearnaí i soláthar seirbhísí nó sa chás nach bhfuil an cur i bhfeidhm comh éifeachtach agus a bhí beartaithe. Mar sin de, ba chóir clár ama athbhreithnithe a chur isteach sa pholasaí, idir 3-5 bhliain, le cinntiú go mbeidh deacrachtaí aitheanta agus pléite. Tá pobal na Gaeilge i gceantar Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí bríomhar agus ag fás, agus cuireann sé go mór le pobail áitiúla. Ba chóir don Chomhairle gach rud gur féidir leis a dhéanamh le tacú le fás agus forbairt an phobail seo, agus le forbairt seirbhísí Gaeilge a éascú. Bheadh sé úsáideach don chomhairle sampla Chomhairle Lár Uladh a leanúint agus ról a thabhairt do phobal na Gaeilge mar fhóram do pháirtithe leasmhara sa phróiseas seo, agus le comhairle agus le treoir a thabhairt don Chomhairle ar féidearthachtaí le feabhas a chur ar seirbhísí.

This draft Irish language policy provides a good platform on which to build upon in order to ensure that the needs of the Irish language community in the area are properly catered for.

It is essential that the implementation of the Irish language policy is monitored on an ongoing basis with mechanisms in place to improve upon the steps that are being taken when gaps in provision are recognised or if a method of implementation isn't as effective as was originally thought. Therefore, a review timetable should be in-built into the policy of between 3-5 years to allow shortcomings to be identified and acted upon. The Irish language community in the Fermanagh and Omagh District is a vibrant and growing community which actively contributes to local communities and the council should undertake to do all in its power to support and facilitate the continued growth of this community and the provision of services through Irish. It would be useful for the council to follow the example of Mid Ulster Council and to provide a role for the Irish language community as a forum for stakeholders in this process, to give guidance and advice to the council on the possibilities to improve services.