

AN POST

LANGUAGE SCHEME 2015 - 2018

Under Section 11 of the
Official Languages Act 2003

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 Guidelines for Preparation of a Scheme.....	3
2. OVERVIEW OF AN POST	3
2.1 Background.....	3
2.2 Mission, Vision and Values of An Post.....	5
2.3 Customers.....	5
2.4 Functional Areas of An Post.....	6
3. PREPARATION OF THE SCHEME	6
4. THE CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME	7
5. COMMENCEMENT DATE OF THE SCHEME	7
6. PRINCIPAL MEANS OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC	7
7. ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES AVAILABLE THROUGH IRISH ONLY	8
8. ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES AVAILABLE THROUGH ENGLISH ONLY	8
9. ASSESSMENT OF EXTENT TO WHICH SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH IRISH AND ENGLISH	9
10. ENHANCEMENT OF SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED BILINGUALLY	10
10.1 Website: www.anpost.ie	10
10.2 An Post Education Programme for Primary and Secondary Schools.....	10
10.3 Media.....	10
10.4 Savings and Investment Services.....	11
10.5 Department of Social Protection (“DSP”) Services.....	11
10.6 Mail Delivery Services.....	11
10.7 Post Offices.....	11
10.8 TV Licence Services.....	12
10.9 Sales and Marketing Services.....	12
11. POST OFFICES IN GAELTACHT AREAS	12
12. STAFF TRAINING	13
13. INFORMATION SYSTEMS	13
14. PUBLIC MEETINGS POLICY	14
15. TELEPHONE SERVICE	14
16. AUTOMATED ANNOUNCEMENTS	14
17. PROMOTIONAL MEASURES	14
18. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVISION	15
19. PUBLICISING OF AGREED SCHEME	15
APPENDIX 1	16

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the first Language Scheme prepared by An Post under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003 (“hereinafter referred to as the Act”).

Section 11 of the Act provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services they will provide:

- through the medium of Irish
- through the medium of English, and
- through the medium of Irish and English

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by An Post through the medium of the Irish Language shall be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

1.1 Guidelines for Preparation of a Scheme

Section 12 of the Act provides for the preparation of guidelines by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and their issue to public bodies to assist in the preparation of draft schemes. This scheme has been drawn up in accordance with these guidelines.

2. OVERVIEW OF AN POST

2.1 Background

An Post is a State owned limited company founded in 1983 under the *Postal & Telecommunications Services Act, 1983*. One ordinary share is held by the Minister of Finance and the remainder of the issued share capital is held by the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

The Company’s head office is located at the General Post Office, O’Connell Street, Dublin 1.

An Post is a major commercial organisation providing a wide range of services which encompass postal, communications, retail and money transmission services. It is one of Ireland’s largest companies directly employing over 9,500 people through its national network of retail, processing and delivery locations.

An Post has a network of c. 1,150 retail offices of which 57 are Company staffed post offices. 69 offices are located in Gaeltacht areas. Post offices receive approximately 1.7 million visits per week from the general public. An Post delivers the following principal services through its retail network:

- Postal Services
- Social Welfare Payments (On behalf of the Department of Social Protection)
- Savings and Investment Services (on behalf of NTMA)

TV Licence Sales and Renewal
Money Transmission Services
Bill Payment Services
Banking Services

Under the Communications Regulation (Postal Services) Act 2011 (“the 2011 Act”), An Post is designated as a Universal Service Provider with the obligation to provide a universal postal service. Under the 2011 Act, a universal service provider shall guarantee:

- (a) that on every working day, except in such circumstances or geographical conditions as ComReg considers to be exceptional, there is at least:
 - (i) one clearance, and
 - (ii) one delivery to the home or premises of every person in the State or, as ComReg considers appropriate, under such conditions as it may determine from time to time, to appropriate installations,

and

- (b) that the following services are provided:
 - (i) the clearance, sorting, transport and distribution of postal packets up to 2 kilograms in weight;
 - (ii) the clearance, sorting, transport and distribution of parcels up to the weight expressed in kilograms specified in subsection (2) of the 2011 Act;
 - (iii) the sorting, transportation and distribution of parcels from other Member States up to 20 kilograms in weight;
 - (iv) a registered items service;
 - (v) an insured items service within the State and to and from all countries which, as signatories to the Universal Postal Convention of the Universal Postal Union, declare their willingness to admit such items whether reciprocally or in one direction only; and
 - (vi) postal services, free of charge, to blind and partially sighted persons.

An Post provides access to this Universal Service Obligation through its network of post offices. To facilitate physical access to the service, An Post has approximately 4,800 post boxes throughout the State and also collects mail from customers’ premises as well as offering 43 bulk mail acceptance points. The Company delivers over 2.5 million items per day through its extensive network of four mail processing centres and in excess of 400

delivery service units. The Company provides daily service to over 2.2 million delivery points.

2.2 Mission, Vision and Values of An Post

Mission

To provide world class postal, distribution and financial services with unrivalled local community access and global connections.

Vision

Working together as a united team, our ambition is to outperform the new competition we face, delivering a better quality service, more efficiently, to more customers by continuously adapting, innovating and implementing change.

Values

Quality Customer Service

Put the customer first in everything we do, consistently delivering world class service quality.

Commercial Success

Achieve commercial success, earning profits that can sustain and develop the business.

Cost Competitiveness & Efficiency

Run a cost competitive, efficient operation.

Respect & Personal Responsibility

Respect each other and take personal responsibility.

Respected Corporate Citizen

Care for the environment and be engaged in the community as respected corporate citizens.

Innovation & Change

Continually innovate, adapt and implement change successfully.

2.3 Customers

Customers avail of the following An Post services:

- Sending mail.
- Receiving mail.
- Savings and Investment services.
- Social Welfare services.
- Bill Payment services.
- Banking services.

- Money Transmission services.
- TV licence purchase and renewal.

2.4 Functional Areas of An Post

In addition to the Chief Executive, there is a team of senior executives who are responsible for various aspects of the Company's operations. These areas are:

- Mails Operations.
- Retail Operations.
- Services.
- Finance.
- Sales and Marketing.
- Strategy and Business Excellence.
- Communications and Corporate Affairs.
- Human Resources.
- Company Secretarial.

3. PREPARATION OF THE SCHEME

This Scheme was prepared under *Section 11* of the Act by An Post and has been drawn up in accordance with the guidelines prepared under Section 12 of the Act by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

An Post published notices under Section 13 of the Act inviting representations in relation to the preparation of the Scheme from interested parties and all submissions received are available on the An Post website at www.anpost.ie. The Scheme has been informed by these submissions. Additionally, An Post's staff were invited (through an article in An Post's staff publication "Postnews") to submit suggestions and views.

A working group comprising representatives from the relevant business areas of An Post has assisted in the drafting of the Scheme.

Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the Scheme will rest with a designated project manager reporting to the Services Director of An Post.

4. THE CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME

The current service provision is largely through English and the primary objectives of the An Post Scheme are to:

- Build on the long standing commitment of An Post to the Irish language as well as the principles of quality assurance and improvement in all its services;
- Increase the number of services to customers provided bilingually; and
- Enhance staff competency in Irish through staff training and external recruitment.

As a starting base, the Scheme builds on the extent to which services are currently available through Irish. Areas for future development are identified in the body of the Scheme. The Scheme also includes a commitment to assess on an ongoing basis the level of demand for services through Irish and to ensure that An Post builds upon its capacity to meet this demand in a planned and coherent manner. An Post will continue to assess the level of demand for services in the Irish language by monitoring the level of enquiries and requests and by conducting research with its customers as required.

5. COMMENCEMENT DATE OF THE SCHEME

The Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The Scheme will commence with effect from **21 September 2015** and will remain in effect for three years from this date or until a new Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister, pursuant to *Section 15* of the Act, whichever is the later.

6. PRINCIPAL MEANS OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC

An Post's main communications with its customers include:

- Corporate publications - Annual Report, etc.
- Information leaflets (excluding marketing material) and brochures.
- Personal contact between customers and counter personnel at post offices.
- Personal contact between customers and delivery staff on delivery work.
- Personal contact between customers and delivery office staff at delivery offices.
- Correspondence, e-mails and telephone calls through a dedicated Customer Service Centre.
- Delivery notices.
- Correspondence relating to TV Licence renewal and purchase.
- Application forms and notices for:
 - Mails Services such as Redirection
 - Savings and Investment purchase, renewal, encashment
 - Social Welfare
- Media.

- Advertisements.
- Website.

7. ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES AVAILABLE THROUGH IRISH ONLY

An Post does not provide any services to its customers through Irish only.

8. ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES AVAILABLE THROUGH ENGLISH ONLY

The services that An Post provides in English only include:

- Telephone customer relationship management system for customers accessing the Customer Services helpline.
- Interactions between customers and staff who do not speak Irish while dealing with Savings and Investment services.
- Interactions with customers and Company staff who do not speak Irish in post offices.
- Interactions between customers and Postmasters and their employees who do not speak Irish.
- Interactions between customers and staff who do not speak Irish while delivering mail.
- Interactions between customers and staff who do not speak Irish in Delivery Offices.
- Interactions between customers and staff who do not speak Irish on the Customer Services Helpline.
- Media.
- Website.
- Tenders, Quotations and Invoices.
- Certain materials including forms for products and services offered by An Post on behalf of other entities (e.g. NTMA and the Department of Social Protection) are currently available in English only. Please note that these agencies are ultimately responsible for the design of these products and services.

9. ASSESSMENT OF EXTENT TO WHICH SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH IRISH AND ENGLISH

The following services are currently provided in both Irish and English:

- An Post replies in Irish to all written correspondence received in Irish in accordance with Section 9(2) of the Official Languages Act 2003.
- The An Post Annual Report is published in Irish and English as is required by the Act (Section 10).
- All information leaflets, covered by Section 9(3) of the Official Languages Act 2003 sent to the general public are in both the Irish and English languages.
- All external signs on post offices are bilingual in non Gaeltacht areas and in Irish only in Gaeltacht areas. All post offices use the official Irish language placenames as provided by An Brainse Logainmneacha.
- Some forms and associated information leaflets are available in Irish on request.
- Some Company staff / Postmasters and their employees in post offices provide services in both Irish and English. Many post offices in Gaeltacht areas provide services in both Irish and English.
- An Intranet site for Irish language resources has been established.
- Speeches by An Post personnel are available in the language of delivery.
- Maturity, closure and reminder notices for Savings and Investment products (on behalf of NTMA) are sent to customers in Irish if they have indicated to An Post that they wish to receive these documents in the Irish language. Otherwise the documents are in the English language. Please note that we are an agent for the NTMA who is ultimately responsible for the design of these products and services.
- An Post delivers mail which has Irish and English language addresses.
- Pre-printed TV licence notices and forms are bilingual.

10. ENHANCEMENT OF SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED BILINGUALLY

An Post is committed to enhancing the level of service we provide to customers through the medium of Irish, in an organised manner and over a period of time, bearing in mind commercial requirements and the requirements of the Act. To this end, An Post will adopt the following specific measures.

10.1 Website: www.anpost.ie

Static Content - An Post commits to making static content on www.anpost.ie, which is primarily in English available in both Irish and English over the lifetime of the Scheme. A bilingual version of the core information elements of the An Post website will be provided within the context of an overall IT strategy (first year 30%, second year 50% and third year 100%).

Interactive Content - over the lifetime of the Scheme, An Post IT Services will actively examine the viability of bilingual formats for interactive services. Any new interactive services which allow the general public to make applications or receive benefits on line will be introduced simultaneously in both languages. **Find your correct Irish language address** - an Irish language postal address search facility will be incorporated into the An Post website. Where the Irish language version of postal addresses are available it is intended that a customer will be able to enter either the Irish or English postal address and then toggle between the Irish and English postal addresses. The addresses are presented in the Address Checker, for both the Irish and English language versions, using Capital Letters only.

Application and information forms for An Post products and services - will be made available bilingually on the website over the lifetime of the scheme.

10.2 An Post Education Programme for Primary and Secondary Schools

The Irish version will be supplied on request and will be available online bilingually. Competition entries are and will continue to be accepted in Irish or in English. The Irish version will be supplied to all schools in the Gaeltacht and to Gaelscoileanna.

10.3 Media

- A minimum of 10% of press releases will be issued simultaneously bilingually. In addition Irish versions of other press releases and media statements will be made available on request.
- All press releases pertaining to the Gaeltacht or Irish language issues will be issued simultaneously in Irish or bilingually. We aim to provide an Irish

language spokesperson for the very few occasions when the service is required. We will commit to up-skill more staff to respond in Irish to media queries over the lifetime of the Scheme.

10.4 Savings and Investment Services

- All standard forms which are available in English will be made available in digital form on the Internet in Irish during the lifetime of the Scheme as follows: 40% by end of Year 1, 60% by end of Year 2, 100% by end of Year 3. Please note that we are an agent for the NTMA who is ultimately responsible for the design of these products and services.

10.5 Department of Social Protection (“DSP”) Services

- All DSP forms and information leaflets are supplied to An Post by the DSP and we will make available to our customers all Irish language forms supplied to us by the DSP. Please note we are providing these services under contract to the DSP who is ultimately responsible for the design of these products and services.

10.6 Mail Delivery Services

- Our aim has always been and will continue to be that mail addressed in Irish receives the same quality of service as mail addressed in English.
- Our Standard Operating Procedures now contain methods for dealing with letters with Irish addresses with which a member of staff is not familiar. Our updated Standard Operating Procedures also contain an instruction that English language endorsements are not to be written on Irish language addressed mail by An Post staff.

10.7 Post Offices

- An easily identifiable counter position will be provided over the lifetime of the Scheme at our four main offices (GPO Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway) at which customers, who wish to do so, can transact their business in Irish.
- A referral system for Customer Services through Irish will be provided in all Company staffed offices (we will refer them to a person in Customer Services who will be able to deal with them through Irish).
- An Post will encourage all post offices to provide enhanced services in Irish to the greatest extent possible. As an initial step, all post offices will be provided with a document which outlines the key elements of the scheme relevant to post offices and An Post will support those offices

willing to provide an Irish language service by erecting appropriate signage to this effect.

- Receipts are currently provided in English only. The viability of using Irish with our software will be examined over the lifetime of the Scheme
- An Post, from time to time, makes available to the public, through its network of offices, publications generated by other organisations. These publications will continue to be made available in the language chosen by the generating organisation.

10.8 TV Licence Services

- All notices and forms will be made available bilingually during the lifetime of the Scheme.
- An Irish language Customer Services telephone service or referral system for TV licence queries will be introduced during the lifetime of the Scheme.
- An Irish language version of the TV licence website is in place.

10.9 Sales and Marketing Services

- Information leaflets sent by An Post to the general public will continue to be available in both the Irish and English languages and will be provided under single cover where practical.
- An Post's Customer Service Centre will have staff competent in the Irish language available to deal with customers. It may not always be possible to immediately transfer all customers to Irish speaking customer service agents. Where this is not possible, customers will be contacted by a suitably qualified customer service agent within 1 working day.
- An Post will advertise in both the Irish and English languages as commercially appropriate.

11. POST OFFICES IN GAELTACHT AREAS

- An Post currently has 69 post offices in Gaeltacht areas, all of which are contractor operated. (See the full list in Appendix 1). A detailed audit was conducted in November 2014 to assess the current level of Irish language service provision in these offices and a summary of the findings are as follows:

41 post offices currently provide a service through Irish, and

An additional 28 post offices offer limited or no services through Irish.

During the lifetime of this scheme An Post will place particular emphasises on supporting these offices to increase and improve the provision of Irish for its customers.

An Post will erect signage indicating that a service through Irish is available in offices where this service is available.

- From the commencement of the Scheme, An Post will introduce as part of its criteria for selection of Postmasters in the Gaeltacht an Irish language competency requirement for the Postmaster or his / her staff.
- From the commencement of the Scheme, advertisements for all new contracts for offices in Gaeltacht areas will require Postmasters to provide an Irish language service to their customers.

12. STAFF TRAINING

- Over the lifetime of the Scheme, An Post will provide the necessary staff training to maintain panels of Irish speaking staff adequate to meet the commitments of this Scheme. Specific training will be provided to receptionists and staff dealing with the public to ensure that communications they receive in the Irish language are dealt with in a prompt and satisfactory manner either immediately or by referral to an Irish speaking staff member.
- An Post has already organised an in-house Irish language training course for staff. Staff participating in this course are encouraged to sit the Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG) and / or FETAC examinations. These training courses will be further developed over the lifetime of the Scheme.
- An Post will offer Language Awareness Training courses to staff in management grades.
- An Post's National Customer Services Centre will include Irish language awareness as part of both Induction and Customer Service training courses so as to ensure staff awareness of:
 - Why An Post implements a bilingual policy
 - The context and background to the policy
 - How the policy will affect their work
- The commitments made by An Post in this Scheme will be brought to the attention of all An Post staff.

13. INFORMATION SYSTEMS

- An Post will establish separate e-mail addresses for queries in the Irish language within 6 months of the commencement of the Scheme.

- The by-lines on An Post e-mails will be in Irish and English within 3 months of the commencement of the Scheme.
- Subject to resources, as new information systems are introduced, or existing major systems are significantly upgraded, An Post will actively and constructively explore how bilingual facilities can be incorporated.
- A bilingual “Out of Office” e-mail message will be made available to staff who may wish to use it within 6 months of the commencement of the Scheme.
- An Post has established an Irish language intranet site and this will continue to be developed as a staff resource.

14. PUBLIC MEETINGS POLICY

- All public meetings in the Gaeltacht will be held in Irish.

15. TELEPHONE SERVICE

- By the end of the first year of the scheme, the main receptionist / telephonist staff will be trained give the name of the An Post ‘office’ and basic welcome phrases in Irish. They will also be given the name of staff who can be contacted if a member of the public has a query in Irish. This member of staff will be able to deal without delay with queries that might arise.

16. AUTOMATED ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Recorded oral announcements in all Company operated post offices are bilingual.

17. PROMOTIONAL MEASURES

- The following are some additional proposals which An Post shall continue to provide and seek to develop over the lifetime of this Scheme:
 - Participation in Seachtain na Gaeilge
 - Ongoing support for and participation in Irish language events
 - Introduction and encouragement of voluntary Fáinne Scheme among staff so that Irish-speaking staff are readily identifiable to the public and each other
 - Inclusion of Irish language articles in staff magazine (Postnews).

18. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVISION

- An Post will keep the effective operation of the Scheme under review. Responsibility for implementing the Scheme will rest with the senior management team of An Post.
- The Official Languages Act Project Manager, reporting to the Services Director, will provide ongoing specialist support to line managers and staff and will have overall responsibility for monitoring compliance with the Scheme.
- Periodic research surveys with its customers will include questions to assess their satisfaction with the provision of services through Irish.
- An Post may initiate further development activities not covered in this Scheme.

19. PUBLICISING OF AGREED SCHEME

- The content of this Scheme along with the commitments and provisions will be publicised to staff and to the general public by means of:-
 - An official launch of the Scheme
 - Circulation to appropriate agencies and public bodies
 - Website and intranet site
 - A copy of this Scheme will also be forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla
- All queries on the Scheme and requests for clarification should be forwarded to Official Languages Act Project Manager, GPO, O'Connell Street, Dublin 1.
- The English language version of this scheme is the official version.

APPENDIX 1

List of Post Offices located in Gaeltacht areas.

APPENDIX 1

1 = Service available through Irish at present
2 = Limited/weak service through Irish at present
3 = No service through Irish at present

Co. Chiarraí	An Daingean	1
Co. Chiarraí	Ceann Trá	1
Co. Chiarraí	Baile na nGall	1
Co. Chorcaí	Baile Mhic Íre	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Cill Charthaigh	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Baile Láir	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	An Bun Beag	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Gort an Choirce	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Dún Lúiche	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Toraigh	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	An Charraig	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Gleann Cholm Cille	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Leitir Mhic an Bhaird	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Anagaire	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Árainn Mhór	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Doirí Beaga	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Na Dúnaibh	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Dún Fionnachaidh	1
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Gaoth Sáile	1
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Tuar Mhic Éadaigh	1
Co. Mhaigh Eo	An Clochar	1
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Bun na hAbhna	1
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Fionnaithe	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Cill Chiaráin	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Indreabhán	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Bearna	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	An Spidéal	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Baile na hAbhann	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Casla	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Ros Muc	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Corr na Móna	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Leitir Móir	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Béal an Daingin	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Inis Meáin	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Inis Oírr	1

Co. na Gaillimhe	An Cheathrú Rua	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Carna	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	An Chloch Bhreac	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Cill Rónáin	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Leitir Mealláin	1
Co. Phort Láirge	An Rinn	1
Co. Dhún na nGall	Carraig Airt	2
Co. Dhún na nGall	Ailt an Chorráin	2
Co. Dhún na nGall	An Fál Carrach	2
Co. Dhún na nGall	Ard an Rátha	2
Co. Dhún na nGall	An Clochán	2
Co. Dhún na nGall	An Clochán Liath	2
Co. Dhún na nGall	Bun na Leaca	2
Co. Dhún na nGall	Mín an Aoire	2
Co. Dhún na nGall	Cionn Droma	2
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Barr na Trá	2
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Gob an Choire	2
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Béal an Mhuirthead	2
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Dumha Thuama	2
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Ceathrú Thaidhg	2
Co. na Gaillimhe	Maigh Cuilinn	2
Co. na Gaillimhe	An Fháirche	2
Co. na Gaillimhe	Baile Chláir	2
Co. na Gaillimhe	Sraith Salach	2
Co. na Gaillimhe	Cor an Dola	2
Co. Chiarraí	Baile an Sceilg	3
Co. Chiarraí	Máistir Gaoithe	3
Co. Chorcaí	Ré na nDoirí	3
Co. Chorcaí	Cill na Martra	3
Co. Dhún na nGall	Cionn Caslach	3
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Poll an tSómais	3
Co. Mhaigh Eo	An Geata Mór	3
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Cnocán na Líne	3
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Gleann na Muaidhe	3