



**Western Development Commission
Scheme
2007 -2010**

**Under Section 11 of the
Official Languages Act 2003**

Contents

Chapter 1 : Introduction & Background

- 1.1 Guidelines for Preparation of Scheme
- 1.2 Content of Language Scheme
- 1.3 Commencement date of Scheme
- 1.4 Overview of WDC
 - 1.4.1 *Vision and Mission*
 - 1.4.2 *WDC Strategic Aims*
 - 1.4.3 *WDC Functions*
 - 1.4.4 *WDC Structure*
 - 1.4.5 *Customers and Clients*
 - 1.4.6 *Functional Areas of the WDC*
 - 1.4.7 *Assessment of extent to which services are available through Irish*

Chapter 2 : Provision of WDC Services

- 2.1 Means of communication with the Public/
Information to the Public
- 2.2 Bilingual Services

Chapter 3: Enhancement of Services to be provided bilingually

- 3.1 Background
- 3.5 Specific Area where services will be enhanced

Chapter 4: Recruitment and Training

- 4.1 Recruitment and Placement
- 4.2 Training and Development
- 4.3 Improving the WDC's Irish Language Capability

Chapter 5: Monitoring and Revision

Chapter 6: Publicising of Agreed Scheme

Chapter 1 : Introduction & Background

This scheme was prepared under *Section 11* of the Official Languages Act 2003 by the Western Development Commission (WDC).

Section 11 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 the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

1.1. Guidelines for preparation of Scheme

Section 12 of the Act provides for the preparation of guidelines by the Minister for Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs 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.

The WDC published a notice under *Section 13* of the Act on June 2006 inviting representations in relation to the preparation of the draft scheme under *Section 11* from any interested parties. Two submissions were received and these have been taken into consideration when drafting this scheme.

1.2 The Content of the Language Scheme

This scheme builds on the extent to which services are currently available through Irish as a starting base. Areas for future enhancement of the services provided by the WDC 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 the WDC continue to meet this demand in a planned, coherent and accessible way. The WDC will continue to gauge the level of demand for its services in Irish by measuring the level of queries/requests for services through Irish in a given period.

1.3 Commencement date of Scheme

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The scheme is commenced with effect from 10th April, 2007 and shall remain in force for a period of 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 earlier.

1.4 Overview of the Western Development Commission (WDC)

1.4.1 WDC Vision

The WDC's vision for the Western Region is: *'a thriving and diverse region that meets the economic, social and cultural needs of individual, enterprises and communities'*

WDC Mission

The WDC aims to be an effective and influential force in achieving economic and social development

1.4.2. WDC Strategic Aims

The WDC's three year Strategic Statement sets out a detailed programme of work and provides a clear focus for the organisation. The strategic Statement uses existing regional strengths to secure a better social and economic environment for the Western Region. The Strategic Statement is published in both English and Irish.

Our current Strategic Statement is organised around four strategic aims:

- *to foster and promote job creation and the transfer of skills to the Western Region*
- *to contribute to the creation of a quality economic and social environment by highlighting and supporting opportunities for improvements in the Western Region's transport, communications and energy infrastructure*
- *to stimulate the creation of a quality business and community-based enterprise environment across the Western Region*
- *to create vibrant and sustainable enterprise in the rural areas of the Western Region.*

1.4.3 Functions

The activities of the WDC are governed by the WDC Act 1998. The WDC works to ensure that economic and social policy and practice meet the development needs of the Western Region effectively. The Region's productive sectors, infrastructure and rural communities are of particular interest.

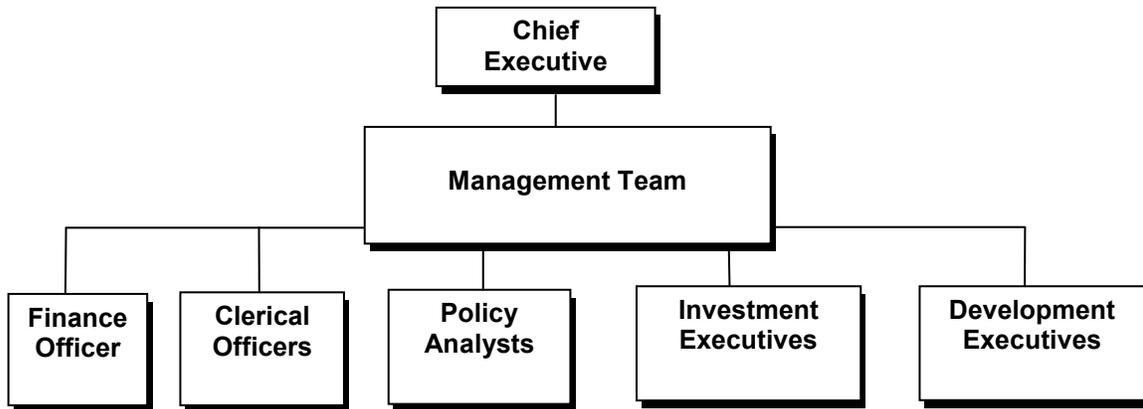
The WDC is responsible for the management and administration of the €34 million WDC Investment Fund. This dedicated fund provides risk capital on a commercial basis to projects and business through equity and loans and thus fills a funding gap identified by businesses and community groups in the Region.

1.4.4. Structure

The WDC is made up of twelve members appointed by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

The Commission is supported by an executive located in Dillon House, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon.

The staff structure is as follows:



1.4.5 Customers and Clients

The WDC recognises the importance of partnership in its work. It ensures that its contribution to the development of the Western Region adds value to the achievement of national Government policy. To this end, the WDC actively fosters and encourages strategic regional initiatives in a variety of sectors through working in partnership with other agencies, local organisations and community groups.

The WDC works strategically with Government Departments and agencies, local and regional authorities, commercial companies operating or investing in the Western Region and with the voluntary and community sector in the Region.

1.4.6 *Functional Areas of the Organisation*

The functional areas of the WDC comprise:

External Support Units:

- Rural/Regional Development
- Policy
- WDC Investment Fund
 - Fund Advisory Panel

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Internal Support Units:

- Administration
 - HR
 - IT
- Finance
 - Accounts
- Corporate Governance
- Internal Audit Function

1.4.7 *Assessment of extent to which services are already available through Irish*

The primary objective of the Official Languages Act is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. In this regard the WDC currently provides bilingual services to a substantial extent and every effort will be made to provide services bilingually when requested.

The WDC's Customer Charter states the following:

“ensure that any customer requesting to conduct their business through Irish can do so”

Chapter 2 : Provision of WDC Services/Activities

This Chapter sets out the official language regime that is currently operated by the WDC.

2.1 Means of communication with the public/Information to the public

As well as publications covered by section 10 of the Official Languages Act such as Strategic Statements and all Annual Reports, the WDC's policy has been that the following services are provided bilingually through the medium of Irish and English.

- **Customer Charter**
- **WDC Investment Fund Brochure**
Currently available in hardcopy in English and on our website www.wdc.ie through Irish/English.
- **Recruitment Advertising**
 - All recruitment Advertisements are published in Irish in 'Foinse'

Press Releases

Press releases for WDC annual report launch are currently published bilingually.

- **Media Interviews**
 - conducted in English and Irish when requested.
- **WDC Website**
 - The following information on the website is available bilingually:
 - reports that have been published bilingually to date
 - information brochure on the WDC Investment Fund
 - Frequently asked questions.

Chapter 3: Enhancement of Services to be provided bilingually

This Chapter sets out the services the WDC will commit to provide bilingually.

3.1 Background

The WDC currently employs one proficient Irish speaker who is in a position to act as Irish spokesperson on behalf of the organisation. The WDC is committed to employing and retaining at least one staff member proficient in the Irish language, in order to comply with the Act. The WDC also has a WDC Board member who is a native Irish speaker and is available to act as a spokesperson. The WDC is committed to ensuring that reception staff will be competent to deal comfortably with general queries through Irish when requested by members of the public. Due to the size of the organisation (15 staff members), the nature of its services and the other arrangements/commitments detailed in this Scheme the WDC considers that these are adequate to enable it to provide a bilingual service.

The WDC's headquarters are located in Dillon House, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon. The WDC does not have any offices located in a Gaeltacht Area.

3.2 Specific Areas where services will be enhanced

WDC Investment Fund Brochure

As stated above, this brochure is currently available in hardcopy in English and on our website www.wdc.ie through Irish/English. WDC will make the brochure available bilingually in published hard copy within one cover when next updating this fund brochure and in any event before the end of this scheme.

WDC does not have any other brochures or applications and have no plans to introduce any in the future.

Reception/Switchboard commitments

In accordance with the principles of Quality Customer Service, the WDC will ensure that:

- (i) Reception staff able to give the name of the WDC bilingually (within 6 months from commencement of scheme)
- (ii) Ability to deal comfortably through basic Irish with any member of the public (12 months from commencement of scheme)

- (iii) Arrangements in place to put members of the public in touch without delay with whatever executive is responsible for offering the service through Irish within (12 months from commencement of scheme).
Training and Development will be acquired to achieve the above.

Press Releases

WDC will continue to publish its press release for its annual report launch bilingually and also commits to publishing:

25% of all other press releases bilingually in year 1 of this scheme;

50% of all other press releases bilingually in year 2 year of this scheme;

75% of all other press releases bilingually in year 3 of this scheme.

Websites

- (i) www.wdc.ie
Where the WDC website is being upgraded in future, measures will be taken to translate the contents into Irish. Given the technical and resource requirements involved in doing this the task will be tackled over the duration of the Scheme. By the end of the first scheme the WDC is committed to having Our Work section available bilingually on the website:

- (ii) www.Lookwest.ie :
Should the Look west website be upgraded in the future, it will be made bilingual.

Email

Any standard disclaimer message on e-mail correspondence will be bilingual and this will be put in place as soon as maintenance is required on the WDC IT Network – no later than 6 months from commencement of this scheme.

Dealing with the Public

- (i) The WDC is committed to providing a competent customer service to the public through the Irish Language in relation to queries and is committed to achieving this before the end of the scheme. The WDC will achieve this by providing adequate training to it's receptionist staff.
- (ii) The WDC is committed to resources being made available in this regard over the lifetime of the scheme.

Computer systems and Interactive services

- (i) WDC shall ensure that any new computer systems, new PCs and printers purchased will be fully capable of handling the Irish language, if necessary, and it will also ensure (in so far as it is under its control) that existing systems are made compatible within the lifetime of the scheme.

- (ii) WDC does not have any interactive services and does not plan to have any in the future.

Chapter 4: Recruitment and Training

4.1 Recruitment and Placement

The WDC is committed to employing and retaining at least one staff member proficient in the Irish language, in order to comply with the Act.

The WDC will publicly advertise staff vacancies in both English and Irish.

All future recruitment adverts will have the additional line of :
'proficiency in the Irish language would be an advantage'.

4.2 Training and Development

There is an ongoing WDC commitment to provide appropriate training for all staff in the Irish language, to meet the needs of customers.

The WDC has and will continue to:

- Provide training in the Irish Language by employing a competent tutor on a regular basis. This training is based specifically on the work of the WDC.
- Review such training from time to time to ascertain how effectively the WDC's needs are being met in this area.

4.3 Improving the WDC's Irish Language Capability

The following actions are proposed in order to ensure that both the level and standard of services to the public are improved during the duration of the scheme:

- Irish Language classes will focus on Customer service needs;
- The WDC will continue to facilitate staff attending Irish classes during office hours;
- The WDC will actively promote the availability of the organisation's Irish Language services through their publications, website, logo etc.

Chapter 5: Monitoring and Revision

The WDC Management Team will keep the effective operation of this scheme under review as well as monitoring the level of demand for its services in Irish.

Day-to-day monitoring of the scheme will be conducted by the Head of Administration and will report on a regular basis to the CEO.

Chapter 6: Publicising of Agreed Scheme

The contents of this scheme along with the commitments and provisions of the scheme will be publicised to the general public by means of:

- Press Release
- Circulation to appropriate agencies and public bodies
- WDC Website

A copy of this scheme has also been forwarded to Oifig Chmomisnéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

Further information available from :

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