

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
Department for Infrastructure (NI)
Language Policy - Ulster-Scots
2017

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Language Policy sets out the ways in which DfI should fulfil its commitment to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML). Guidance on the ECRML is available on the Department for Communities (DfC) internet site at:

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/european-charter-regional-and-minority-languages>

The Language Policy is available on the DfI internet site, in both English and Ulster Scots:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/accessible-and-alternative-formats>

- 1.2 Linguistic diversity must be regarded as a common cultural wealth. Everyone is entitled to respect and courtesy, which extends to their language. Every effort should be made to convey this respect even if it is not possible to deal with the person in the language of his/her choice.
- 1.3 Officers should become familiar with the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages that apply to Ulster-Scots and the measures the Department has decided upon to implement them.

2. Personal Names

- 2.1 A person is legally entitled to assume any name he or she wishes – in English or in any other language. If he or she is generally known by that name, it is valid for purposes of legal identification. Unless it appears that he or she is not generally known by that name, staff must respect the wishes of anyone who wants to be known by the Ulster-Scots version of their name, and should use only that name in official business. Care should be taken to avoid confusion and duplication if an individual is known by both Ulster-Scots and English names. It may be useful to put a record of both versions on file.
- 2.2 If an officer believes that the person in question may also have been using an English form of their name, he/she might ask, *“Is this the form of your name you always use? I have to ensure that all your records are together.”*

- 2.3 If a person gives his/her name in Ulster-Scots, and the officer dealing with the person has difficulty in writing or even pronouncing it, they should ask the person to help them spell it.
- 2.4 If the name includes an accent, this should present no problem. Practically all computer software packages cater for this.¹
- 2.5 In short, a person may use whatever form of their name they choose. This right should never be questioned. Every effort should be made to write and/or pronounce a person's name correctly. Don't be embarrassed to seek that person's help.

3. Face-to-Face Interviews and Meetings

- 3.1 In the spirit of the Charter, Departments and associated bodies are encouraged to make provision for Ulster-Scots interviews and meetings. However at present it is not normally possible to facilitate face-to-face meeting in the Ulster-Scots language due to difficulty in ensuring appropriate quality assurance for interpreters. Further advice can be sought from the Equality Unit.

4. Telephone Calls and Voicemail

- 4.1 If a caller begins the conversation in Ulster-Scots the officer may respond in Ulster-Scots (if they speak it) or English. If the officer does not speak Ulster-Scots they should explain this and offer alternatives for dealing with the call. The following form of words may be helpful:
"I am sorry I cannot answer you in Ulster-Scots. But I can offer you the following options for dealing with your call. You may:
 - *continue the call in English;*
 - *write to us in Ulster-Scots;*
 - *wait while I transfer you to an Ulster-Scots speaking colleague [see 4.2];*

¹ Some Ulster-Scots spelling systems use accents to represent inflexion. When using Microsoft Word, the accent can be keyed in by pressing the *Alt Gr* key and then the vowel in question. In the case of capitals the *Shift* key should also be pressed. All such letters can also be accessed by using the *Insert –Symbol* facility.

- *transfer you to the NICS voice mail phone where you can leave a message in Ulster-Scots [see 4.3-6].”*

4.2 The DfI Ulster Scots speaking officer who is willing to assist with telephone calls is:

- Arnold Stewart (ext 40619)

This official will speak to the caller and, afterwards, pass the message to the relevant business area for follow-up action.

4.3 **Procedures for the use of Ulster-Scots Language Voicemail:** Whilst the Charter does not require acceptance of oral applications in Ulster-Scots, this facility offers the opportunity to encourage and promote the language in line with Part II of the Charter.

4.4 If a caller contacts the central switchboard or an individual Department indicating that they wish to conduct their business in Ulster-Scots, the official receiving the call will speak to them in Ulster-Scots if they feel confident they can do so. If they cannot do so, or are unable to divert the caller to the Ulster-Scots speaking member of staff listed at 4.2, they should divert or direct the caller to the NICS Ulster-Scots language voice mail on extension 75251 or 02890 515 251.

4.5 The voice mail is monitored by officials in Languages Branch, Department for Communities. Messages received will be translated immediately or forwarded to an interpreter for translation. Translated enquiries will be forwarded to the appropriate official or business area for action.

4.6 **Message on Ulster-Scots Voice Mail Facility (in Ulster-Scots):**

“Welcome to the Northern Ireland Civil Service. If you would like to leave a message with us someone will come back to you as soon as possible. You can leave your message after the tone. To handle your call we need you to give us the following information:

- Your name;
- Your address;
- Your daytime telephone number ;
- The name of the person you would like to contact, if you know it;

- The name of the Department you would like to contact, if you know it; and
- The nature of your business.

We will try to get back to you as soon as possible but if your business is very urgent you are advised to contact the particular Department directly in English.”

5. Correspondence

- 5.1 The Charter does not oblige Departments to accept written correspondence in Ulster-Scots, but the Department’s policy is to do so. Section 6 provides guidance on how to obtain a translation.
- 5.2 If it seems that, taking translation into account, it will not be possible to provide a substantive reply by the relevant deadline, an acknowledgement should issue in the normal way, explaining that the letter is being translated and that a substantive reply will follow – example provided at Annex A.
- 5.3 The acknowledgement should be issued in English and accompanied by an unsigned version in Ulster-Scots using the translation provided at Annex B. English translations of the original letter and response should be filed.

6. How to Obtain a Translation

- 6.1 There is a NICS wide Face to Face Interpreting & Text Translation Service which is carried out by Flex Language Service Ltd, and Step Training & Learning Ltd. The service is provided in accordance with the specification and terms and conditions of their contracts. It is envisaged that Flex, as the first ranked tender, will carry out the majority of the work required. All translations should be obtained through the Equality Unit (Debbie Williamson ext 40934, or Gabrielle Kerr ext. 40824) who can advise and arrange translation of documents or correspondence from, or into, Ulster-Scots, via the NICS translations contract provider.

The main use of the NICS contract will be for text to text translations.

- 6.2 The process for obtaining translations is:

- A word copy of the translation required should be forwarded to the Equality Unit.
- The Equality Unit will obtain a quote which will be forwarded to the relevant business area for approval to proceed with the translation.
- It is the responsibility of the business area to raise the purchase order once costs have been established.
- The Equality Unit will then request the translation. The translation should take two days – however this may take longer if it is a lengthy document.

7. Addresses

- 7.1 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 provides that a District Council may place a version of a street name in another language alongside the English name. For up to date information on non-English street names adopted by District Councils contact the Ordnance Survey (info@pointer-ni.gov.uk). When a person has used a lawful Ulster-Scots language street name staff should use the Ulster-Scots form in replying to correspondence or while processing applications. Both Ulster-Scots and English versions should be noted on the official record.
- 7.2 Where third parties may be involved i.e. where a document may need to be scrutinised (e.g. driving licence) or publicised (e.g. planning application) the English form of the street address should be shown as well as the Ulster-Scots version.
- 7.3 There are no restrictions on using Ulster-Scots versions of other parts of an address e.g. townland, town, county, country.
- 7.4 When contact is being initiated, it would be in keeping with the spirit of the Charter to use both versions initially, and then continue using whichever language was used in the reply. Departments and associated bodies are encouraged to use versions in both languages in their documents and publications.

8. Enquiries and Monitoring

- 8.1 Enquiries about this guidance and further advice on requests to do business (oral or written) in Ulster-Scots should be addressed to the Equality Unit (Gabrielle Kerr ext. 40824, or Debbie Williamson ext 40934).

Annex A

Department for Infrastructure

Tel:
Fax:
email:

(Name)
(Department)
(Address)
(Address)
(Address)

(Date)

Dear

Thank you for your letter todated

The matter is being dealt with and a reply will issue in due course.

Yours sincerely

(NAME)
Department for Infrastructure

Annex B

Depairment fur Owerstructur

Phóane:
Faix:
I-póast:

(Name)
(Department)
(Address)
(Address)
(Address)

(Date)

....., guid freen,

A'm ableeged tae ye fur yer scrieivin tae o tha (date)
.....

Tha mettèr's noo in han an ye shud hae a repone in coorse.

Wi an aefauld hairt,

(NAME)
Depairment fur Owerstructur