English-language Summary

Context

The *Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the Use of Irish in the Gaeltacht* (Ó Giollagáin et al.,), published in 2007, highlighted the severe decline in the use of Irish as a community language in the Gaeltacht. In response to these, and other, findings, the government published the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language* (2010) and *Gaeltacht Act 2012* was signed into law to give a legislative basis to some of the aims of the *Strategy*.

Under the *Gaeltacht Act 2012*, the Gaeltacht was divided into 26 Language Planning Areas (LPTs) and the community of each LPT was required to produce a language plan to strengthen Irish as a community language in the area. This language plan has been prepared for the Meath Gaeltacht LPT according to the provisions of the Act.

Background

In 2015, Comharchumann Ráth Chairn was appointed the lead organisation for the Meath Gaeltacht LPT, which meant that the Comharchumann would be responsible for the preparation of the language plan. The Comhchumann then founded a steering committee, Coiste Pleanála Teanga Ghaeltacht na Mí (CPTGM), with 18 members representing both communities in the LPT – Ráth Chairn agus Baile Ghib. The members are as follows: Dáithí Mac Cárthaigh (Cathaoirleach), Mairéad Ní Cheallaigh, Brídín Uí Chonaire, Éanna Ó Cróinín, Mairéad Mhic Dhonncha, Gearóidín Ní Dhubhda, Seán Ó Dubhda, Alan Ó hEadhra, Úna Ní Fhaircheallaigh, Éamonn Ó Fearraigh, Harry Mac Gearraidh, Colm Keegan, Katie Lally, Nóra Ní Mhéalóid, Máirín Sarikaya, Fionnuala Seoighe, Siobhán Seoighe, Seosamh Ó Teaighneáin.

In October 2016, CPTGM hired Hannah Ní Dhoimhín as a language planning consultant to help with the preparation of the plan.

The Language Planning Area of Ráth Chairn and Baile Ghib

History of the LPT

Unlike other Gaeltacht areas, the Irish-language community of the Meath Gaeltacht are a resettled community, who were moved to Meath from the Gaeltachtaí of the west coast by the land commission in the 1930s. All of the Gaeltacht families who were resettled in Ráth Chairn came from Conamara, and families were brought from the Mayo, Kerry and Donegal Gaeltachtaí to settle in Baile Ghib.

Topography

With an area of 44km², the Meath Gaeltacht is the smallest in the country. The LPT is made up of two areas – Ráth Chairn and Baile Ghib – which are separated from each other by the M3 motorway.

Population

According to the 2016 Census, the LPT has a population of 1,857 and a population density of 4.2 people/km². Census statistics show that the population of the LPT has increased by 11.2% over the last decade (2006-2016).

The Irish Language

Although the population of the LPT has risen in recent years, census statistics show that the percentage of the population with Irish language ability, as well as the number and percentage of daily Irish speakers, has fallen since 2006. In the 2016 Census, 59.8% of the population claimed to have Irish-language ability, and 15.9% reported to speak Irish on a daily basis, outside the education system.

The Education System

Naíonra Ráth Chairn is the only Irish-medium naíonra in the LPT. While there had been an Irish-medium naíonra in Baile Ghib, it was closed in 2016. There is one English-medium preschool in the LPT as well: Hillcrest Montessori in Baile Ghib.

There are three primary schools situated in the LPT: Scoil Uí Ghramhnaigh in Ráth Chairn, Scoil Ultain Naofa in Baile Ghib (both Irish-medium) and Scoil Chaitríona Naofa in Baile Ghib (English-medium). Coláiste Pobail Ráth Chairn is the only secondary school located within the LPT boundaries, and the majority of the teaching in the Coláiste Pobail is Irish-medium.

Scoil Uí Ghramhnaigh, Scoil Ultain Naofa and Coláiste Pobail Ráth Chairn have all applied for Gaeltacht school status under the *Policy for Gaeltacht Education, 2017-2022*.

Other Language Services

Outside of the formal education system, a wide variety of Irish courses are provided in the LPT, mostly by Comharchumann Ráth Chairn, and Coláiste Eoin Uí Ghramhnaigh and Coláiste na bhFiann run summer courses for secondary school pupils.

There is an Irish-medium crèche in Ráth Chairn, Naíolann Ráth Chairn, and Glór na nGael has an office in Ráth CHairn, which sells Irish-language books and games.

Local Services

Most of the services in Ráth Chairn are provided by the Comharchumann. A community shop, community hall, pub and a radio studio are all located in the Comharchumann buildings. There is also a church, public library, playground and GAA pitch with floodlights in Ráth Chairn.

In Baile Ghib there is a shop, a community hall, a church and a GAA pitch.

Leisure

Sport and Other Leisure Activities
There are three GAA clubs located near or in the LPT: Bhulf Tón GAA, Clann na nGael GAA and Dunderry GAA. There is also a rugby club (Athboy RFC) and an athletics club (Fr. Murphy's) located near the LPT.

A drama club, Cumann Drámaíochta Ráth Chairn, was founded in Ráth Chairn in 1973 and is still active.

Festivals
Currently, the LPT is host to four annual festivals, all of which take place in Ráth Chairn: Siamsóir na Mí, Féile na Gealaí, Éigse Dharach Uí Chatháin and Féile na Mí.

Gaeltacht Service Towns

The population of the LPT travel primarily to Athboy, Trim, Kells, Navan or Dublin to access various services, to shop and to work. It was announced in 2014 that Athboy and Navan would be recognised as Gaeltacht Service Towns under the *Gaeltacht Act 2012*. Despite a community-led campaign to have Trim designated a Gaeltacht Service Town as well, this has not yet happened.

Preparation of the Language Plan

During the preparation of the language plan, a coordinated awareness campaign was employed to keep the community informed about the process, to incite debate about language issues in the LPT and to encourage the local community to take part in the research and the make an input in the plan.

A total of 817 completed questionnaire were returned by members of the community, as well as a small number of recommendations and ideas that were submitted independently to the language planning consultant. 15 people took part in the focus groups as well.

CPTGM's logo was clearly visible on all questionnaires and on other material which was used during the research project and this helped the committee to raise awareness of the process. The language planning consultant analysed the research results between May and September 2017 and the results and analysis are presented in the next section.

Research Results

The results of the research conducted in the preparation of this language plan adhere to overall national and Gaeltacht trends: results from the general community and from the various target groups show positive attitudes towards Irish and towards the language planning process in the LPT, and research amongst school children, in particular, show a reasonably high level of interest in Irish-language events and activities.

Ability in Irish is also quite high, with 55.3% of the wider community and 99.4% of school children reporting to have fluent or reasonably good Irish. There is, however, a worrying trend in terms of language background, with only a small number of children coming from homes in which Irish is spoken and even fewer again from homes in which Irish is the main language of communication.

Regarding language practice, the research results reflect the pattern predicted in the *Comprehensive Linguistic Study* (2007 and update, 2015): less than a third of the community (31.8%) report to speak Irish on a daily basis, and although the schools' language policies boost the use of Irish within the school environment, only 7.1% of young people claim to speak Irish on a daily basis outside of the school or home setting.

A Summary of the Recommendations included in the Language Plan

Implementation of the Language Plan

6.2.1 Operating Structure

Aim:	To introduce a structure that will ensure the effective implementation of the language plan.
Description:	The lead organisation will employ a Language Planning Officer (OPT) who will work under the direction of CPTGM and will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the recommendations of the language plan.

6.2.2 Online Presence

Aim:	To raise awareness of the language planning process and to provide a point of contact for the community.
Description:	A website will be developed for CPTGM which will provide information about the language plan, contact details, news, etc. The OPT will be responsible for updating this website as well as CPTGM's Facebook page.

6.2.3 Database of Contacts

Aim:	To inform the community of the LPT of any developments regarding the implementation of the language plan.
Description:	With the consent of those in question, the OPT will keep a database of contacts and use this list to send out the newsletter (Recommendation 6.8.1) and other news about the language plan.

6.2.4 Monitoring

Aim:	To monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the language plan.
Description:	The OPT will be responsible for various monitoring activities (e.g. feedback forms, meetings, questionnaires) to ensure the effective implementation of the language plan.

The Education System (including early education services)

6.3.1 Strengthening the relationship between the schools in the LPT

Aim:	To promote socialisation between young people in the LPT and to encourage pupils who attend Gaeltacht primary schools to enrol in Coláiste Pobail Ráth Chairn.
Description:	The schools' management will be brought together to discuss ways to encourage parents to keep their children in the Gaeltacht education system for secondary level. Secondary school pupils will be recruited as 'language ambassadors' and will visit local primary schools to speak to the pupils about the importance of Irish and the rol of young people in preserving Irish in the LPT.

6.3.2 Naíonra in Baile Ghib

Aim:	To provide Irish-medium early education services in Baile Ghib.
Description:	An Irish-medium naíonra will be founded in Baile Ghib.

6.3.3 The Language Assistant Scheme

Aim:	To extend the Language Assistant Scheme to ensure that language assistants are present in the LPT's schools for the entire school year.
Description:	With the support of the schools, local politicians and relevant organisations, the Department of Education and Skills will be lobbied to provide funding to extend the Language Assistant Scheme.

6.3.4 Videos

Aim:	To produce high-quality videos for use in the classroom.
Description:	Short courses or camps on filming will be developed for pupils of Coláiste Pobail Ráth Chairn which will enable them to produce short educational videos for use in the LPT's primary schools. Possibilities will also be discussed with the coordinators of the Máistreacht Ghairmiúil san Oideachais (PMO through Irish, NUIG) regarding the production of similar videos for second-level.

6.3.5 Afterschool Club

Aim:	To provide language supports to pupils whose parents/guardians do not speak Irish and for parents/guardians who do not speak Irish but whose children are attending Gaeltacht schools.
Description:	An afterschool club will be founded for pupils of the LPT's primary schools and Coláiste Pobail Ráth Chairn. Facilitators will be provided to help pupils with their homework and to help parents/guardians who do not speak Irish to go through their children's homework.

6.3.6 Language Awareness amongst Young People

Aim:	To raise awareness of language issues amongst the LPT's young people and to enable them to act as micro-level language managers.
Description:	In Coláiste Pobail Ráth Chairn, mini-courses and workshops will be provided on language awareness, minority language, language planning, language revitalisation and sociolinguistics. In the LPT's primary schools, teachers will be provided with material and discussion points which will help them to organise regular discussions on language issues in their classroom in a way that is interesting and accessible to primary school children.

Childcare, Preschool and Family Support Services, including language support services

6.4.1 Correspondence Scheme for New Parents

Aim:	To increase the number of families who speak Irish in the home.
Description:	A correspondence scheme for new parents will be developed through which parents will receive regular letters/packages containing information about their child's cognitive and language development, rhymes and games that would be suited to their child at each stage and other materials.

6.4.2 Resources for Parents/Guardians

Aim:	To provide more resources for parents/guardians in the LPT.
Description:	Language Support Centres for Families will be developed in Ráth Chairn and in Baile Ghib. Parents/guardians will be able to borrow from a collection of Irish-language books, games, music, etc. which will be provided in these centres.

6.4.3 Gaeltacht Schools Parents/Guardians Groups

Aim:	To raise awareness amongst parents/guardians on language choices and to encourage them to use more Irish in the home domain.
Description:	Parents/guardians of children attending schools in the LPT will be invited to meet up regularly to discuss ways in which they can help their children, language-related difficulties they may be having, etc. The OPT will be present at these informal meetings to facilitate discussion and to answer questions.

6.4.4 Childminders

Aim:	To minimise the English-language input that young children in the LPT receive in the home domain and to ensure parents/guardians have access to childminders/babysitters with Irish.
Description:	With the permission of those involved, the OPT will compile a database of local childminders/babysitters with fluent Irish and parents/guardians will be able to contact the OPT to access this information. Parents/guardians will be encourages to use childminders/babysitters with Irish, regardless of their own language ability.

6.4.5 Playground Facilities

Aim:	To improve the facilities that are available for young children in the LPT and to increase the visibility of Irish.
Description:	**Baile Ghib:** A playground or similar facility will be developed in a central location which will provide parents/guardians and their young children to come together in an informal setting. A clear language policy will be implemented to ensure that Irish is given priority and to encourage people to speak as much Irish as they can while using the facility. **Ráth Chairn:** The playground will be developed/extended and the visibility of Irish in the playground will be strengthened.

Services for Young People and Other Age Groups

6.5.1 Youth Language Planning Committee

Aim:	To raise awareness of language issues amongst the LPT's young people and to enable them to act as micro-level language managers.
Description:	A Youth Language Planning Committee will be founded and will be responsible for organising events and for promoting Irish amongst their peers.

6.5.2 Social Spaces

Aim:	To develop centres in the LPT in which young people will be encouraged to socialise through Irish.
Description:	Centres will be developed in Baile Ghib and in Ráth Chairn as social spaces for young people. These spaces will be equipped with entertainment facilities and a policy will be imposed which will encourage young people to speak Irish while they are there.

6.5.3 Youth Clubs

Aim:	To promote Irish as the language of social interaction amongst the LPT's young people.
Description:	Irish-medium youth clubs will be provided for the following age groups: 4-8 yrs., 9-12 yrs., 13-15 yrs. and 16-19 yrs.

Learning Opportunities outside the Education System

6.6.1 Irish Classes

Aim:	To raise Irish-language ability in the LPT.
Description:	Informal conversation-based classes will be provided throught the LPT. These classes will be free and will cater to all levels of ability.

6.6.2 'Caifé agus Caint' Scheme

Aim:	To increase the number of people in the LPT who can speak Irish and who speak Irish daily.
Description:	A scheme will be introduced which will pair Irish-language learners with fluent speakers. These pairs will be encouraged to meet up for a short time on a weekly basis to practice their Irish.

6.6.3 'Oíche na bhFoghlaimeoirí' (Learners' Night)

Aim:	To provide informal opportunities to use Irish.
Description:	'Oíche na bhFoghlaimeoirí' nights will be organised regularly in local pubs (e.g. an Bradán Feasa and the Silver Tankard) and will be advertised in the LPT and in the surrounding times as opportunities for Irish speakers of all abilities to get together and practice their Irish in an informal, social setting.

The Business Sector, Community Organisations and Co-ops

6.7.1 Business Support Service

Aim:	To increase the use of Irish in the public domain.
Description:	A support service for business will be established which will encourage local businesses and organisations to use Irish in their daily business. This service will include a translation service, advice and support materials.

6.7.2 Áras Pobail Ráth Chairn

Aim:	To renovate Áras Pobail Ráth Chairn.
Description:	Áras Pobail Ráth Chairn will be renovated, with special attention being paid to the recommendations of this language plan.

6.7.3 Employment through Irish

Aim:	To provide local through Irish to the community of the LPT.
Description:	CPTGM will work with Údarás na Gaeltachta to develop strategies which will attract companies to the LPT and create jobs for the local community.

The Media

6.8.1 'An Geaitín' Newsletter

Aim:	To distribute information about Irish-language events in the LPT and to strengthen ties between Ráth Chairn and Baile Ghib.
Description:	The newsletter 'an Geaitín' will be reinstated. The newsletter will include news and pictures from the LPT as well as information on Irish-language events in the area. The newsletter will be in Irish or bilingual, as appropriate.

6.8.2 The Media

Aim:	To promote the use of Irish amongst young people and raise the profile of the LPT.
Description:	In collaboration with RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, transition year pupils from the LPT will broadcast a short, weekly programme from the studio in Áras Pobail Ráth Chairn, focusing on local news and current events.

6.8.3 Technology

Aim:	To increase the use of Irish online and on smartphones.
Description:	With support from other language planning committees, a campaign will be undertaken to have Irish versions of popular communication apps developed and released.

Public Services

6.9.1 Gaeltacht Service Towns

Aim:	To ensure that the community of the LPT have access to services through Irish in local towns.
Description:	A campaign will be developed to have Trim recognised as a Gaeltacht Service Town, and the OPT will develop a working relationship with the Gaeltacht Service Town committees in Athboy and Navan to ensure continuity between language planning efforts in the LPT and in the Gaeltacht Service Towns.

6.9.2 State Services

Aim:	To ensure the provision of state services through Irish in the LPT.
Description:	Údarás na Gaeltachta will be lobbied to establish an office in the LPT which will provide state services (e.g. tax, motor tax, social welfare, etc.) through Irish, in accordance with article 17 of the *Gaeltacht Act 2012*.

6.9.3 TÚS Scheme

Aim:	To ensure that the TÚS scheme does not inhibit the ability of local companies and organisations to provide a service through Irish.
Description:	The possibility of placing Irish-speakers in positions located in the LPT will discussed with TÚS.

6.9.4 The Catholic Church

Aim:	To promote Irish in the religious domain.
Description:	Possibilities regarding the promotion of Irish as part of religious services will be discussed with local priets and with the diocesan office.

Physical Planning and Development

6.10.1 Planning Permission

Aim:	To ensure and strengthen the language condition for planning permission in the LPT.
Description:	In collaboration with Meath County Council, the systems for implementing the language condition for planning permission in the LPT will be reviewed.

Social and Leisure Services

6.11.1 Social Events for Young People

Aim:	To promote Irish as the language of social interaction amongst young people.
Description:	More events for children and young people will be organised as part of local festivals.

6.11.2 School-based Events

Aim:	To extend the favourable language practice which exists in the school environment to other contexts.
Description:	Social events will be organised through the schools but outside of the school grounds and outside of school hours.

6.11.3 Training and Support for Trainers/Tutors

Aim:	To provide leisure activities through Irish for the community of the LPT.
Description:	**Training:** Training will be provided to those who run events and leisure activities in or near the LPT to enable them to promote Irish as part of those events/activities, regardless of their own Irish-language abilities. **Tacaíocht:** Language supports, such as advice, translation and help with language policies, will also be provided.

6.11.4 The GAA

Aim:	To provide leisure activities through Irish for the community of the LPT.
Description:	With the support of local GAA clubs, shared training sessions through Irish will be organised for Irish-speaking underage players from any of the clubs. A joint team will be put together to enter Comórtas Peile na Gaeltachta Local clubs will be encouraged and supported to enter Glór na nGael's Fondúireacht Seosaimh Mhic Dhonncha (a foundation which aims to help GAA clubs promote the use of Irish in the club and in the community).

6.11.5 Leisure Activities through Irish

Aim:	To provide leisure activities through Irish for adults in the LPT.
Description:	Classes and workshops (e.g. cooking, photography, yoga, knitting, etc.) will be provided through Irish in the LPT.

6.11.6 Book Club

Aim:	To encourage the community of the LPT to read more Irish-language books and to develop Irish-language social networks.
Description:	A book club, or – depending on demand – book clubs, will be established in the LPT. Depending on the Irish-language ability of the members, these clubs could focus entirely on Irish-language books, or read English-language books and discuss them in Irish.

6.11.7 Pup-Up Gaeltacht

Aim:	To provide informal opportunities to use Irish in the LPT and in the surrounding area.
Description:	A Pop-Up Gaeltacht will be organised on a regular basis in the LPT or in one of the local towns.

The Status of Irish in the Area – community attitudes, ability and usage.

6.12.1 Discretionary Fund

Aim:	To increase the number of Irish-language events that are organised in the LPT and to ensure the community's support for the language plan.
Description:	A discretionary fund will be made available to CPTGM and groups and individuals who wish to organise events or festivals will be able to apply for a grant. Applications will be evaluated on the basis of language-related criteria.

6.12.2 Gaeltacht Scholarships

Aim:	To motivate young people in the LPT to take an interest in Irish and to ensure the community's support for the language plan.
Description:	Four full scholarships and four half scholarships per year will be awarded to secondary school students in the LPT to attend a Gaeltacht summer college.

6.12.3 Internship Scheme

Aim:	To provide employment through Irish and a taste of Irish-based careers to young people in the LPT.
Description:	Summer internships with various Irish-language organisations will be funded to allow young people from the LPT to spend a summer working in a profession Irish-language environment.

6.12.4 Developing Language Planning in the LPT

Aim:	To raise awareness amongst young people in the LPT of language issues and to encourage them to play an active part in the language planning process.
Description:	A work experience scheme will be developed which will allow transition year students from Coláiste Pobail Ráth Chairn to undertake work experience with the OPT (Recommendation 6.2.1). A summer scholarship will also be made available.

6.12.5 Meath County Council

Aim:	To ensure coordination between the language plan and Meath County Council.
Description:	Annual or biannual meetings will be organised with Meath County Council to discuss the state of Irish in the county as well as the implementation of the language plan.

6.12.6 Public Talks

Aim:	To raise awareness of language issues in the community.
Description:	A series of public talks will be organised which will cover a wide range of language-related issues and will interest different groups within the community (e.g. Irish speakers, English speakers, parents, etc.).

Costs and Funding

A full expenditure programme for the language plan can be found on pages 120-121.

Awareness and Publicity

Awareness

One of the primary aims of this language plan is to raise awareness of language issues and of the language planning process in the LPT. To that end, many of the recommendations included in the plan focus on or include an element of awareness-raising.

The Meath Gaeltacht is a unique context in that the two communities in the LPT are separated and are both surrounded by traditionally English-speaking communities. Therefore, it will be important to raise awareness of the language planning process not only amongst the community of the LPT but also in the surrounding communities.

Publicity

Any publicity regarding the language plan or its recommendations should adhere to the brand guidlines provided in Aguisín IV, unless the OPT and/or CPTGM decide to develop other branding. Various types of media will be used to publicise the language plan, including print media, radio, internet and social media.

Implementation and Monitoring

As is set out in Recommendation 6.2.1, a three-tiered structure consisting of the lead organisation, Comharchumann Ráth Chairn, the steering committee, CPTGM, and the OPT will be used to ensure the effective implementation of the language plan. The implementation of the plan will be monitored continuously and amended, if necessary, to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency.