



Derry City & Strabane
District Council

Comhairle
**Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSraitha Báin**

Derry Citty & Stràbane
Destrìck Cooncil

Appendix 1: Initiatives to promote Irish and Ulster-Scots 2019/20

Initiatives to promote Irish and Ulster-Scots 2019/20

This document provides an overview of projects, events and initiatives which have been undertaken by Council in the period 2019/20 to promote the language of Irish and Ulster-Scots.

1. Festivals and Events

(a) Irish Language Week 2020

Irish Language Week is an annual event which seeks to promote opportunities for people to learn about and use the Irish language. Established in 1902 the now two-week long festival encourages participation from users and learners of the language with the emphasis on community groups organising their own events and activities.

Each year Derry City and Strabane District Council co-ordinates the local programme of events and activities to promote the festival which runs from the 1st-17th March. Part of this work includes signposting groups to funding opportunities, and facilitating capacity-building for new and emerging groups, and co-ordinating a two-week long programme of activity that aims to appeal to as broad and diverse an audience as possible. Typical community events include conversation circles, language taster sessions, social events in the medium of Irish, coffee mornings, charity fundraisers, arts drama and sports events, schools events and film screenings. As well as co-ordinating the wider programme for the Council area, Council organises and hosts a number of its own events to complement the programme.

In recent years, the Council has sought to diversify the scope of the festival locally and in recent years has undertaken to co-ordinate events to mark World Book Day and International Women's Day which both fall within the time period of the festival. In 2020 the Council hosted an Irish language-themed International Women's Day which saw Irish language students from local post primary schools from across the city and district take part in an Irish medium careers and opportunities fair held at the Guildhall and facilitated by representatives from some of the six Irish language lead organisations which operate throughout the island of Ireland, including: Oireachtas na Gaeilge, Conradh na Gaeilge and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. To jointly mark World Book Day 2020 and Irish Language Week, the Council worked in partnership with the North West Japanese Cultural Group to organise a dual language Japanese and Irish storytelling event for local Irish Medium Primary Schools.

(b) Ulster-Scots Language Week 2019

Ulster-Scots Language Week aims to promote awareness and appreciation of the Ulster-Scots language. Launched in 2019, Derry City and Strabane District Council was one of the first to embrace the opportunity to promote the campaign, and devised a week-long programme of events were designed to provide opportunities for the public to learn more about the Ulster-Scots language.

The Council hosted the Chief Executive of the Ulster-Scots Agency for a photo-launch at Derry's Guildhall ahead of the events which ran for the duration of the last week of November 2019. Our programme began at the Tower Museum on Monday 25th November 2019 with a lecture by leading Ulster-Scots writer and Professor Emeritus of Irish Studies at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris - Wesley Hutchinson - who delivered a lunchtime talk titled 'Tracing the Ulster-Scots Imagination' which addressed the legacy of the Ulster-Scots literary tradition and the impact of Ulster-Scots writing both locally and internationally. On Tuesday 26th November, the Council ran 'A When o Wurd's' - an Ulster-Scots Language Taster event held at our Strabane Civic Offices and delivered in partnership with the Ulster-Scots Community Network. This event offered an engaging and entertaining introduction to the Ulster-Scots language. Participants were taught basic words, phrases and expressions in Ulster-Scots in an interactive two-hour session. On Friday 29th November, Deirdre Speer-Whyte from the Ulster-Scots Community Network delivered an informal talk at the Education Space at the Tower Museum titled - 'An Introduction to the History, Heritage and Language of the Ulster-Scots'; this event provided participants with an overview of the Ulster-Scots tradition in the local area, focusing in particular on the Ulster-Scots origins of family names and the influence of Ulster-Scots on the variety of English spoken here. In the weeks leading up to the event we undertook a social media and printed media campaign to encourage members of the public to attend our programme of events, and indeed, to consider running events of their own. We were delighted to receive a positive response from Derry & Raphoe Action who submitted details of 'A Celebration of Ulster-Scots Language' for inclusion in our programme. The event, held on Thursday 28 November 2019, involved a visit by Newtownstewart Model Primary School to the local library for a celebration of Ulster-Scots music, poetry, song and dance. All events were open to the public and were free of charge. In 2020, the Council will move to a digital format for the programme and has recently issued a call to our Select List of Ulster-Scots Artists and Facilitators to create an original piece of digital content exploring Ulster-Scots as a living language. The programme will be supplemented by online talks, language taster sessions. The Ulster-

Scots Agency has also provided our Council with access to a range of electronic learning aids to enrich the programme.

(c) European Day of Languages

Each year the Council co-ordinates an awareness campaign with local schools to encourage participation in European Day of Languages which takes place each year on 26 September. Council's Language Officers run Language Awareness events for Council staff to coincide with this date, which seek to encourage an appreciation of the value of our languages and of the importance of linguistic diversity to our shared identity. The event offers an opportunity to enhance awareness of the languages of Irish and Ulster-Scots and of the protections both languages receive under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

(d) Culture Night 2019/20

In recent years Council has programmed language events as part of the wider programme to celebrate Culture Night. In 2019 the Council's Language team ran an event at the Guildhall on Culture Night titled 'Echoes from the Oakgrove' which featured a performance by world-renowned Irish traditional sean-nós singer Kate Crossan along with an Irish language and Ulster-Scots community information point and pop-up engagement zone which provided information to members of the public on language opportunities in the local area. In 2020, Council opted for a digital approach to the event and secured funding to commission a newly-composed song in the Irish language; this commission was won by Lasairfhíona Ní Chonaoala, a sean-nós singer from Aran who wrote a piece reflecting on the challenges of this unique year. The song was livestreamed as part of the Council's digital Culture Night programme. A range of Ulster-Scots themed events also featured in the programme

(e) UNESCO Year of Indigenous Languages 2019

In 2019 the Council ran a series of events to celebrate the UNESCO Year of Indigenous Languages designation and was successful in securing from UNESCO permission to use the event branding to market a year-long programme of language events, the highlight of which was the Island Voices autumn lecture series which in 2019 focused entirely on the indigenous languages of this region – Irish and Ulster-Scots' and which was featured as part of the UNESCO global indigenous languages programme. Further details on Island Voices are contained later in this appendix. The Council also marked

the year by programming a week-long programme to mark Ulster-Scots Language Week

2. Language Awareness and Proficiency

(a) Language Awareness Programme

A dedicated Language Awareness module has been developed to help Council staff to better understand the legislative and policy framework governing languages at local government level. Language Awareness sessions have been offered to Council staff and Members on a rolling basis from 2008 to the present day and cover a range of areas including; Irish, Ulster-Scots, ethnic minority languages and sign languages. The Language Awareness programme equips staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the range of obligations assigned to local authorities under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) and to deal with enquiries for information and services from members of the public whose first language may not be English. This programme complements the commitments outlined in our Equality Scheme and our Code of Practice on Producing Information.

(b) Irish Language Proficiency Programme

Local Councils are obliged under the terms of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) to have at their disposal staff who are suitable competent to deal with requests for services and information in languages categorised as Part III (i.e. Irish) within the ECRML. In order to work towards progressively realising this commitment, the Council has developed an Irish Language Skills Training Programme to support staff members keen to improve their proficiency in the Irish language, the ultimate aim of which is to support staff to deliver both services and information in the Irish language. The course makes use of the fluency milestones outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages guidelines, which allows achievable fluency outcomes to be set for staff members progressing through the various levels of the course; Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced. Staff are also entitled to apply to undertake qualifications in the Irish language with external course providers under the Council's Post Entry Training Programme. The course is delivered by the Irish Language Officer on a weekly basis and offers staff the opportunity to work towards the achievement of the 'fáinne' fluency pin which is a symbol demonstrating competency in the Irish language and is widely used within corporate and public-service environments to indicate to potential service users that the pin-wearer can deliver services and information in the Irish language.

(c) Irish Language Award Scheme - An Fáinne

The Council launched its Fáinne Scheme in 2010 offering employees who are learning Irish as part of the Council's Irish Language Skills Training Programme to undergo an oral examination in the language and compete for the silver (intermediate level) and gold fáinne (advanced level) accreditation. To date a total of 45 employees have been awarded fáinne after undertaking the Council's Language Learning programme.

(d) Ulster-Scots Award Scheme – A Wheen o Wurd

This is a scheme newly-launched by the Ulster-Scots Agency to award a competency pin to those who undertake a short online self-assessment course in Ulster-Scots or who participate in a 'Wheen o Wurd' language taster event run by the Ulster-Scots Agency or its partner organisation, the Ulster-Scots Community Network. In 2019, shortly after the scheme launched, the Council ran an event for staff and members of the public as part of Ulster-Scots Language Week and plans to offer this as an annual event, which alongside the fáinne scheme for the Irish language will demonstrate to the public an ongoing commitment to promoting both Irish and Ulster-Scots within the business of the organisation and in dealings with members of the public.

3. Communications and Social Media

(a) Irish Language Council Newsletter

The Council launched its Irish Language Newsletter 'Scáthán' in January 2010 to publicise Irish Language Services offered by the Council and to provide coverage of events and Irish language initiatives in the local area. The newsletter facilitates increased uptake of Irish language services and acts as a centralised resource by which individuals and groups within the Irish language sector can share information with the community network. In 2018 the Council redeveloped the newsletter into a MailChimp digital and this is now issued on a quarterly basis to subscribers to the Irish language community newsgroup.

(b) Social Media and Community Engagement: Irish and Ulster-Scots

Council operates social media accounts for both Irish and Ulster-Scots on Facebook and Twitter (@foramphobal and @fairfaaye). Our Irish Language Facebook presence acts as an online portal to share information about our services in the Irish language as well as acting as a one-stop-shop for

information about Irish language events taking place across the city and district. It is an immensely popular platform which uses a youthful aesthetic to appeal to younger and older social media users and which also acts as an additional channel whereby service users can directly access our services and receive a response in real time.

In 2020 we became the first Council to launch an Ulster-Scots social media presence on Twitter @fairfaaye. In the short space of a few months our Twitter platform has become increasingly popular and has gained significant traction with users of both Ulster-Scots and Scots. This platform allows us to promote Ulster-Scots events and activities taking place across the Council area, but more importantly it offers a visual presence to the Ulster-Scots language and helps promote the language within public life, an obligation which is explicit within the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Visual samples of the Irish Language Newsletter and of our Ulster-Scots Twitter Platform are included at Appendix 3.

(c) Media Engagement

In addition to creating and hosting content on Council web and social media platforms, the Council is actively represented in regional and national media platforms. In the 2019/20 period Council has participated in the recording of an Irish language documentary for TG4 showcasing the Council's involvement in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and Language/Policy Officers have provided interviews for BBC2's Irish language magazine TV programme 'An Focal Scoir'. More recently, Council's Language/Policy Officers have provided interviews to BBC Radio Ulster's Ulster-Scots magazine programme 'Kintra' to promote our Ulster-Scots activities. The Council operates social media platforms for both Irish and Ulster-Scots and issues a quarterly Irish language newsletter to the Irish language community. This, along, with an overview of our Ulster-Scots Twitter social media platform @fairfaaye is provided at Appendix 3 in the report.

4. Arts, Heritage and Good Relations projects to promote Irish and Ulster-Scots (2019/20)

(a) Island Voices

The Island Voices lectures series is an annual event which sets out to explore the Irish and Ulster-Scots cultural traditions with a particular focus on language and heritage. First launched in 2011, the event is funded by the Council's Good Relations programme, and is jointly delivered by the Council's Irish Language Services programme in partnership with the Heritage and Museums Service.

The Island Voices autumn lecture series is arguably our most successful initiative which acts to jointly promote Irish and Ulster-Scots within a good relations context. The initiative runs each year at the Tower Museum and features talks which explore the shared heritage of our Irish and Ulster-Scots traditions. Each lunchtime talks series features lectures by three different guest speakers each presenting their interpretation of the series theme which changes each year. Previous talks have included themes such as 'The lost Gaeltacht of County Derry', 'Concepts of place in English writing from the North of Ireland' and 'The Ulster-Scots Literary Tradition in the North West of Ulster'.

The lectures are, by their nature, thought-provoking and challenging, allowing for members of the public to listen to speakers explore often contentious subjects in a frank and open manner but never losing sight of the importance of celebrating our shared linguistic and cultural heritage and the diverse legacy of our shared past.

In 2020 due to the unprecedented challenges posed by a global pandemic, the series moved to a fully virtual format and explored the theme of 'Island Sisters' which looks in depth at the mutual intelligibility between languages such as Irish and Scottish Gaelic, and Scots and Ulster-Scots and which explores the shared legacy of St Columba who is recognised as a figure of global significance and whose 1500th anniversary is celebrated in 2020/21.

Island Voices has been particularly effective in giving a platform to Ulster-Scots voices which are sometimes absent from the mainstream. Since the inception of the series, we have had the opportunity to host a very broad range of speakers who have spoken to a range of Ulster-Scots subjects summarised in brief as follows: A Lively Introduction to Scots (Dr Fred Freeman); Planter and Gael Women of Ulster (Jacqui Reed); An Introduction to Ulster-Scots in the North West (Deirdre Speer Whyte); The Ulster-Scots Literary Tradition in the North West (Dr Frank Ferguson); Notable Ulster-Scots Men and Women and their Legacy (Frank Carey); The Plantation - Processes, People and Perspectives (Deborah J Stockdale); The Songs of Robert Tannahill (Dr Fred Freeman); The Rhyming Weavers of Ulster (Laura Spence); Decade of Centenaries Programme: English, Irish & Ulster-Scots in the Easter Rising and

the Somme (Professor Elizabeth Crooke and Dave Duggan); The Border Reivers (Robert Bell); Disagreeably Scottish – Voices of the Ulster-Scots (Dr Carol Baraniuk); and; Tracing the Ulster-Scots Imagination (Wesley Johnston); and in 2020 the virtual format of the programme has allowed us to feature voices from further afield: our 2020 programme 'Éire and Alba – Island Sisters' explores the deep cultural and linguistic connections which exist between Scotland and Ireland. The series will also feature Stuart A Paterson, a leading voice in the Scots literature movement and previously poet in residence at BBC Scotland who will compare and contrast the Scots and Ulster-Scots literary and language movements in a virtual lecture titled 'Baith Sides o the Sheugh'.

(b) Language Links

In 2018 as part of our wider language awareness programme Council undertook a community outreach programme which chose to focus on older people based mainly within rural communities. The Council engaged well-known Ulster-Scots broadcaster, presenter, commentator and journalist Liam Logan and Linda Ervine from the East Belfast Mission Project which promotes Irish and Ulster-Scots to deliver a series of events within rural communities in the DCSDC area aimed at promoting an awareness of Ulster-Scots and Irish and which challenged the perception that our regional and indigenous languages are held within the cultural ownership of one community. This initiative was also delivered to Elected Members in January 2020.

(c) GP Findlay Project

Derry City and Strabane District Council is working with Ulster-Scots partners in the local community to take forward the GP Findlay project. This project will utilise the original personal documents and numerous writings of George Patton Findlay, a native of Ayr in Scotland and significant civic figure in the city during the early to mid-20th century. Heavily influenced by Robert Burns, and a leading light of the Londonderry Burns Club and Caledonian Society, Findlay was a prolific poet, regularly writing in the Scots and Ulster Scots dialects. Many of his poems were published in the local press and span a crucial and tumultuous time in Irish history, from before the outbreak of the First World War, through Partition and the Second World War. In addition to embracing his linguistic heritage in his writings, Findlay wrote with humour, humanity and an understanding of everyday life, adopting a similar approach to his work as both Burns and William Forbes Marshall, 'The Bard of Tyrone'. This project will undertake research into the following areas:

- Life of GP Findlay
- Poetic works of GP Findlay
- Use of Ulster Scots linguistic style and language within local poetry
- Influence of Robert Burns in the writings of Findlay and others
- Role and work of the Londonderry Burns Club and Caledonian Society within the city circa 1907 -1957 approx.

This research will be collated and edited with the result being a Burns Night celebration event (2021) comprising of a talk and discussion of Findlay and his work, and poetry recital of both Burns and Findlay poetry primarily in Scots and Ulster Scots dialects. In advance of the formal launch a digital performance featuring GP Findlay's work has been created and featured at the New Gate Online Fringe Festival and is set to feature on the 2020 Good Relations Week programme.

5. Schools Outreach Programme

Council has entered into a number of informal partnerships with external organisations to ensure access to high-quality learning opportunities for young people in Irish medium education in the city and district. The Council has been involved in delivering dual-language workshops to IME schools on a range of subjects and with a range of partners including the British Red Cross, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Sustrans, recycling and waste management programmes with Council partners, biodiversity workshops, and most recently, Council has been working with the Verbal Arts Centre and Seagate to deliver unique dual language programmes which mainstream the use of Irish and which enhance access for learners who would, without this intervention, not have been able to access these supplementary learning opportunities.

(a) Reading Rooms

Council is partnering with the Verbal Arts Centre (now known as Verbal) to assist in offering the Reading Rooms project through the medium of Irish. Reading Rooms is an outreach programme of reading-based activity with an emphasis on discussion which improves and supports positive mental health outcomes. The Reading Rooms model involves groups of people meeting weekly in a community location. Sessions are structured and short stories and poetry are selected in advance to meet the needs of the group. The literature is read aloud by a trained, accredited volunteer facilitator. At regular, pre-designed, and tested discussion breaks in the reading, the group is

encouraged to reflect on what is being read. Groups explore how the literature might relate to their own lives and circumstances.

Council's Irish Language Officer has attended training sessions in Verbal with a view to training volunteers to facilitate Reading Rooms sessions in Irish for young people on the basis of a pilot model. Irish medium schools suitable for the project have been identified in the Council area and the plans are currently in place to extend the programme into the Donegal County Council area.

(b) Seagate/STEM

Council is currently working alongside representatives from leading precision-engineering and datasphere company Seagate to develop a dual language STEM programme for Irish medium schools in the city and district. Following an approach to Council by the company, the Council's Irish Language Officer has begun work to facilitate a STEM workshop through the medium of Irish which has been piloted with one school with a view to tailoring the programme so that it can be offered to other schools in the city and district.

(c) RSPB – Schools Biodiversity Project

Derry City and Strabane District Council has been partnering for the past three years with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to deliver a unique biodiversity project developed from the Big Garden Birdwatch campaign, which was designed specifically in a dual language format to encourage participation from the Irish medium education sector in the charity's Schools Education Programme. This project represented the first formal engagement between the Council and the well-established environmental charity and has provided a model upon which other Councils and schools can develop programmes for their own local areas.

(d) My House of European History

Council is currently partnering with partners in the European Parliament to develop material for the My House of European History project. This is a unique collaborative project which seeks original content and testimonies from people living within Europe about European history and contemporary life. Content is arranged in easy to browse chronological time slices and links these stories and testimonies to accurate location maps. The European Parliament is keen to seek new materials in all of the European languages and our Council has had some initial discussions with the Brussels-based project team to identify ways in which we can encourage the local community and

schools audiences to participate and provide content which showcases the Council area and which serves to illustrate the unique nature of our situation in this region. Council has involved partners within the Heritage and Museum Service and plans to begin a media awareness campaign in autumn 2020 in advance of any call for content. The Council plans to invite the public to submit content in both Irish and Ulster-Scots.