

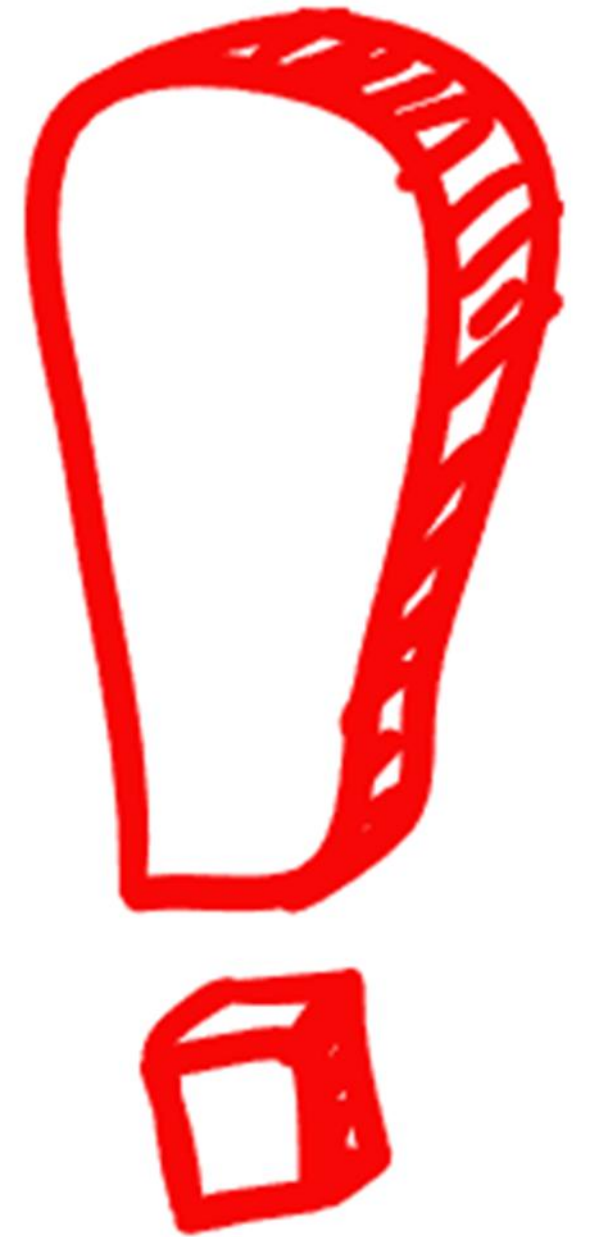


**Comhairle Cathrach
na Gaillimhe**
Galway City Council

Gaeilge Style Guide

Adopted by SMT January 2026

- Where a style, language, or format is set out by guidelines, regulations or legislation, please ensure you follow the relevant process/ format.
- If you spot an error or information that needs to be updated – please get in touch with the Communications Unit – Communications@GalwayCity.ie



Why Develop a Gaeilge Style Guide?

Photos by Cormac McMahon



Galway City Council Style Guides

Galway City Council has a **general Style Guide**, and a **Gaeilge Style Guide**.

Both documents are available on the Communications Sharepoint.

These guides explain the formatting, spelling and other styles we use in Galway City Council to **create more accessible content**.

The main reason to create accessible content is to ensure that people with visual, auditory, cognitive, physical or learning disabilities are able to access our content, and that their experience is equal to that of someone without these disabilities – both for those who speak English, and those who speak Gaeilge.

Using this ‘House Style’ in print and online makes our information clearer, more consistent, more readable, and more accessible – for everyone.

Why Develop a Style Guide?

For Gaeilge in particular, Galway City Council has a number of **legislative obligations** in relation to services and communications.

The Gaeilge Style Guide sets out these obligations, and how to apply them.

This means clearer, more accessible content as Gaeilge – and reduces complaints to the Irish Language Commissioner for non-compliance.

When materials are non-compliant, they generally have to be reprinted – **at additional cost**.

Why Develop a Gaeilge Style Guide?

This document sets out a standard for the appearance and content of Galway City Council materials in Gaeilge.

It should also be used by third parties preparing materials for us – particularly if they are for public consultation or engagement.

Any Tender or Request for Quote documents should reference the GCC Style Guide, Gaeilge Style Guide, and Branding Guidelines, and require consultants to apply the standard to any materials they produce on behalf of GCC. If unsure, please contact Communications.

Why Develop a Style Guide?

Please refer to the original Style Guide for more information on:

- branding,
- formats for dates and times,
- appropriate terms (in English),
- Hiberno English,
- formatting,
- Plain English,
- readability,
- acronyms and Technical terms,
- using graphics, and
- resources to support Accessibility.

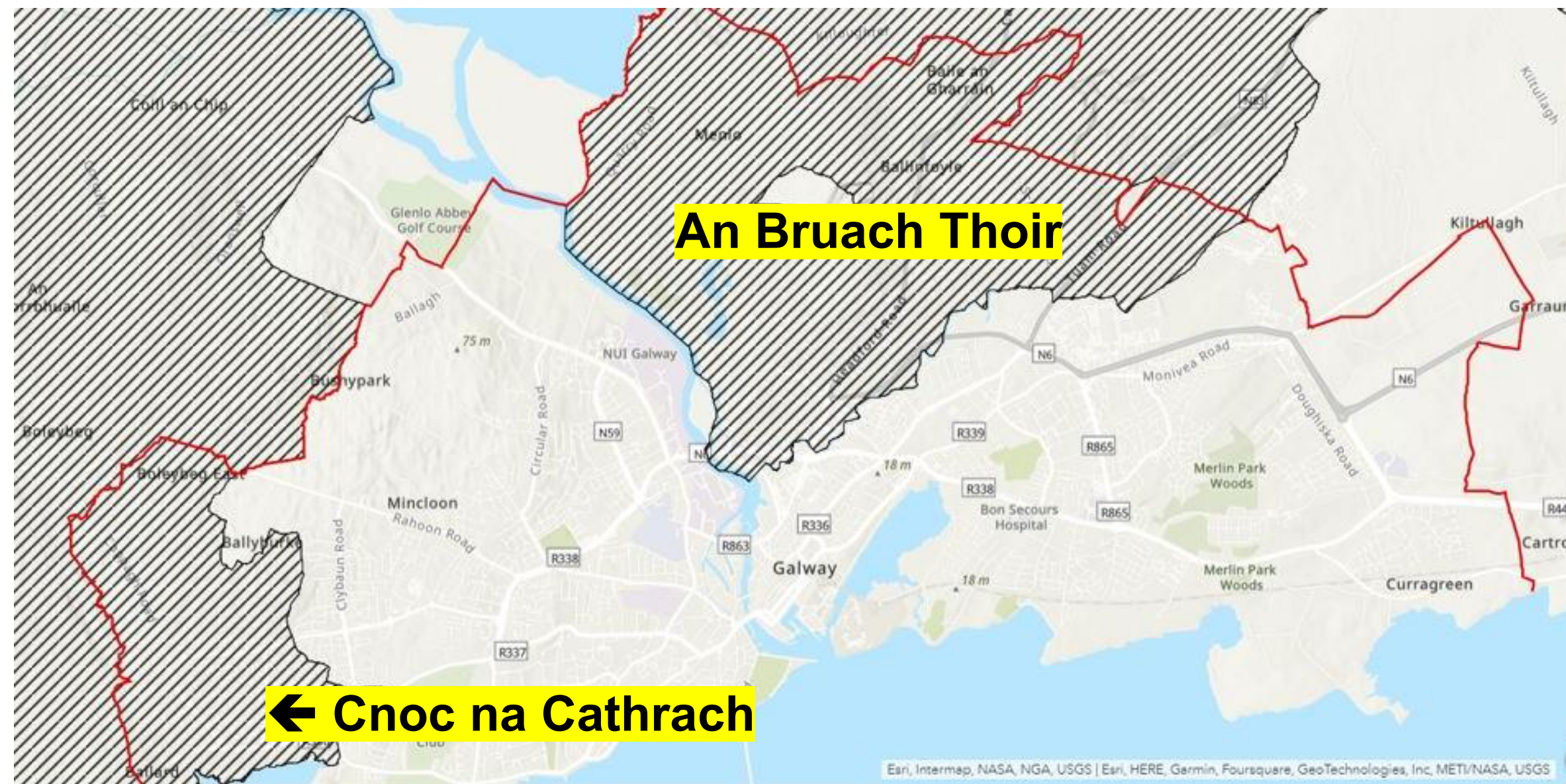
If you have any queries or are unsure of the guidance, please contact Communications –
Communications@GalwayCity.ie

Legislation



GCC Policy and National Legislation

- As a public body, a Gaeltacht Service Town, and a bilingual city, Galway City Council has a number of obligations in relation to services through Gaeilge.
- Large areas of the city are Gaeltacht areas - to the east of the city (An Bruach Thoir) and to the west in Cnoc na Cathrach.



Legislation

The legislation that details Galway City Council's obligations as Gaeilge are:

- An Scéim Teanga 1 – 4 (Galway City Council's Irish language policy), and
- Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021 – Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021



A series of [short videos explaining these obligations](#) is available for staff on the Gaeilge Sharepoint.

Legislation

In summary:

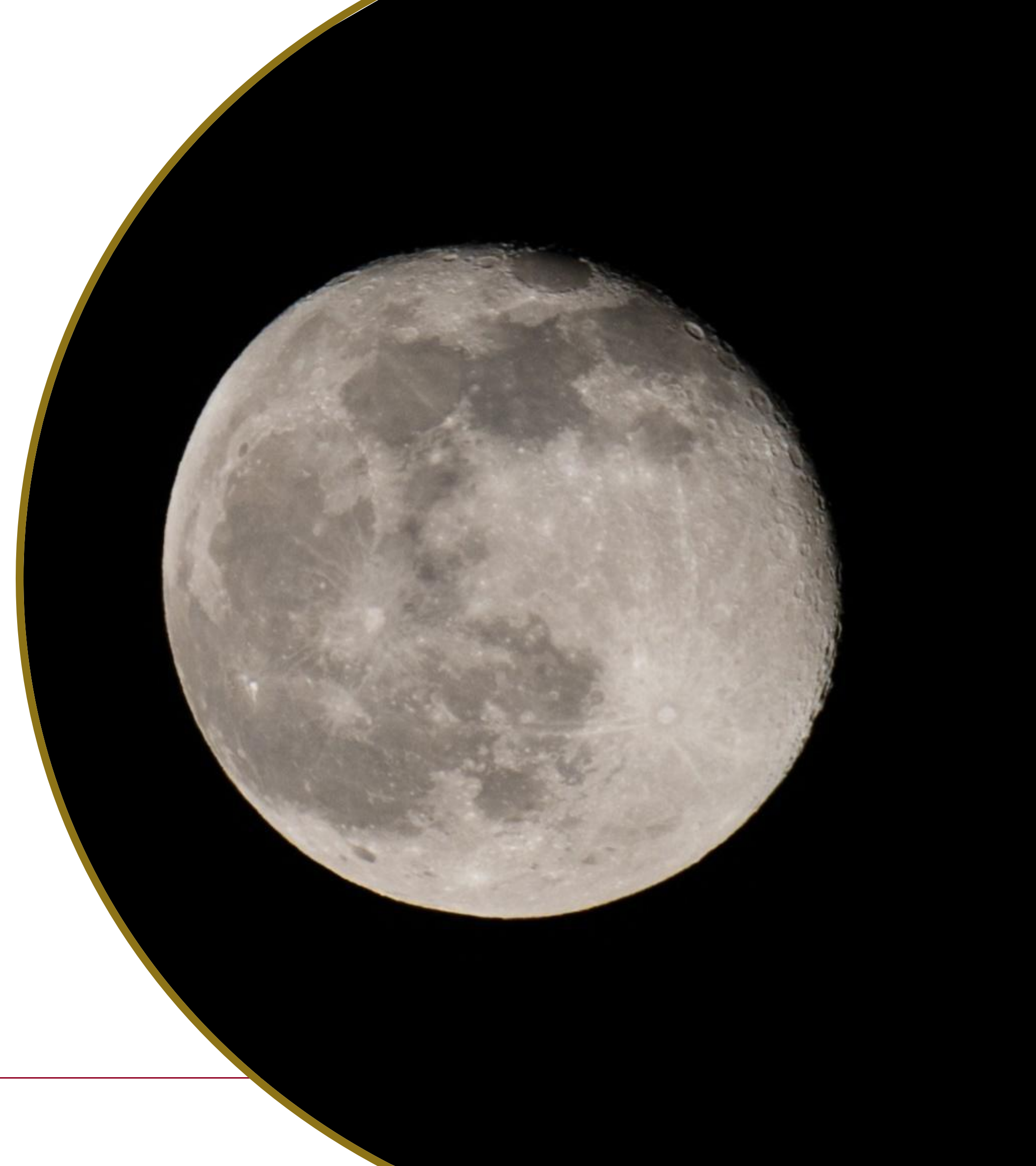
- **All public-facing communications** shall be in Irish, or Irish and English where the Irish is of equal prominence to the English.
- **Advertising and marketing material** - whether aimed primarily at tourists and visitors, or locals - shall be in Irish, or Irish and English, where the Irish is of equal prominence to the English.
- **Public-facing signage/ newsletters/ posters/ communications**, that have been posted **by or on behalf of** Galway City Council must be in Irish, or Irish and English, with Irish having the same prominence as English.

This includes, for example, posters, signs, road signs, receipts, flyers, web pages, press releases, promotional items, photo props, advertisements, t-shirts, banner stands, brochures, and policy including draft policy – including temporary versions of the above.

This includes materials GCC publishes, and materials contractors produce on our behalf.

Translation

Rules of Thumb



Translation

As a rule of thumb, **always go to a human translator** – either the GCC translation supplier, or the Irish Officer.



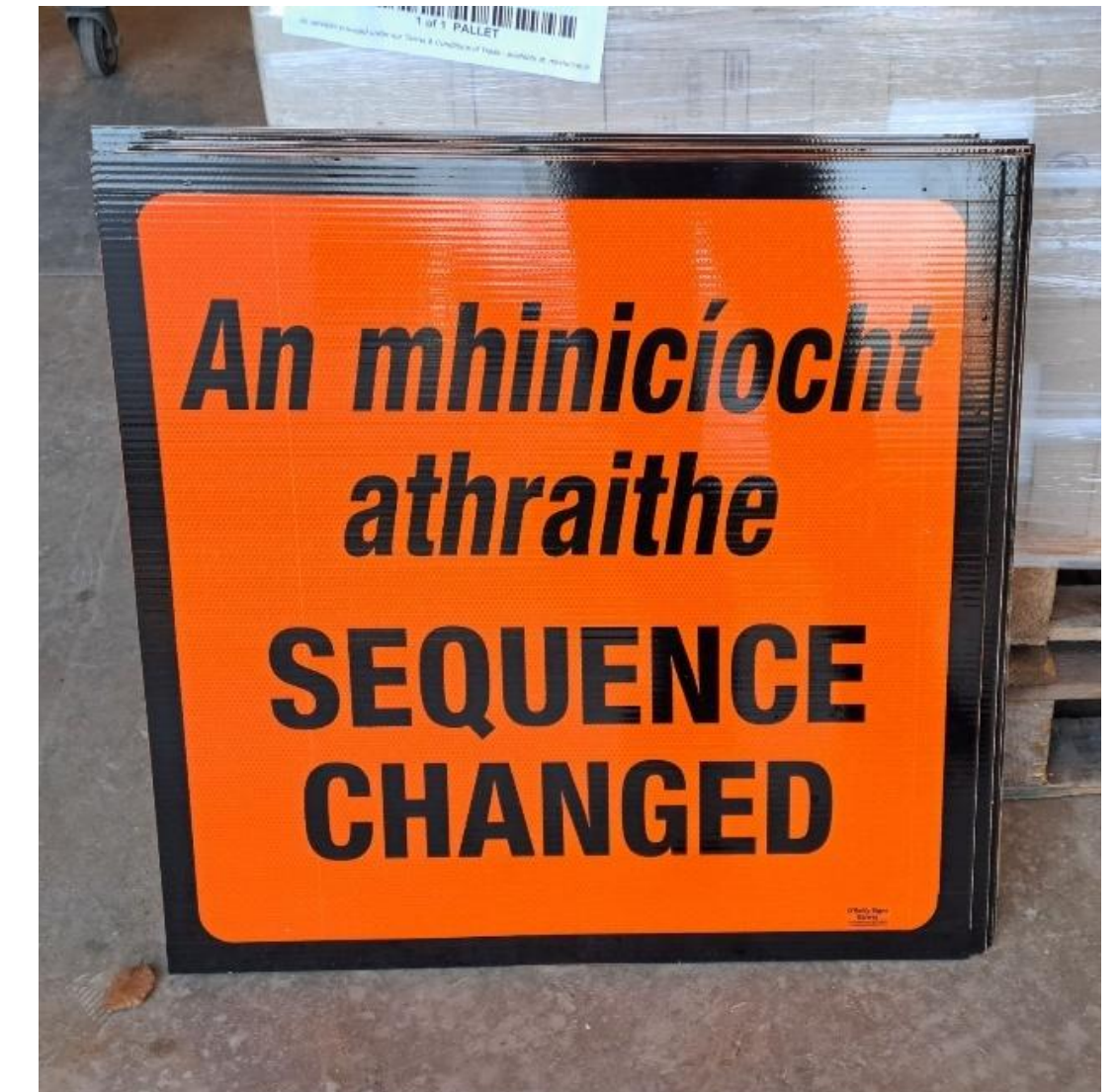
‘In Context’ Translation

This sign is to warn pedestrians that a traffic lights sequence has changed.

If ‘sequence changed’ was translated without knowing how the sign will be used, it’s possible that the wrong translation would result.

A terminology dictionary will return ‘seicheamh’ for sequence – but this means a mathematical sequence, not the traffic light sequence.

Many words in any languages contain layers of meaning and the context will always lead to the desired meaning.



As a rule of thumb, **always go to a human translator** – either the GCC translation supplier, or the Irish Officer.

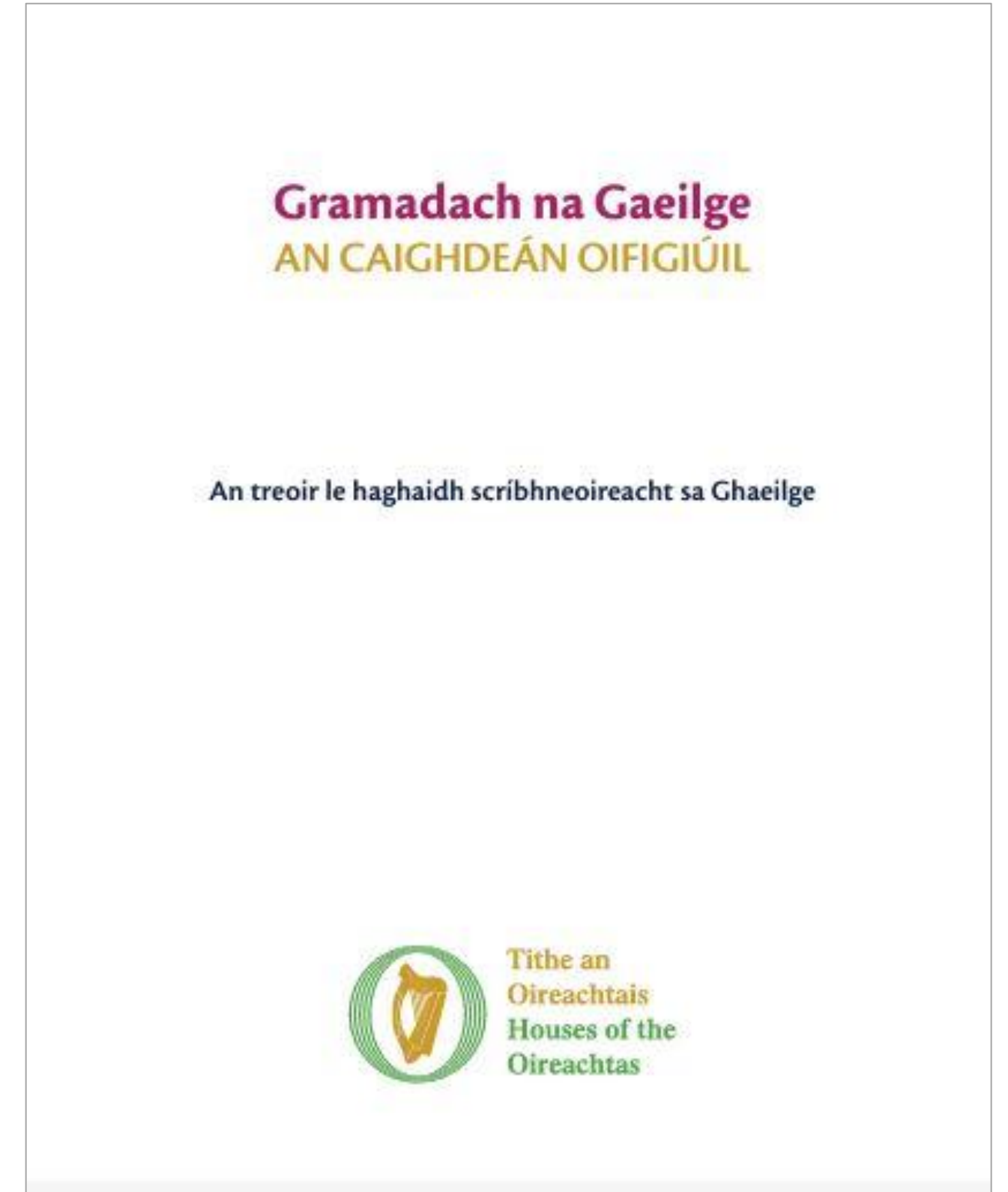
An Caighdeán Oifigiúil

There is an official ‘standard’ for the Irish language, which is the standard for spelling and grammar/ rules.

All translations must be in line with the official standard.

Do not use online or machine translations – always go to our appointed supplier or the Irish Officer.

Note the Official Standard for Irish applies to **written** Irish and not spoken Irish.



Translations

Galway City Council's translation service provider is Europus.

- Contact Eolas@Europus.ie for all translations
- Allow time for translations!
- A short press release can take min 24-48 hours.

For a single sentence, slogan, phrase, or high profile/ visible materials, please contact the Irish Officer for assistance.



Language Styles

In general, we apply a 'Plain English' style of writing in Galway City Council.

A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information.

Standards Committee of the International Plain Language Federation

The same approach applies in Gaeilge.

Direct Translation

Direct translation from English to Irish often does not work – and makes no sense to an Irish speaker.

In the examples below, the English phrase, the appropriate Gaeilge translation, and a direct translation are shown.

English	Irish	Speech
Time will tell	Is maith an scéalaí an aimsir	Indirect – conveys the same meaning, but in a different phrase, commonly used in Gaeilge. (The weather is a good story teller)
	Inseoidh (an t-) am	Direct – words are translated directly from English to Irish, but is not how people speak in Irish.
No one is perfect	Ní bhíonn saoi gan locht	Indirect (No sage is without fault)
	Níl aon duine foirfe	Direct
Silence is golden	Is binn béal ina thost	Indirect (A mouth is sweet in its silence.)
	Tá (an) ciúnas órga.	Direct
Love where you live	Is mór an spóirt é ár gceantar	Indirect (Our place is beautiful)
	Bíodh grá agat don áit ina chónaíonn tú	Direct
In the middle of it (the action/ party/ bustle)	I lár an aonaigh/i lár na sráide	Indirect (in the middle of the fair/ in the middle of the street)
	I lár in aicsin	Direct (in the middle of the action)

Note - Machine translation will not usually translate indirect speech well, so it will be obvious to an Irish speaker if you have used Google translate, as it is more likely to have errors and direct translations.

Direct Translation

In the table on the previous slide, the direct translations are grammatically correct, but a communication disaster!

The ultimate test is, ‘Do people speak like that?’

In each example, the indirect phrase was the correct choice. The direct phrase was an English sentence/phrase, using Irish words.



Galway's positive anti-littering campaign

Indirect Speech

Indirect speech is the way to most effectively communicate a message in Irish, because it is usually the ‘plainest’ language.

The rule of thumb is “Is there a more straightforward or plain way to say this?”

A good way to find this out is ask a native speaker.

‘Cur Gaeilge ar...’

(How do I say (phrase or question) in Irish?)

Direct speech is important for legal or technical communications, but it can trip up even a good translator.

See below examples of direct translation, where ‘claoíninsint’ is more appropriate.

English	Direct Translation	Claoíninsint (with Direct English)
Pregnant	Torrthúil	Ag súil (expecting)
Conspiracy	Comhcheilg	Uisce faoi thalamh (underground water)
Grudge	Faltanas	Nimh sa bhfuil (poison in blood)
Savoury food	Bia sailhte	Bia ceart (proper food)
Depopulation	Dí-dhaonrú	Bánú
Clear/ transparent glass	Gloine trédhearcach	Gloine bhán (white glass)

Different Concept for the Same Action...

When translating to Gaeilge, the preference is to use figures of speech from Gaeilge, instead of ‘borrowing’ from English.

For example, in English we say, ‘We are going **out** to Aran’.

In Gaelige, you can also say ‘going out’ to Aran, but this borrows the English concept.

The preference is to use the figure of speech from Gaeilge, which is ‘Tá muid ag dul **isteach** go hÁrainn’ (into Aran).

In Irish, people tend to go ‘into islands’ and ‘out to (from an island) the mainland’.

Different Concept for the Same Action...

Below are examples of words ‘found in speech’ in Gaelige, and their equivalent phrase ‘borrowed from English’. Translation of expression without ‘concept’ can lead to ‘Béarlachas’ - because the translated expression is conceptually stuck in English. When translating for Galway City Council, the preference is always for the ‘found in speech’ original Gaeilge version.

Found in speech	Sticking with the English concept
Amach sa bhfarraige (out to sea)	Isteach sa bhfarraige (into the sea)
Isteach ar oileán (into an island)	Amach ar oileán (out on an island)
Líon isteach foirm (fill in a form)	Líon amach foirm (fill out a form)
Tarraing ceist anuas (pull down a question)	Ardaigh ceist (raise a question)
In aice láimhe (beside hand – nearby)	Sa gcomharsanacht (in the neighbourhood)
Lánpháirtíocht (full participation – integration)	Imeascadh (mixture – integration)
Bunchloch (bottom stone – cornerstone)	Cloch coirnéil (cornerstone)

Avoid Homophones and Avoid Confusion

Homophones have the same pronunciation but different meanings, origins, or spelling, for example *new* and *knew*.

‘Rabhadh’ is very commonly used on warning signs.

Galway City Council is increasingly using the word ‘foláireamh’ instead.

Why is this?

The word ‘rogha’, meaning ‘choice’ is a homophone of ‘rabhadh’ (warning).

These are different words with different meanings but the same pronunciation.

‘Foláireamh’ is unambiguous.

Language Style

Depending on the communication, the following styles apply in Gaeilge for Galway City Council materials:

Media	Translation rules of thumb
All ads	Accuracy is most important.
Benches, outdoor promotions, bins, art installations and murals	Vernacular, Colloquial (can be), Regional.
Policy and Reports	Vernacular, Regional within the Standard, An Caighdeán Oifigiúil.
Audiovisual	Note An Caighdeán Oifigiúil (the Official Standard for Irish) applies to written Irish and not spoken. It is always advisable to use fluent speaker. The preference for GCC materials is to use regional Galway-Conamara or Galway-Connacht. Speech should be plain, vernacular language.
Road Signs	Per Traffic Sign Manual: Accuracy, Bilingual, Irish above. Note – Gaeilge only signage required in Gaeltacht areas in the City.

International Placenames



International Placenames

Many cities around the world have Irish versions of the names which organically evolved over the years.

Most cities do not, but it helps to be aware of the fact that for a number of towns and cities outside Ireland there is an Irish version in use and if so, it is recommended to use the Irish.

With adjacent Celtic Languages – Gaelic, Manx, Welsh, Cornish, Breton – the local version is often used in Irish.

Twin city Lorient (An Oriant) and partner city Stirling (Srugha) are a lot clearer to an Irish speaker because they are make sense in Irish (definite article ‘An’ and Irish phonetics and meaning of ‘Srugha’).

International Placenames

English	Gaeilge
London	Londain
New York	Nua Eabhrac
Glasgow	Glaschú
Paris	Páras
Moscow	Moscó
Berlin	Beirlín
Stirling, Scotland	Srughha, An Albain
Lorient, Brittany	An Oriant, An Bhriotáin

“Sa”-urú Chonamara (na Gaillimhe)



“Sa”-urú

There are certain features of grammar that are regionally distinctive.

In written communication that are longer than ads, it is recommended to use An Caighdeán (the Standard) (see translation rules of thumb).

In Galway-Conamara, a distinctive feature of the spoken Irish is adding an eclipsis (urú) to the word after ‘sa’ (in). Other dialects typically use a séimhiú (added ‘h’) instead.

Famously in Galway is the ‘Sa’-urú Chonamara employed. Because it is so pervasive, it is allowable under ‘An Caighdeán Oifigiúil’ so we embrace the Galwayness and aim to apply it across the board.

Galway	Not Galway	English
Sa gcarr	Sa charr	In the car
Cara sa gcúirt	Cara sa chúirt	Friend in court
Isteach leis sa mbosca	Isteach leis sa bhosca	Into the box

Colours in Gaeilge



Colours in Gaeilge

Colours and their uses in Irish is an illustration of how languages shape our concept of our world.

This is because colours are used not only to describe primary colours but also concepts they represent.

Colour	Meaning
Gorm	Blue
Glas	Green or Grey depending on the context
Uaine	Green (artificial/ synthetic)
Buí	Yellow
Bán	White

Colours Representing Concepts in Gaeilge

Colour	Subjective Meaning
Gorm	Black skinned ‘Duine gorm’ - a way of explaining a shimmering iridescence from a dark surface, explained here by Black Irish writer Emma Dabiri .
Glas	Glas meaning quasi-, nearly Glasoileán is a tidal island Glasstócach is a boy in his early teens (Ulster)
Buí	Gratitude or thankfulness, as in ‘buíoch’ and ‘buíochas’ “A bhuí le Dia gur tháinig muid slán”, would translate to “Thank God, we were unharmed”.
Bán	Empty, devoid ‘Bánaithe’ is broke or cleared out, ‘Bánú na tuaithe’ is ‘rural depopulation’ ‘Talamh bán’ is barren land ‘Gloine bhán’ is represented in recycle banks as ‘gloine thrédhearcach’ whereas in speech, the more straight forward ‘bán’ is used more widely for glass that is devoid of colour.
Dearg	Dearg is commonly used as ‘total’ ‘Sin dearg-bhréagadóir!’ ‘(S)he’s a complete-liar!’ ‘Cosán dearg’ is a beaten track, the likely provenance of ‘Red Lane’ in Sean Talamh

Audio Visual Content



Audiovisual content

For audio visual materials, it is preferable that the speaker is fluent (not necessarily a native speaker).

Good pronunciation is important, especially placenames.

Accents are differrent to dialects. Having a ‘local’ dialect sounds more local, but other dialects are not Double Dutch to Irish speakers!

When the placename is pronounced locally in English as Irish, it is recommended to incorporate this into any audiovisual material. Contact communications if you are not sure of the pronunciation of an Irish name.

Place name Gaeilge	Anglicised to	Pronunciation (local)
Baile an Phoill	Ballinfoyle	ainm áite Baile an Phoill.mp4
Binsín	-	ainm áite Binsín.mp4
Cúil Each	Coolough	ainm áite Cúil Each.mp4

Writing Dates and Times



Dates

The Galway City Council Style Guide format for writing dates is:

Write the day, the date as a numeral, then the month, then the year:

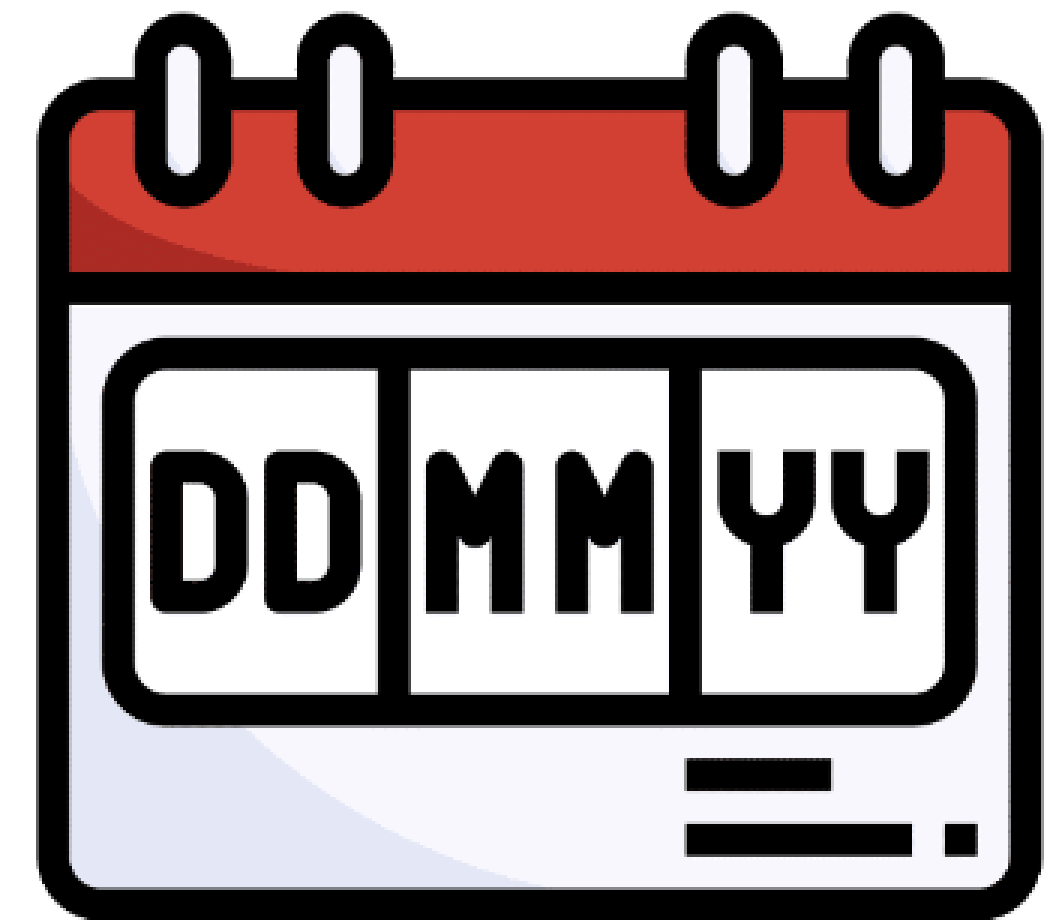
Wednesday 29 September, or

29 September 2022

This applies in Gaeilge also:

Press release from 19 December 2025

Preaseisiúint ón 19 Nollaig 2025.



Times

The Galway City Council Style Guide format for writing times is:

- Write the time as a numeral and use a colon to separate hours and minutes. Add 'am' or 'pm'

10:30am

10:30-11:30am

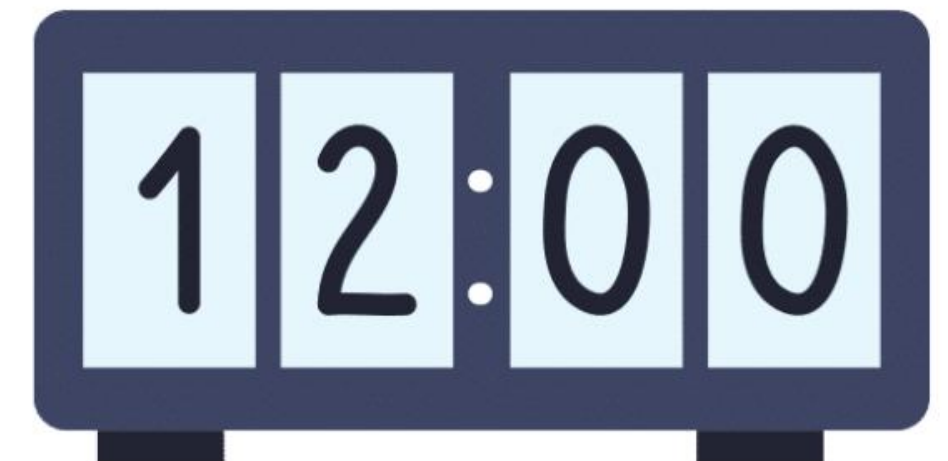
11.30am-2:30pm

This applies in Gaeilge also. The same 12-hour format is used with r.n. for am and i.n. for pm (or you can use the 'words' - r.n. or roimh nóin, i.n. or iar nóin)

Expected arrival **3:00pm**

Ag súil le theacht: **3:00i.n.**

Ag súil le theacht: **3:00 iar nóin**



Sample Compliant Signage



Flooding Signage

- Equal size/ style on both languages
- Gaeilge first



Gateway Signage

Sign fully as Gaeilge in a
Gaeltacht area



Separate Languages

Where a poster or material has limited space, it can work better to have separate Irish and English versions, instead of one bilingual version.

Note the GCC Style Guide is also applied on this poster, which improves readability and accessibility (no CAPs, italics or underlines, text aligned ragged left).



Car Parking Signage at City Hall

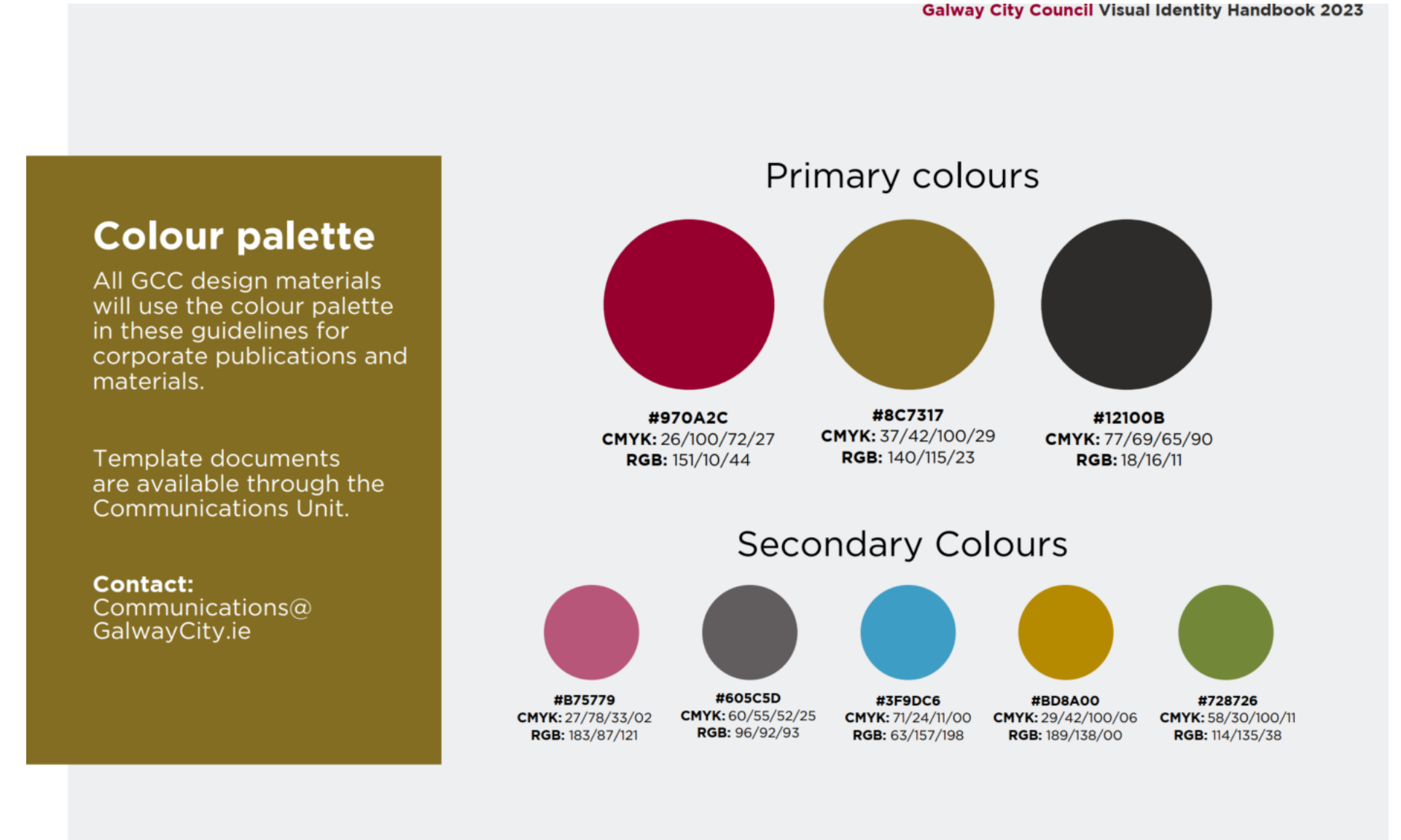
- Same font (size and weight) for both languages
- Irish on top
- Equal prominence for both languages
- Languages differentiated by colour.



If **differentiating languages by colour**, ensure the Galway City Council Branding Guidelines are applied, and there is high contrast between text/ background colours for accessibility.

Sample contrast checker - <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>

Compliant Signage



If **differentiating languages by colour**, ensure the Galway City Council Branding Guidelines are applied, and there is high contrast between text/ background colours for accessibility.

Sample contrast checker - <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>