



Internal Memo

To: Helen Harding
DVTA HQ

From: Keith Walsh
Central Management Branch

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Date: 6 December 1996

110 DEC 1996

Mr. Duggan *VP*
To note the current position.
We will need to report to the
ADI *10/12.*
cc. Mr Magee
Mr Watson

Helen Harding *discussed*
Mr. advise current
position.
Andrew
3- Dec 96

USE OF IRISH LANGUAGE IN ADDRESSES / OFFICIAL BUSINESS

You asked about the policy regarding the use of the Irish language in addresses used in official business. Your query arises from a request from an ADI that the Irish version of Blackwatertown, "Portmore", be used in his address on official documents. The correspondent has referred to the fact that the Irish version has been used on his driving licence issued by DVLNI.

I enclose for your information Circular CSC 1/95 which sets out the position clearly in paragraph 9. Departments should use the English version of all Northern Ireland place names, including townlands, towns and counties, in all circumstances. Where doubts arise as to the correctness of a place name, Departments may wish to seek the assistance of Ordnance Survey. I a copy of a minute giving the relevant contacts in OSNI.

Earlier this year DVLNI issued an internal memorandum for operational purposes which turned out to be in contradiction to the Circular. This memorandum has now been withdrawn. The driving licence in question may have been issued whilst the incorrect memorandum applied.

I hope this clarifies the position.

Keith Walsh
Central Management Branch

Cent Sec Circular 1/95

USE OF IRISH LANGUAGE IN OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Introduction

1. The purpose of this circular is to offer guidance on the use of the Irish language in official business. In essence the guidance confirms that correspondence with the members of the public who wish to use the Irish language should be treated with due courtesy.
2. This circular comes into effect on 16 May 1995, replacing Central Secretariat Circular 1/88 from that date.

Personal Names

3. An individual is legally entitled to assume any name he or she wishes - in English or in any other language - and, if he or she is generally known by that name, it is valid for purposes of legal identification.
4. Departments should accordingly respect the wishes of any individual who has indicated a desire to be known by a personal name in the Irish language. Unless it appears that he or she is not generally known by that name, a personal name in Irish should be accepted for all official purposes, including correspondence and official documents. It may be necessary also to record previously used versions of a name on official files and computer records etc in order to help identification. However, only the version requested by the individual concerned should be used in correspondence and documents issued to that individual. Though little used nowadays, older forms of written Irish retained archaic letter

characters. The Irish version of names for official purposes should use only Roman letter characters (ie as in English).

Addresses

5. The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 removed the previous prohibition on District Councils erecting street names in any language other than English. From 16 May 1995 a Council may place a version of the street name in another language alongside the English name. In practice, the second language is most likely to be Irish and some individuals, organisations, companies and local authorities will wish to use the Irish street name in their address.
6. The Order does not authorise or require the use of a street name in a language other than English as part of the address or the description of land for the purposes of any statutory provision. The legal position is therefore not altered in respect of any other statutory provision. Departments should continue to use only the English street name in most circumstances. However, in line with the general approach of this Circular, Departments should respect, as far as possible, the expressed desire of individuals and organisations to use a lawfully adopted Irish street name in their address. The following guidance applies to the use of Irish street names in correspondence and applications from such individuals or bodies where that street name has been lawfully erected by a District Council. Ordnance Survey will advise on whether that is the case and on the English version of the address.
7. When a person has used a lawfully adopted non-English street address in correspondence, Departments should respect that preference by replying in the same form, though the remainder of the address (including the town and county) should be in English. The Post Office's policy is to endeavour to deliver all correspondence, however addressed. Similarly, an

application using a lawfully adopted non-English street address should be acceptable and subsequent correspondence with the applicant in relation to that application should cite that address, though official records should also note the English version.

8. There are circumstances where third parties may be involved, eg where an official document will require to be scrutinised or where there is a requirement to publicise an application. Examples include notification of planning applications, driving licences, official certificates of various types. In all such circumstances the English version of the street address must be shown. Subject to cost and technical feasibility, the Irish version of the street address may also be shown alongside the English, but only when the individual making the original application used the Irish version. Where a Department cannot show both names, in response to an application using the Irish version, Departments should seriously consider informing the applicant of why this is the case, for example by means of a leaflet. This may pre-empt correspondence from individuals protesting about the use of the English name only.
9. Departments should continue to use the English version of all Northern Ireland place names, including townlands, towns and counties, in all circumstances. Where doubts arise as to the correctness of a place name, Departments may wish to seek the assistance of Ordnance Survey.

Correspondence

10. Where a correspondent writes in Irish, Departments should use their best endeavours to obtain a translation in order to enable the inquiry to be handled. (CRISP records will help Departments to identify officers who are fluent in Irish.) It may on occasions be necessary to seek the correspondent's confirmation of the Department's understanding of any difficult

or technical points in the letter. For example, it may be sensible in replying to use a phrase such as "I understand from your letter that you are requesting". Departments should always reply in English.

11. Where a letter in Irish could have legal implications, Departments should exercise special care to ensure that any translation accurately reflects the original and that the meaning is clear. To establish certainty of understanding it may be appropriate to include a typed copy of the English translation with the Department's reply and to stress that such a reply is based on the Department's interpretation of the original letter as set out in the translation. In some circumstances it may be prudent to delay issuing a substantive reply until the correspondent has confirmed that the Department's translation accurately reflects the original.
12. Central Secretariat should be consulted if a Department receives a large number of letters in Irish and would face problems in responding within an acceptable timescale, or where a Department is of the view that an attempt is being made to use the Irish language in order to delay official business.
13. Central Secretariat will be glad to offer advice on any difficulties facing Departments as a consequence of this circular.
14. This circular also applies to the NIO, but separate, additional guidance has been issued in respect of the Prisons Department. The NI Court Service is also considering separate guidance.