

Objectives and Activities

Conradh na Gaeilge is the democratic forum for the Irish-speaking community. Conradh has over 200 branches and numerous individual members registered around the world, members that work hard to promote the use of Irish in their own areas. Conradh na Gaeilge was established by Douglas Hyde, Eoin Mac Néill, and their colleagues on the 31st of July 1893. Conradh na Gaeilge founded the company CNAG TEO and this company is charged and has responsibility with the development of Conradh na Gaeilge in the north of Ireland. CNAG TEO is a leading Irish language organisation in the north that continues to work with community groups, government departments and local bodies to ensure the voices and demands of the language community are heard and represented in forums and spaces that affect the decision making process in relation to language matters

The organisation runs Irish-language courses; advocates for the language rights of Irish-speakers; raises awareness about the language; hosts the international Irish-language festival Seachtain na Gaeilge le Energia; manages the Irish-language information hub PEIG.ie and delivers on a wide range of programmes and projects.

Strategic development and governance.

Conradh na Gaeilge has a board of directors trustees that oversee and direct the programme of work in the north. They meet on a quarterly basis throughout the year. They are elected at the annual general meeting that's held in February each year. One director resigned in June and a new appointment will be made in the near future

2022 and 2023 has been hugely successful for us as an organisation and we have shown our ability to continue to grow. In an uncertain time and era we have increased our income and diversified our revenue from additional resources and continue to work to attract private and state income. We have secured income from the Department of Foreign affairs Reconciliation Fund, Community Foundation NI, and Foras na Gaeilge. We continue to look into 2023 and 2024 at additional funders. We have increased our staff team with an additional worker employed and now undertaking the work of Seachtain na Gaeilge in the north.

Irish language rights.

The work of Conradh na Gaeilge in ensuring and challenging shortcomings in the affordation of the rights of the Irish language community has proven transformational, particularly within local councils, Government Departments and other Arms Length Bodies (ALBs). In recent years, we have lobbied for more progressive, rights-based dual language street signage policies across local councils, have responded to and promoted numerous consultations, as well as submitting submissions in specialist areas that have ranged from the development of Irish language policies/strategies, to ensuring the Irish language is considered and promoted in capital projects. We have reached out and met with numerous public authorities, most recently Ulster GAA and Translink, to discuss the potential of how to better promote and protect the Irish language in their work. We continue to chair the Casement Park community and benefits subcommittee on language and culture to ensure the new capital build in the Gaeltacht Quarter is a unique and high standard bilingual experience

Irish Language Legislation

Conradh na Gaeilge played a central role in ensuring the historic Irish language legislation as it was initially agreed in January 2020, as well as the introduction and subsequent enactment of that very legislation 2.5 years later. During this time, we have continuously engaged with politicians, both locally and at Westminster.

We held meetings with Aontú, Sinn Féin, Alliance, SDLP and engaged with the NIO on a number of occasions regarding the content of the legislation and to discuss our concerns around the delay in implementation. We too held meetings with the Shadow Secretary of State, Peter Kyle, and Minister of State, Steve Baker.

The Identity and Language Act (2022) received Royal Assent on the 6th of December 2022. Commencement have been granted to two parts of the legislation including the legislation that allows for the commissioner to be appointed and the for the SoS to use his additional powers if needed. We continue to work on this but we are sure the lack of a functioning executive

Irish Language Investment Plan

130+ Irish Language and Gaeltacht organisations support An Plean Fáis as ambitious new vision for the Irish language is launched in Mansion House, Dublin, tomorrow

The Irish Language and Gaeltacht Investment Plean 2024-2029, An Plean Fáis, Over 130 Irish language and Gaeltacht groups and organisations have officially backed An Plean Fáis.

The Plean Fáis sets out the way ahead regarding strengthening funding and investment in the Irish language from now to 2029. The levels of funding requested in the plan would see the creation of over 9,000 jobs (especially in the Gaeltacht), and would lead to increased provision of housing for Gaeltacht communities in their local areas, whilst also supporting local groups implement their Irish language plans effectively and providing thousands of scholarships to young people who would not have the money to attend summer courses in the Gaeltacht.

The baseline of funding provided to Irish language and Gaeltacht schemes and projects through recent decades has been consistently low, around 0.17% of State expenditure, which has left huge gaps in support provisions for the language across the county. The task here is straightforward, with more funding, we can do more to support the language. We believe that with ambitious investment we can make long lasting and effective interventions in language promotion and protection, creating more and more opportunities for people to use, access and learn the language, and to ensure equality for our Gaeltacht communities. Increasing State expenditure from 0.17% to 0.4% through the life-span of this Investment Plan will be a huge step forward.

Dearg.ie

This past year has seen immense progress made on our online organising platform; we have continued to maintain and update our media archive, giving communities access to stories which concern them. We too have continued collecting and publishing monthly articles, giving a platform to voices of activists, both young and old, right across the north. Our biggest success this year has been the development of our community lobbying tools - we have successfully encouraged participation from over 7,000 people right across the north in civic campaigns, including #LE23, cuts to vital community services, increasing the visibility of Irish in public, shared spaces as well as our ongoing tool which seeks to draw attention to the ongoing genocide in Palestine.

Communities against cuts - Padaí

Conradh na Gaeilge worked in conjunction with local early-years and community providers who were threatened with staff redundancies and extreme funding cuts. Conradh na Gaeilge supported and represented local Irish language early-years support services, including preschool 'Gaelspraoi' services, through the Pathway funding, and after-school services, through Bright Start funding and took part in local demonstrations to that end. On 25th May 2023 Conradh na Gaeilge worked in close partnership with the 'Communities against Cuts' umbrella movement to address huge crowds in Belfast City Centre, calling for funding equality to protect jobs and services.

Foram na nGael

We have continued in our role as chair of Fóram na nGael, the umbrella group which represents all Irish language organisations in Belfast, with a total of 4 meetings under our belt this year. We have seen increased cooperation and communication between all organisations and the unified approach has proven particularly effective in co-ordinating and encouraging participation and responses to vital consultations and public rallies. Most notably this year, Fóram na nGael championed the Communities against Cuts campaign, participated wholly in Belfast City Council's public consultation regarding bilingual signage at Olympia Leisure Centre and are undertaking research into the ongoing challenges faced by Irish-medium early years services. Our next meeting will be convened on the 18th January 2024.

Spraoi Cois Lao

This year saw the establishment of Spraoi Cois Lao, the first Seachtain na Gaeilge event of its kind directly funded by Belfast City Council. This was a welcome development for the Irish language community here in Belfast and its success was testament to the cooperation between Féile an Earraigh and Seachtain na Gaeilge. Spraoi Cois Lao celebrated and endorsed a sense of belonging to the ever growing Irish language community in the city, attracting over 5,000 people to its very heart for a jam packed day of fun, games, activities and most importantly, in celebration of the language. The event was Belfast's flagship Irish language community event during Seachtain na Gaeilge and Féile an Earraigh and was launched by Lord-Mayor of Belfast City Council, Councillor Tina Black.

Spraoi

Conradh na Gaeilge has traditionally supported young people who wish to attend residential Irish-language courses in the Donegal Gaeltacht, and indeed other Gaeltacht areas on the West Coast of Ireland. The Spraoi scheme enabled Conradh na Gaeilge to provide 128 part-scholarships to 51 male and 77 female secondary school students from each of the 6 counties. Increased efforts were made to target areas and schools located in disadvantaged areas and with higher rates of free school meals. Support was given to families who are in receipt of social welfare payments so as to increase access to those young people who may not be financially able to cover costs themselves. The Spraoi Gaeltacht bursary scheme is funded by Foras na Gaeilge.

Research

The ongoing lobbying carried out by Conradh na Gaeilge, particularly at local council level, has shed light on the considerable level of disparity that exists in Irish language service provision right across the north. To this end, Conradh na Gaeilge have commenced an extensive audit of Irish language provision across the 11 council areas, based upon 10 certified best-practice criteria, scoring each council as per their compliance. We too are continuously working alongside CAJ on research which will set out a pre-NDNA benchmark with regard to Irish language provision, against which all subsequent changes and progress can be measured.

Communication & social media

Conradh na Gaeilge runs a wide range of social media platforms. We post daily to Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram and TikTok. We also have a regular presence on LinkedIn and YouTube. Conradh na Gaeilge seeks to disseminate our work, our projects, amplify staff and member voices and give platforms to local groups or campaigns through our social media accounts. Our accounts publish content on a bilingual Irish/English basis so as to widen access to our materials. We work closely with traditional media outlets, disseminating over 50 press releases in the 2023 calendar year. All press releases are published bilingually to all media outlets that we hold contact details for. They are kept up to date on the Conradh na Gaeilge website at <https://cnag.ie/en/news-heading/news/news-archive.html>

Research & Resource Development

In the past year we have developed and co authored two research projects. One project focused on Irish Medium Education and the other on language rights. These have been developed alongside independent researchers who have been commissioned to undertake this work. We will continue this work in the years ahead.

Spraoi

'Spraoi' is a scholarship scheme run by Conradh na Gaeilge in conjunction with Comhaltas Uladh to encourage young people (under 18 from the north) to attend Gaeltacht courses and to provide support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Over 500 young people have benefited from this scheme since it began in 2019. Conradh na Gaeilge promotes the scholarship scheme among schools, branches, community groups and the two Líonra Gaeilge in the north. Conradh na Gaeilge has increased the amount of funding from £100 vouchers to £250 per young person. We hope to continue this scheme throughout 2022 and 2023.

The development of the online organising platform dearg.ie has seen much success; the site aims to broaden access to localised campaigns and to provide a space where communities can engage with decision makers. Through engagement with our various community activists and stakeholder groups across the north, we identified a common area of demand; language visibility through street signage.

Users can now use our website to learn more about their local council's current provision for bilingual street signage and challenge these shortcomings accordingly by engaging directly with their local council. There are a number of characteristics on the online platform which will provide users with the skills and tools required to run a successful community-led campaign and which will broaden access to relevant subject matter, as per the user's individual interests/needs.

This programme of work and much more made 2021 and 2022 a hugely successful year for Conradh na Gaeilge. This has been achieved by a dedicated network of volunteers, staff team and board of directors.

