



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

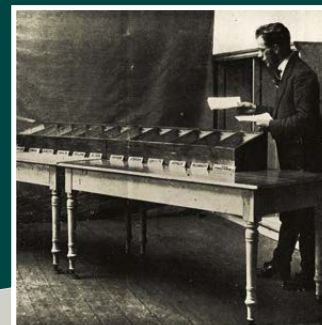
125 Years of Local Government in Ireland



Early forms of Local Government



The Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898



Local Elections



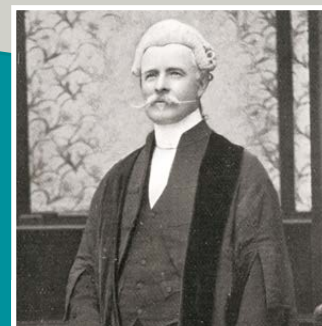
Elected Members



Women in Local Government



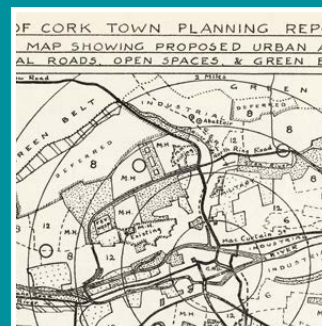
Borough & District Councils



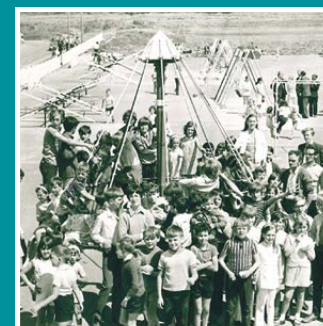
Administration & Finance



Roads, Housing, Motoring & Emergency Services



Environment & Planning



Community, Enterprise, Cultural Services and Recreation

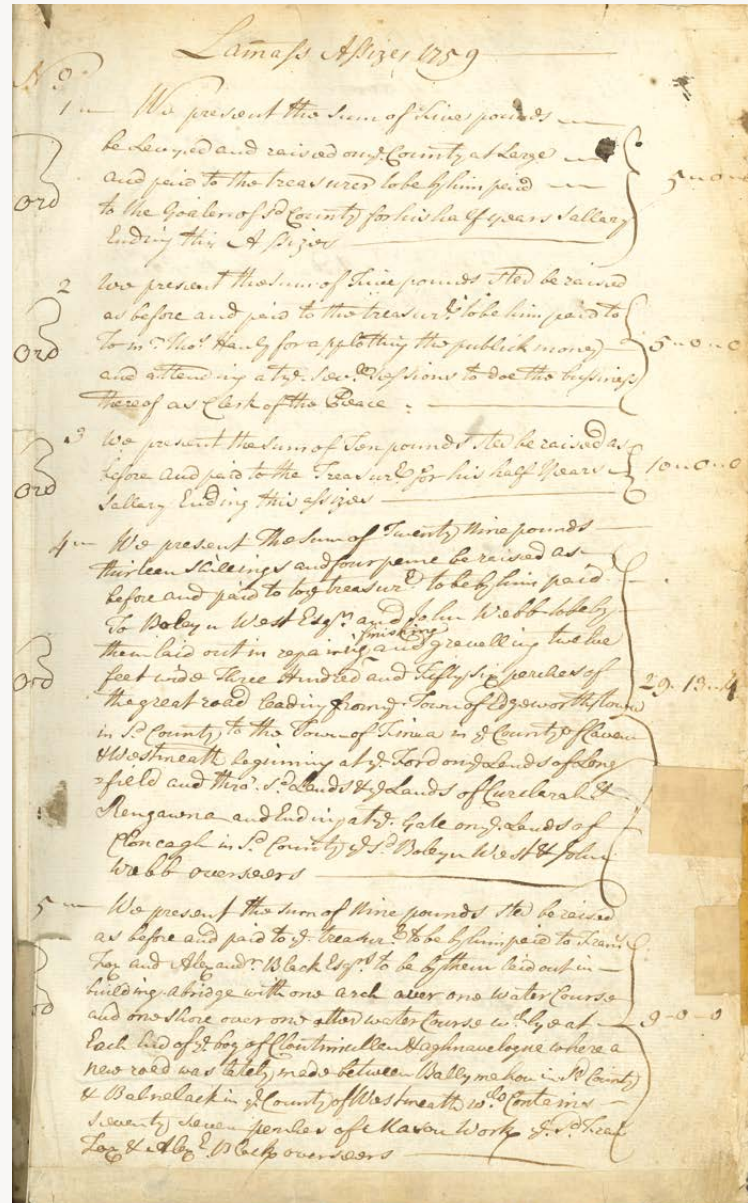


The Irish Language and Local Government

Local Government Archivists and Records Managers
in association with the
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Early Forms of Local Government

The earliest form of local government began after the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in the 12th century. These were borough corporations, granted to certain cities and towns, generally by royal charter. From 1828 onwards, municipal government was partially democratised with the establishment of town commissions in many places.



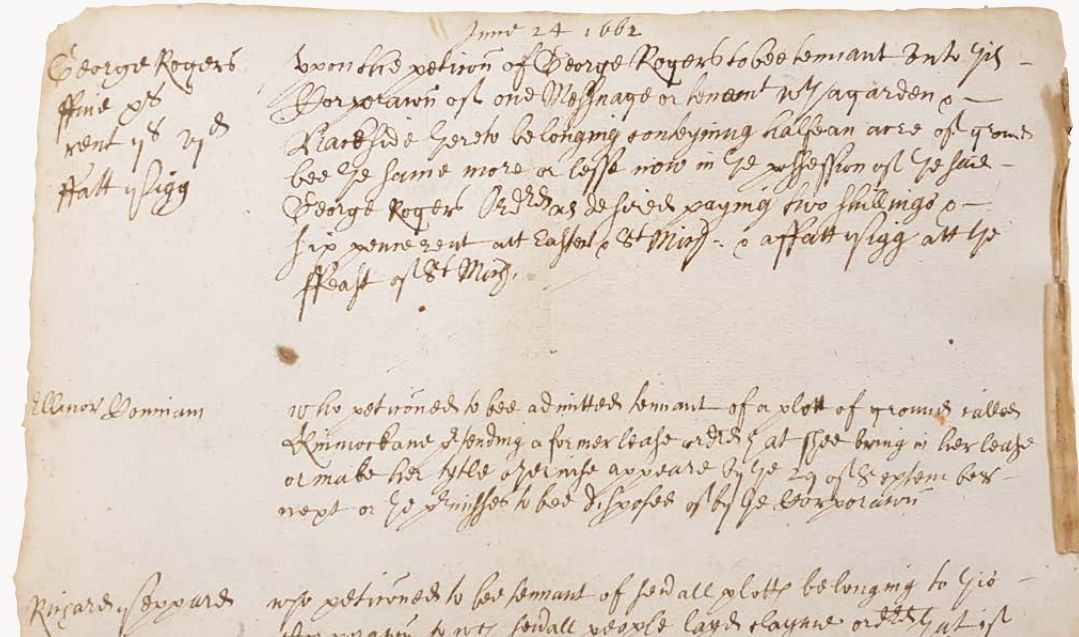
Page from County Longford Grand Jury Book, 1759
(Longford County Archives)



Early Forms of Local Government

Grand Juries

Local government at county level developed with the expansion of the functions of the grand jury. Its members were landowners, summoned by the high sheriff twice yearly – Lent and summer. The role of the grand jury was to decide which cases were referred to the assize courts. Later, it was granted authority to collect rates and approve various works, such as road and bridge repairs, and the building and maintenance of courthouses and county gaols.



Extract from Wicklow Borough Corporation Book, 1662 (Wicklow County Archives)



A 'grotesque' (a rat emerging from a man's mouth) from the Dublin City Treasurer's Accounts, 1540-1613 (Dublin City Library and Archive)



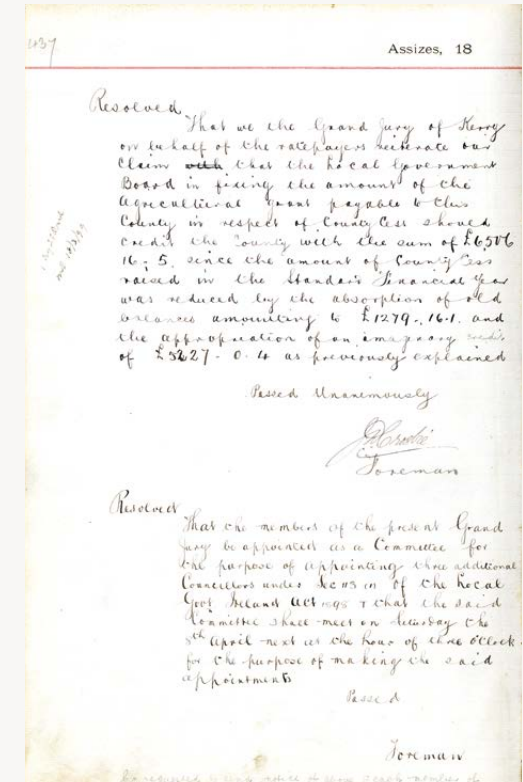
Early Forms of Local Government

Poor Law Guardians

Boards of poor law guardians were established under the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act 1838. There were eventually 163 poor law unions based around market towns throughout Ireland. They were responsible for the operation of the system that included the workhouses and other relief work. Some guardians were elected by rate-payers, making the system partly democratic. Significantly, women could serve as guardians from 1896.



Last Grand Jury of Donegal, 1899 (Donegal County Archives)

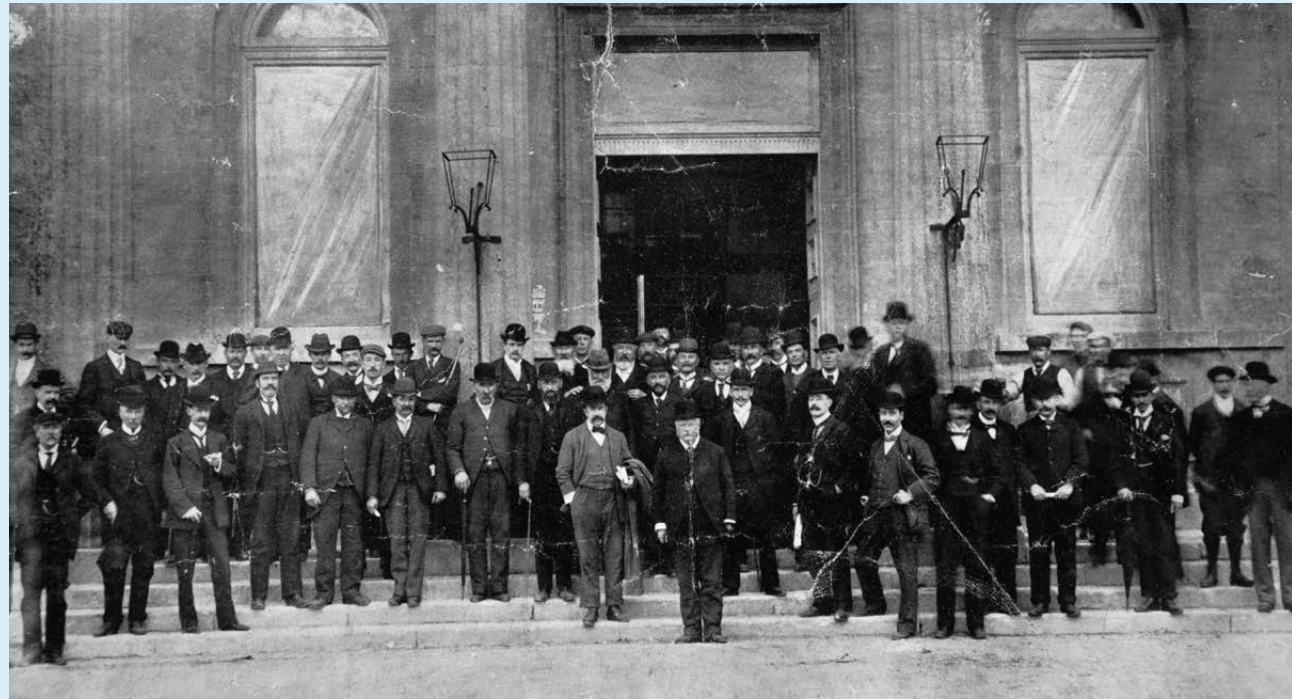


The last resolutions passed by County Kerry Grand Jury in the spring of 1899 (Kerry County Archives)

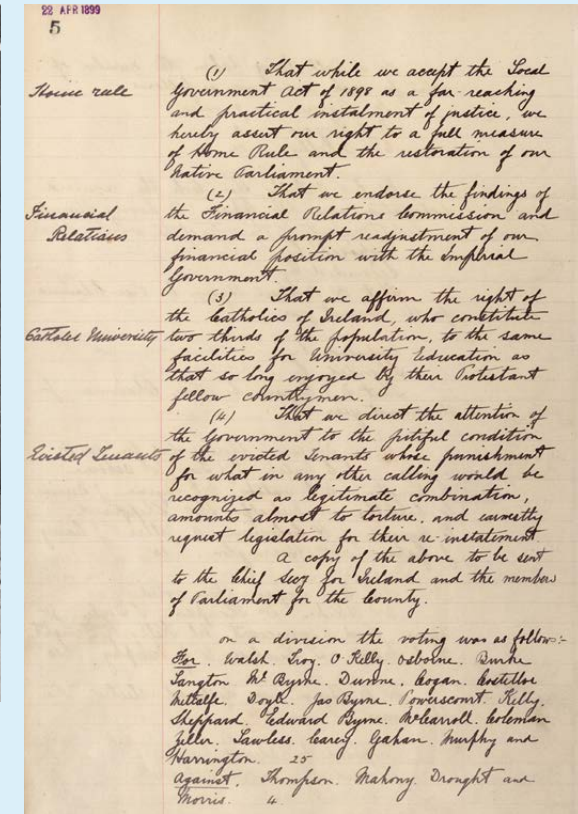


The Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898

The Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898 completely changed local government. It created three new forms of local authority: county councils, rural district councils and urban district councils. The law established democratic local government at county level, with county councils taking over the administrative functions previously exercised by the grand juries.



The first members of Galway County Council, with others, 1899 (Galway County Council Archives)



Resolutions passed by Wicklow County Council at its first meeting, 22 April 1899 (Wicklow County Archives)

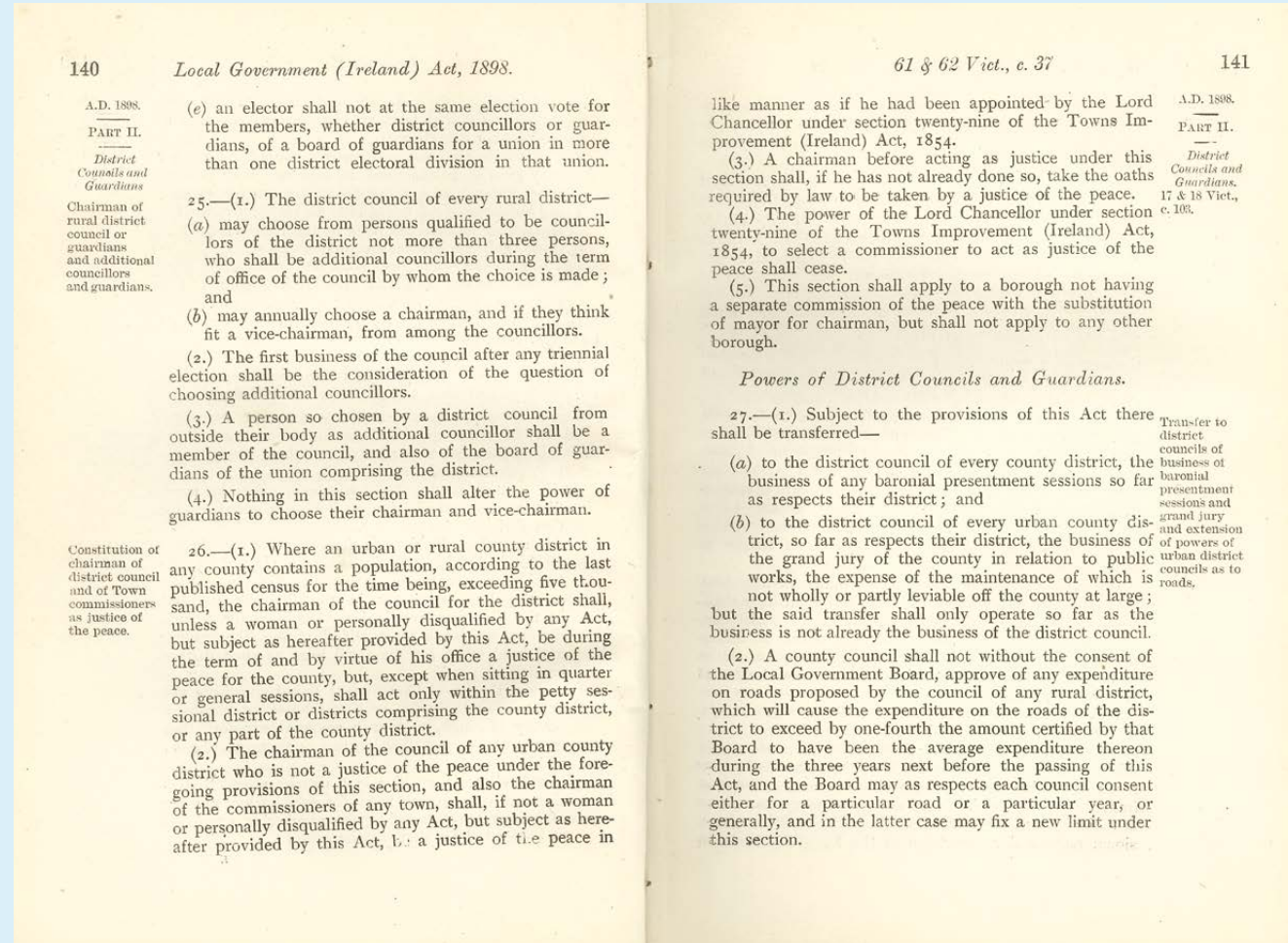


The Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898

The Right to Vote

A revolutionary aspect of the new system was that it created a broader franchise. Men over 21 years who were householders, or who rented a portion of a house, valued at a minimum of £10 per year, could vote, as could women over 30 years of age who met the same criteria. Women could also contest both rural and urban district council seats. The average annual wages for agricultural labour in Ireland at the time was only £25, so most people could not vote.

Initially the Irish Parliamentary Party was sceptical about the new legislation, seeing it as part of the British policy of 'killing Home Rule with kindness', yet nationalists benefitted from it. Many future parliamentary politicians served as local councillors and built up valuable experience and support networks as a result.



Extract from the Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898 (Longford County Library and Archives)



Local Elections

The first elections to the county councils and rural district councils took place on 6 April 1899. Most county councils met for the first time on 22 April of that year. Nationalist candidates won about 75% of the county council seats. Local elections were required to be held every three years, changing to every five years in 1953. However, there were several postponements through the years.

Proportional representation was introduced for the 1920 local elections, with the expectation that it would dilute Sinn Féin support. However, achieving widespread electoral success, the party took control of 27 of the 33 county councils. At the same time, Unionists consolidated their control in north-eastern areas.

BOROUGH OF THE CITY OF DUBLIN } Register of Parliamentary and Local Government Voters, 1899-1900.

Division I.—College Green.

Rated Occupiers and Inhabitant Householders.

Arran Quay Ward Electoral Division—No. 1.

Name or Description of Premises rated, Street, Lane, or other like Place in this Borough, and No. (if any) of the House where the Property is situate.	Nature of Qualification, whether Rated Occupier or Inhabitant Householder, and Rated Value of Premises.	Surname and Christian Name, Sex.	No.
Aberdeen street			
3 house and yard	Inhabitant Householder	Edward Spear	1
4 house from house, 20 Finlister st.	Inhabitant Householder	John Vaughan	2
5 house and yard	Inhabitant Householder	Patrick Nevin	3
6 house and yard	Inhabitant Householder	Mathew Doran	4
7 top back room	Inhabitant Householder	John Quish	5
8 house and yard	Inhabitant Householder	James Fox	6
9 house and yard	Inhabitant Householder	Laurence Conroy	7
10 house and yard	Inhabitant Householder	Alexander Sharpe	8
11 house and yard	Inhabitant Householder	Joseph Delamore	9
12 top front room	Inhabitant Householder	John Moore	10
13 top back room	Inhabitant Householder	John Savage	11
14 house and yard	Inhabitant Householder	William Fagan	12
15 house and yard	Inhabitant Householder	Michael Herbert	13
16 house and yard	Inhabitant Householder	William Strahan	14
17 house and yard	Inhabitant Householder	John Barron	15

Electoral Roll, 1899 (Dublin City Library and Archive)

cc/14/15(a)
No. 25 Division, Co. Donegal.
21st April 1911

Mr. J. Brennan
Dungloe

Dear Sir

I understand that you are contesting the Dungloe District against two brother members at this coming election. I have no desire to intimidate you in any way as our society is not capable of such dastardly conduct, but I would give you ~~you~~ timely warning as a personal friend — that our societies or branches will not hold themselves responsible for the indiscretion or rashness which may

Letter from the Ancient Order of Hibernians to J.K. Brennan, Dungloe, County Donegal, a candidate in the 1911 local elections, threatening him if he did not withdraw from the contest. (Donegal County Archives)

be shown, nay even the physical force which may be used by some of the ~~old~~ ~~brother~~ of my brother on the occasion of this approaching election.

Take heed in time Mr Brennan, take a friend's advice, do not stay with an edged tool, beware, show some of your old time well-headedness. Either withdraw from this election or with the utmost speed book your passage to some foreign land where you shall be secure from the inevitable wrath which shall result.

Faithfully Yours
"Inevitable"

Do not imagine for a moment that I am prompted by any ulterior motive in giving you such advice. I should not like to see you being brought back some day from your canvas upon a stretcher consequent on the advice.

BEWARE! BEWARE! DON SAID TO YOU!



Local Elections

Reform

In 1935, the franchise was reformed when all men and women over 21 years were granted the right to vote, without any qualification.

In 1999, the electorate approved a referendum providing constitutional recognition of local government and guaranteeing elections at intervals of five years.

KENNY'S P.R. FRAMES FOR RETURNING OFFICERS' TABLES

MADE OF SELECTED TIMBER, HIGHLY FINISHED AND VARNISHED,
AND FITTED WITH WIRE-HOLDERS FOR REMOVABLE CARDS.



One compartment should be provided for each Candidate whose votes are to be concurrently analysed. 12 compartments are shown in illustration.

Useful for office equipment when not required for election purposes. Each compartment 8 inches deep and 7½ inches wide. 10 inches from front to back.

For each Section of Six Compartments £2 : 5 : 0
Carriage and Packing Extra.

Advertisement for tables for returning officers, 1920 local elections (*Donegal County Archives*)

427/4/3

CORK MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS,

JANUARY, 1920.

Men of Rebel Cork, remember those who died to save our land
Neath the Flag of Pearse and Connolly, prepare to take your stand
Has the blood of Irish Martyr's for your sake been shed in vain
Will the name of good old Rebel Cork be e'er disgraced again ?
Will you shame the Irish Nation, Ireland's tricolour haul down ?
Like the dirty Corporation who brought Asquith to our town
Are the murders of brute Maxwell, cowardly Colthurst's ali forgot ?
Or George Crosbie's famous p'card "only two more to be shot"
Those false creatures you elected, never voiced the least protest
When the fiends incarnate murdered, Ireland's bravest, and her best
All election's were suspended, for our British tyrants knew
That our people were disgusted with the rotten servile crew
Now the time has come to deal with all the foul and loathsome pack
They have clung to office too long, give the whole damn lot the sack

Sinn Féin leaflet used in 1920 municipal elections in Cork City (*Liam de Róiste Papers, Cork City and County Archives*)



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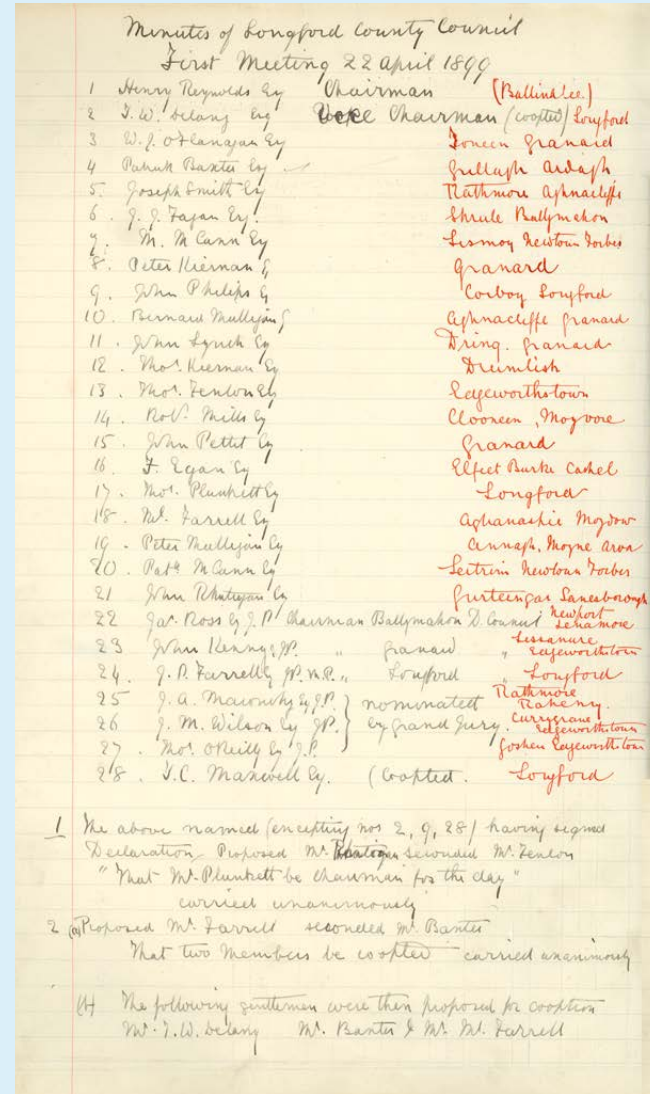
Local Government Archivists and Records Managers
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Elected Members

Members of local authorities have been elected in increasingly democratic elections since 1898. A major step in this direction took place in 1911 when women became eligible for election to County Councils. In 1920 the current electoral system of proportional representation was first introduced in Ireland for local elections.

Changes and reforms have been introduced over the decades since the foundation of the State in 1922. Reforms include, in 2003, the abolition of the 'dual mandate' which meant that members of the Oireachtas could no longer hold Council seats. The 2014 Local Government Reform Act reduced the number of local authorities from 114 to 31, and the number of council members from 1627 to 949.



The members of Longford County Council listed in the minutes of the first meeting, 22 April 1899 (Longford County Archives)



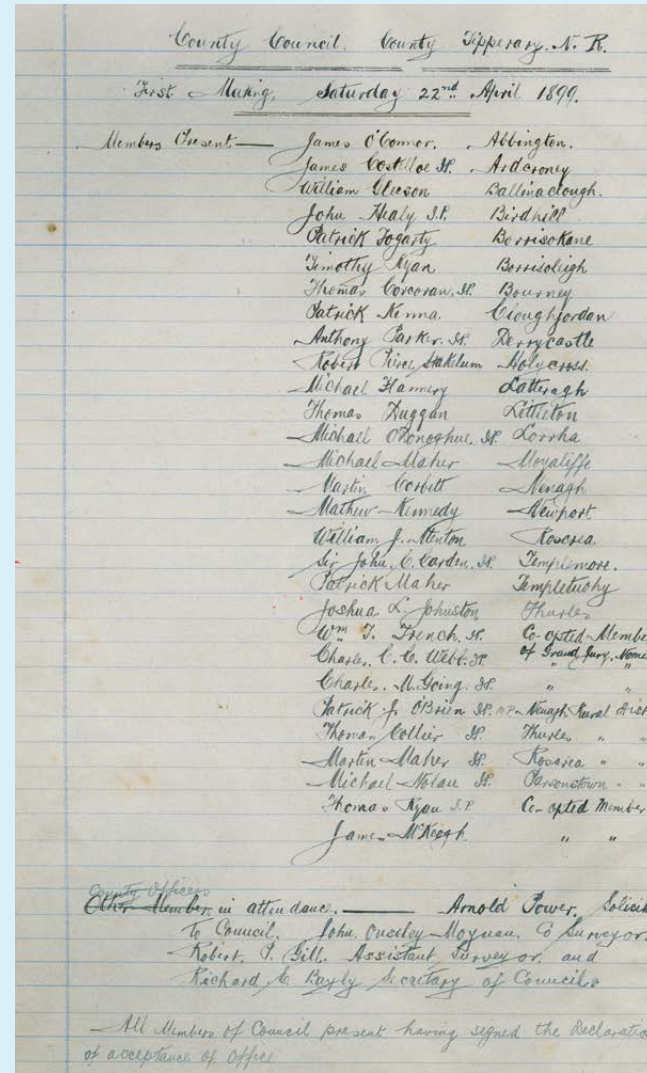
Frances Condell, Lord Mayor of Limerick, with President John F. Kennedy, 1963 (Limerick Archives)



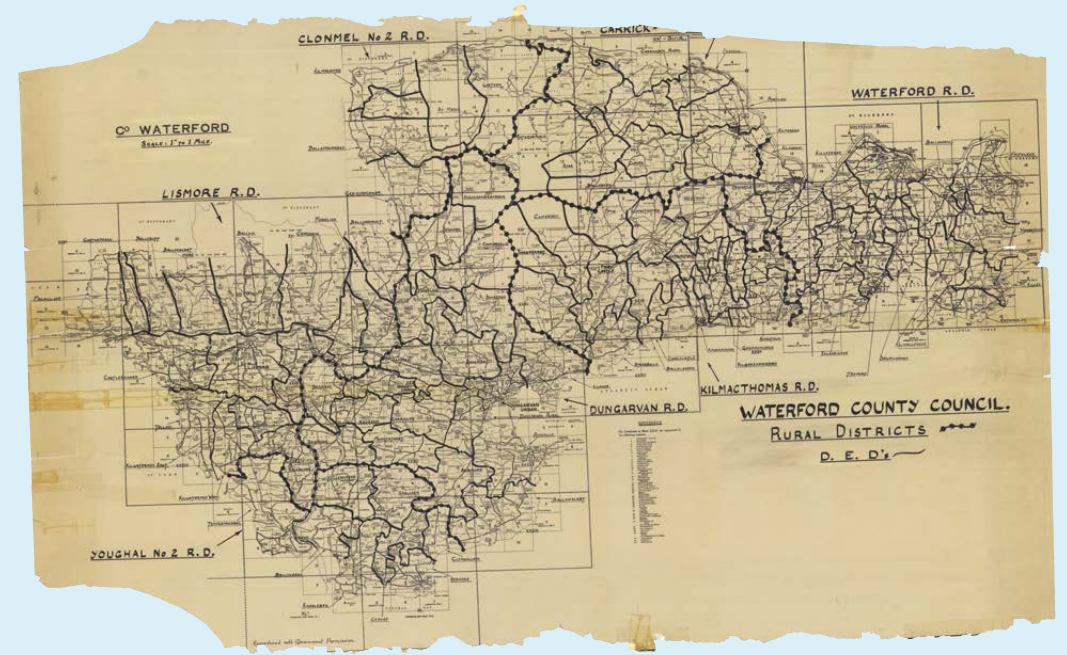
Elected Members

Significant changes in eligibility rules for standing for election have been made over the years. Candidates must be ordinarily resident in Ireland, be at least 18 years old and do not need to be Irish citizens. Most candidates belong to political parties though many are independents. Local Authority elections are held every five years.

The functions of elected members are known as 'reserved functions'. These include responsibility for major policy decisions and the approval of the budget. Councillors represent their constituents in their local electoral areas. They oversee the local authority's Executive, pass bye-laws and address important local issues. Implementation of their decisions rests with the Executive. The Cathaoirleach (chairperson) or Mayor, who is elected by council members on an annual basis, represents the council at public functions and events. June 2024 saw a Mayor directly elected by the people of Limerick, an historic first in Ireland.



The members of Tipperary North Riding County Council at its first meeting, 22 April 1899 (Tipperary County Archives)



Map of County Waterford Rural Districts, 1950s (Waterford City and County Archives)



Women in Local Government

Women over 30 years old, who were householders or who rented a portion of a house, valued at a minimum of £10 per year could vote in local elections under the 1898 Act and could stand for district councils. In 1899, 31 women were elected to rural district councils and 4 to urban district councils. It was not until 1918 that women could vote in national elections.

The earliest woman elected to Dublin City Council was the artist and suffragist, Sarah Cecilia Harrison in 1912. Also in 1912, Dr Mary Strangman, another activist, was elected to Waterford Corporation.

In the early years, some of the women elected to local authorities were members of Cumann na mBan and passionate campaigners. Lady Albinia Broderick, the first woman elected to Kerry County Council in 1920, was a republican and radical. One of the longest serving female prisoners of the 1916 period, Ellen Ryan from Tomcoole, Taghmon was the first woman elected to Wexford County Council in 1928. Caitlín Bean Uí Chléirigh, widow of Tom Clarke (executed leader of the 1916 Rising) became the first female Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1939.



Sarah Cecilia Harrison, 'Self Portrait' (Reg. no. 1604, collection & © Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin)



The Honourable Albinia Broderick at the 1923 general election count in Tralee (*The Kerryman Photographic Archive, Kerry County Archives*)



Ellen Ryan, member of Wexford County Council, 1928-54 (*The Martin Ryan (Taghmon) Collection, Wexford County Archive*)



Women in Local Government

Encouraging Participation

In recent years, a number of Government-supported initiatives have aimed to increase the numbers of women and diverse candidates participating in local government.

The Local Government (Maternity Protection and Other Measures for Members of Local Authorities) Act 2022 introduced maternity leave for councillors and also provided a choice to elected members to appoint an individual as a temporary substitute in their place while on maternity leave. In 2023, an additional administrative support allowance was introduced for councillors who avail of maternity leave.

Funding is offered to local authorities, political parties and stakeholder groups for activities which encourage the participation of women and diverse candidates at local level. This funding has supported extensive training and capacity-building for candidates, as well as initiatives such as party Diversity Officers, annual women's conferences and mentoring programmes. Support is also offered to local and regional-level women's caucuses.



Six previous Lord Mayors of Dublin are pictured standing in front of a portrait of Caitlín Bean Uí Chléirigh (Kathleen Clarke) - the first female Lord Mayor of Dublin (1939-42). The painting by Gareth Reid, was unveiled in September 2022 and now hangs in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Dublin.

Left to right: Emer Costello; Hazel Chu; Caroline Conroy; Mary Freehill; Carmencita Hederman; Alison Gilliland. (Dublin City Council)



Nothing for their Panes - Votes for Women (Dublin City Council Library and Archive)

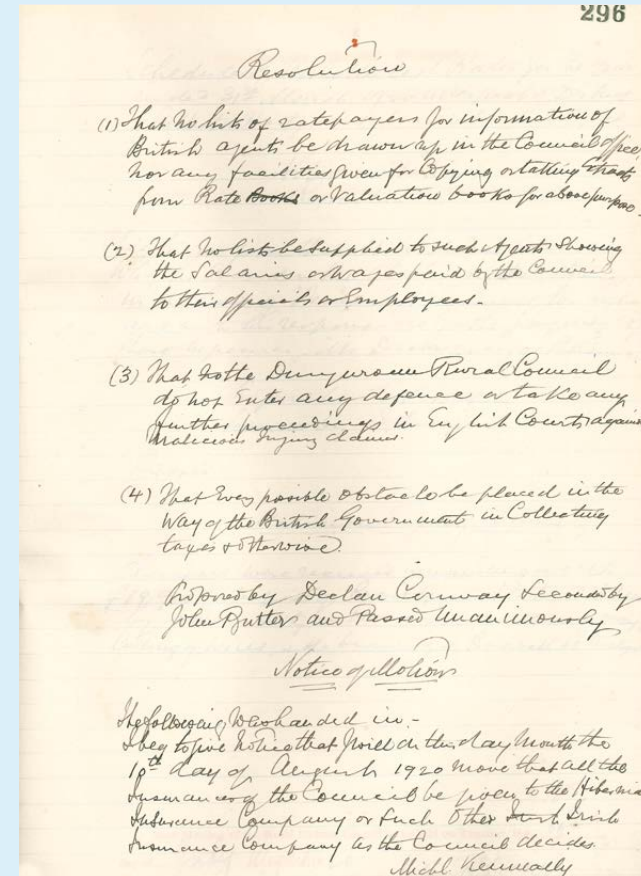


Borough and District Councils

Many towns in Ireland were administered by a borough council or corporation, which dealt with sanitation, lighting, roads and public amenities. There were also five royal boroughs: Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. These had corporations that were granted under royal charters.



Charter granted by King Charles I to Waterford Corporation, 26 May 1626 (Waterford City and County Archives)



Resolutions refusing to co-operate with the British government passed by Dungarvan Rural District Council, 13 July 1920 (Waterford City and County Archives)



Borough and District Councils

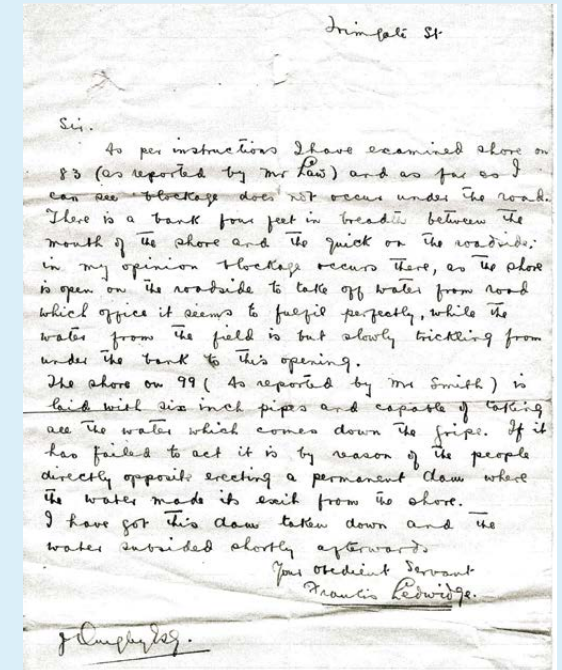


Drogheda Corporation c. 1900 (Louth County Archives)

Changes

The Municipal Corporations (Ireland) Act 1840 dissolved 58 corporations and 38 boroughs. The Towns Improvement (Ireland) Act 1854 introduced town commissions with expanded responsibilities for sanitation and other improvements. The Public Health (Ireland) Act, 1878 gave the poor law unions and town commissions the status of sanitary authorities.

The 1898 Act sought to rationalise the system of local government. Rural district councils were established and included towns that did not have urban sanitary authorities. Some town commissions became urban district councils. Further rationalisation was introduced under the Local Government Act, 1925 which abolished rural district councils. The most recent reforms came in 2014 with the abolition of Town Councils and the implementation of the Municipal District structure.



Letter from the First World War poet Francis Ledwidge when on the Navan Rural District Council to James Quigley, County Surveyor, Meath County Council, detailing road inspections and improvements c. 1914 (Courtesy of the Ledwidge Museum)



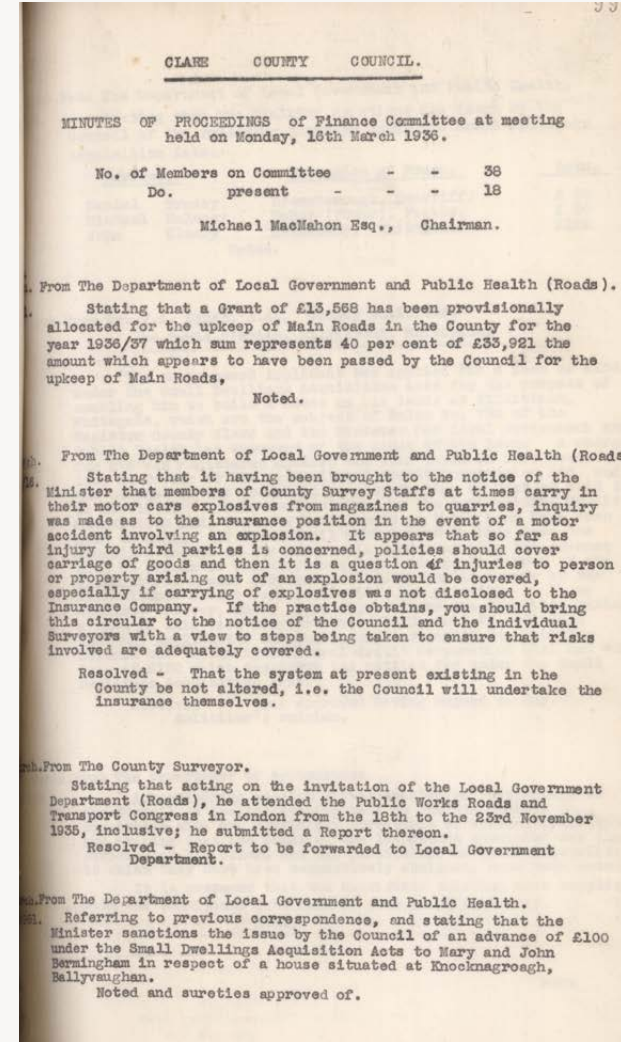
Administration and Finance

Following the 1899 elections, county councils' monthly meetings were, for the first time, held in public, providing a firm basis for democracy. The new councils were financed by means of rates levied equally across all parts of the county, a fair determination which helped to gain support for the new system of local government.

Administration was needed to implement the council's decisions, and paid officials were recruited for this purpose. For instance, by 1900 Galway County Council had 21 paid officers – all men – headed by the county secretary and including a sheriff and sub-sheriff; 8 surveyors; 4 coroners; 4 clerks; and 2 solicitors. As local authorities evolved over the years and acquired more functions, additional staff were recruited; the 1963 Planning Act created a need for planners for example.



Sir Henry Campbell, Town Clerk of Dublin, 1893-1920. He is mentioned in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. (*Dublin City Archives*)



Extract from the minutes of the Finance Committee, Clare County Council, 18 March 1936. Note the reference to explosives being carried by staff in their cars! (*Clare County Archives*)



Administration and Finance

Administration in both city and county councils was consolidated under the City and County Management Acts, 1929-40, leading to a defined partnership between elected councillors and officials.

FORM 11. 3

Recommendations of Proposal Committee	To Pay			To Debit			To Strike Out			Observations	Division of County Council
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.		
LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL.											
COUNTY AT LARGE.											
PROPOSAL COMMITTEE, 1st AUGUST, 1902.											
JOHN PHILLIPS, Esq., Chairman, Messrs FAGAN, Messrs P. KIERNAN, REYNOLDS, T. KIERNAN, ROSS, EARLY, RHATHGAN.											
County Infirmary.											
1.—To John H. M-Mann and the Bank of Ireland Treasurers to the County Infirmary, towards the maintenance of same, for quarter ending 30th Sep., 1902, in advance. £ 187 10 0											
2.—To N. Mayer, Esq., Surgeon, to the County Infirmary, for quarter's salary, to 30th June 23 10 0											
Industrial Schools and Reformatories.											
2.—To the Directors or Managers of the Newtownforbes Industrial School for Girls, County Longford, for the maintenance of 24 girls, detained therein from this County, at 2s. 6d. Half-year's maintenance; accounts furnished half-yearly. —											
4.—To the Directors or Managers of the Lichlands Industrial School, Sligo, for the maintenance of 1 girl, detained there from this County, at 2s. 6d. Half-year's maintenance; accounts furnished half-yearly. —											
5.—To the Directors or Managers of High Park Reformatory, Drumcondra, for 1 girl maintained from this County, at 2s. 6d. Half-year's maintenance; accounts furnished half-yearly. —											
6.—To the Directors or Managers of the Mease Industrial School, County Westmeath, for the maintenance of 7 girls, detained there from this County, at 1s. 6d. Half-year's maintenance; accounts furnished half-yearly. —											
7.—To the Directors or Managers of the Letterfrack Industrial School for the maintenance of boys, at 1s. 6d. Half-year's maintenance; accounts furnished half-yearly. —											
8.—To the Directors or Managers of the Arane Industrial School for maintenance of 10 boys, at 2s. 6d. Half-year's maintenance; accounts furnished half-yearly. —											
9.—To the Directors or Managers of Reformatory School, Phillipstown, for maintenance therein of 1 boy, detained there from this County, at 2s. 6d. Half-year's maintenance; accounts furnished half-yearly. —											
Carried forward, £31 0 0											

Pages from a schedule of payments made by Longford County Council, 1902 (Longford County Library and Archive)



Management and staff of Donegal County Council, 1960s (Donegal County Archives)



Roads, Housing, Motoring and Emergency Services

A primary function of county councils has been to build and maintain roads and associated infrastructure, such as piers and bridges. They also provide street lighting, road safety measures and the winter road gritting programme, together with a range of related ancillary services.

Ireland's first motorway-standard road, the M7 Naas bypass, was opened on 4 October 1983 by the Tánaiste, Dick Spring, T.D., Minister for the Environment. Designed in-house by Kildare County Council staff, the M7 Naas bypass motorway consisted of 12 kilometres of dual carriageway and five major bridges. The design took account of noise and landscape impact assessments, a first in terms of environmental assessment for large road schemes in Ireland.



Road workers at Ballygar, Co. Galway, c. 1940
(Galway County Council Archives)



M7 Naas Bypass, Liam Kenny Collection,
(Kildare County Archives and Local Studies)

Extract from a register of motor cars, Limerick County Council, 1915 (Limerick Archives)

REGISTER OF County (or County Borough)		MOTOR CARS of Limerick					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Plate No.	Full Name of Owner and Street Address of his usual Residence	Description or Type of Car	Make	Year of Make	Colour	Whether insured for	By whom insured
TI 351	Limerick Corporation, South, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th	Motor Car	—	—	—	Private use	✓
TI 352	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TI 353	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TI 354	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TI 355	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TI 356	—	—	—	—	—	—	—



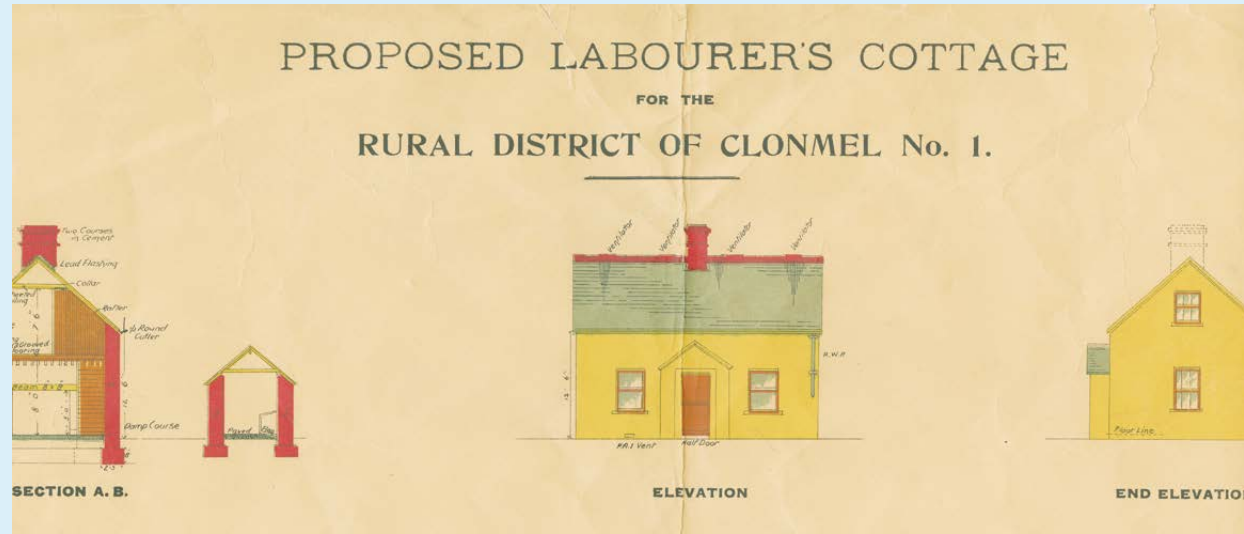
Rucky Hill, Dundalk – Carrickmacross Road improvement scheme, 1938 (Louth County Archives)



Roads, Housing, Motoring and Emergency Services

Laws enacted between 1868 and 1890 provided for the construction of local authority housing. It was originally the responsibility of borough councils and poor law guardians. Later, rural district councils and after them, county councils, took on the design, construction and maintenance of social houses. Councils also administer a range of government schemes providing mortgages, loans, grants and financial assistance to those with a variety of complex housing requirements.

Since legislation in 1940, local authorities have provided essential fire-fighting, fire safety, fire prevention, building control and emergency services. Services range from dealing with simple chimney fires to major environmental disasters.



Plans for a labourer's cottage in Clonmel Rural District (*Tipperary County Archives*)



Thomas Brannigan with Merryweather fire engine, Dundalk, 1930s (*Louth County Archives*)



Building local authority housing in Dundalk, 1950 (*Louth County Archives*)



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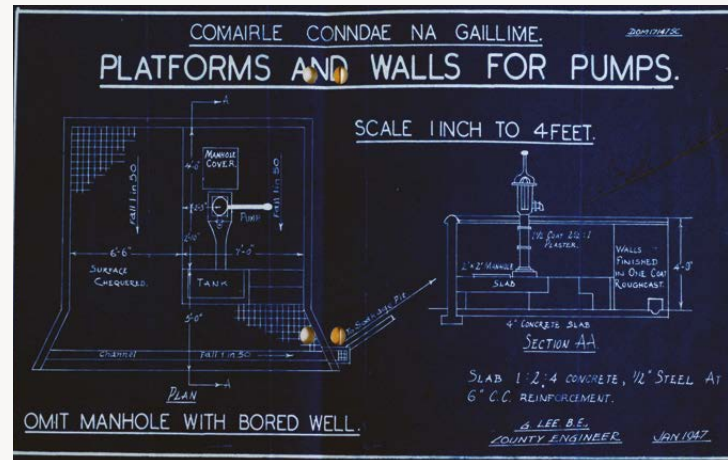
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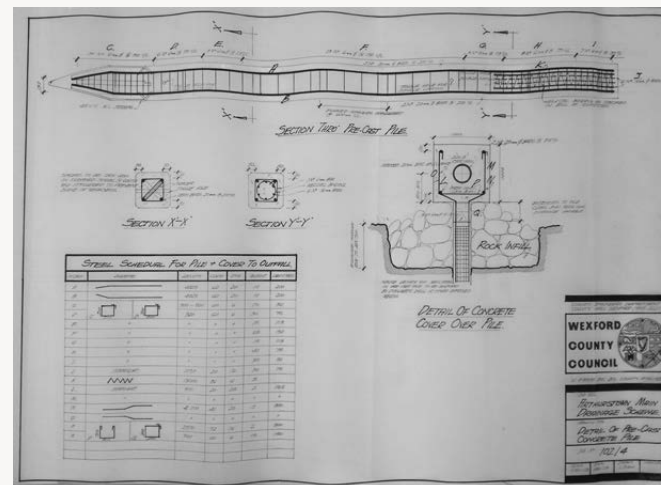
Environment and Planning

Widespread disease led to the introduction of the Public Health (Ireland) Act 1878. It aimed to improve living conditions, sanitation and water quality and required enormous effort from local authorities in the early years. These services have evolved into the sanitary and environmental services which we take for granted today.

Activities evolved from addressing water supply, sewerage, infectious diseases, nuisances, overcrowded houses and burial grounds to eventually include functions relating to monitoring water quality, water conservation, pollution control, waste management, recycling, beaches and water safety. Since 2014 the provision and maintenance of public water and waste water services have been transferred to the national water utility, Uisce Éireann.



Blueprint for Aughrim pump, 1947
(Galway County Council Archives)



Drawing of part of
Arthurstown Main
Drainage Scheme,
Co. Wexford, 1979
(Wexford County
Archive)



Dundalk water treatment plant at Cavan Hill, Cavan,
Co. Louth, 1990 (Louth County Archives)



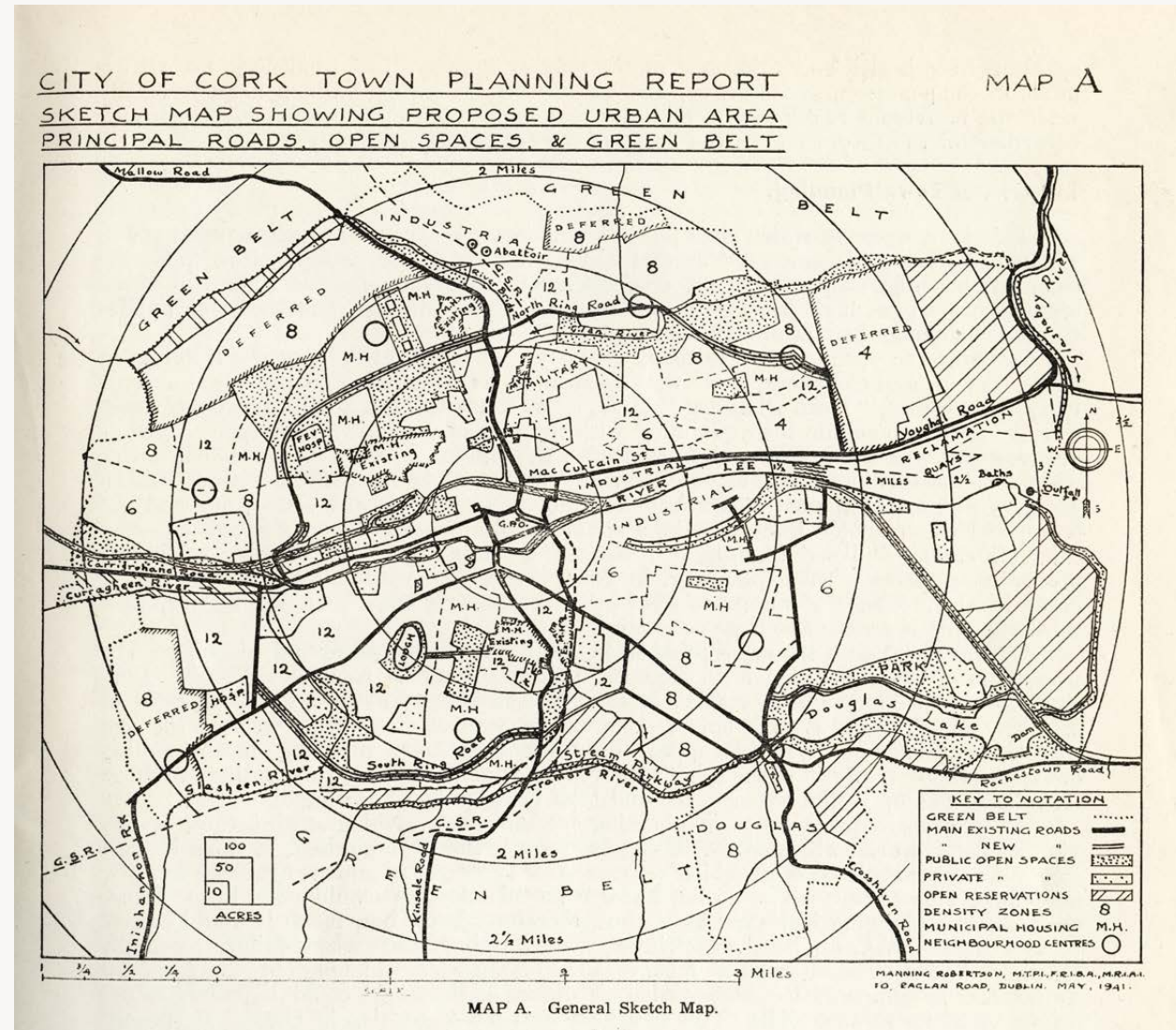
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Environment and Planning

While several planning measures existed under the Public Health Acts and Housing Acts, the 1934 Town and Regional Planning Act was the first legislation dedicated solely to planning. Not considered a success, it was eventually replaced by the Planning and Development Act 1963 and again by the Planning and Development Acts and Regulations 2000-2018. Planning has evolved from the early concerns of locating houses on busy roads to regulating complex and sustainable developments.



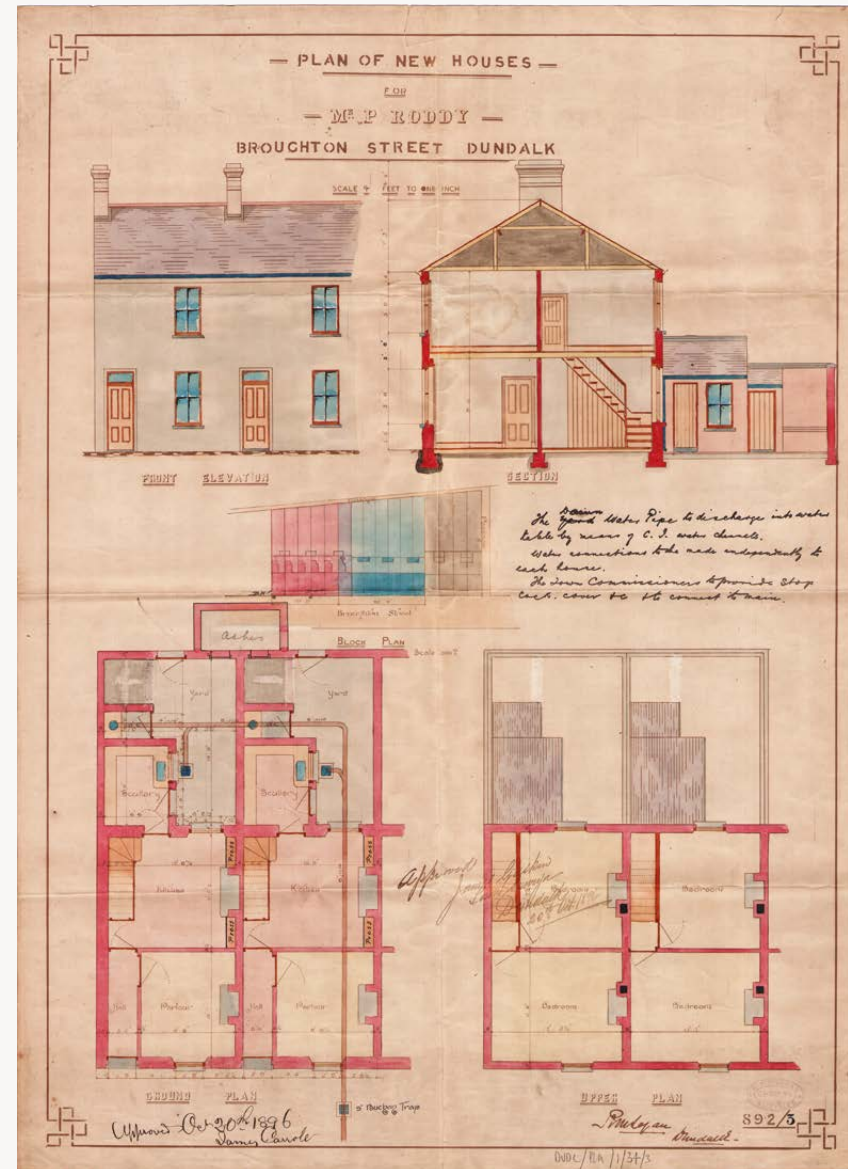
Cork City town planning report, 1941 (Cork City and County Archives)



Environment and Planning



Building Faghart reservoir, Dundalk, ca 1900 (Louth County Archives)



Plans for new houses in Dundalk, 1896 (Louth County Archives)



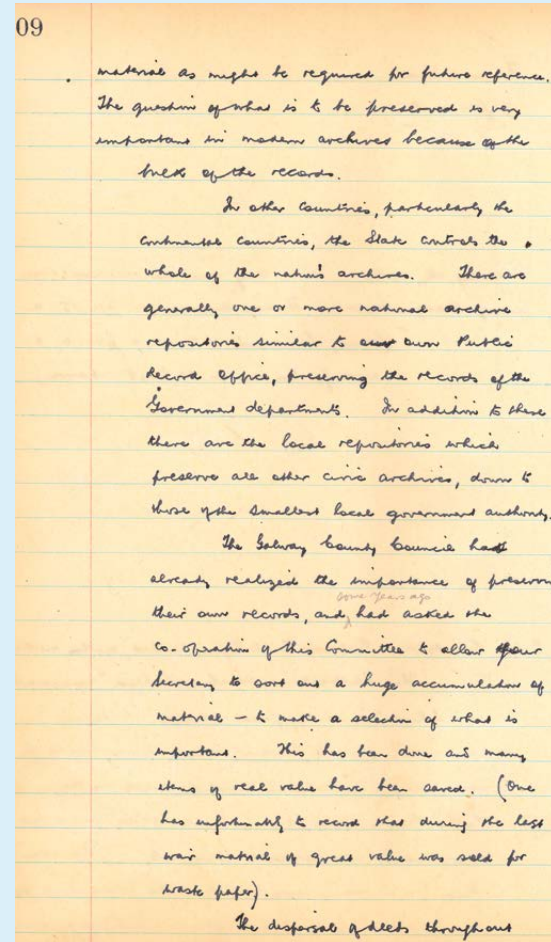
Community, Enterprise, Cultural Services and Recreation

Cultural Services and Recreation

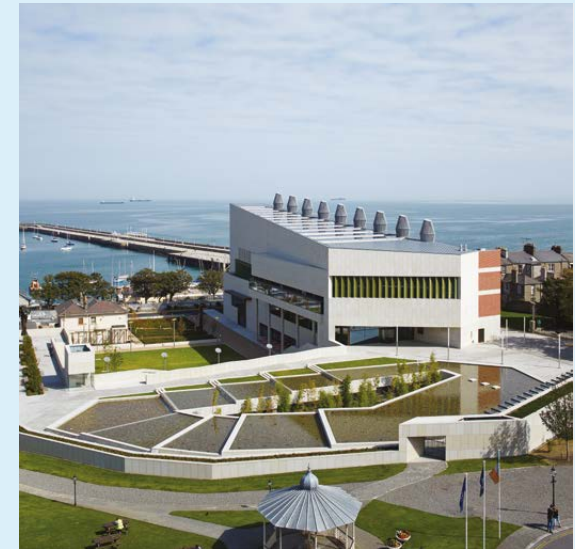
Local authorities provide a range of cultural services. Initially, public libraries were established under legislation of 1855. The post of Arts Officer was created in 1985. Heritage Officers, first appointed in 1999, promote all aspects of heritage within their areas. Most local archives services have been established since it became mandatory for local authorities to ensure the proper preservation and management of their archives under the Local Government Act 1994. In more recent years the cultural offering of local authorities has increased enormously, including the very successful Decade of Centenaries programme and Cruinniú na nÓg, a national day of free creativity for children and young people led by Creative Ireland.



The Carnegie Library, Dún Laoghaire
(Local Studies and Archives, dlr Lexicon)



Extract from the minute book of Galway County Library Committee, 26 July 1941, emphasising the importance of preserving local archives
(Galway County Council Archives)



Lexicon Library, Dún Laoghaire
(Local Studies and Archives, dlr Lexicon)



Community, Enterprise, Cultural Services and Recreation

Each council has a number of departments that contribute significantly to addressing cultural activities across the country. Arts, heritage, libraries, archives, museums and more recently, excellent public programmes in biodiversity and climate action, all contribute to the well-being of residents and citizens. These services support quality access, participation, learning and innovation through collaboration and strategic partnership at local, regional and international levels. In addition to embedded cultural services, many councils also develop projects around community engagement through various “culture companies”, entities that specialise in community engagement and inclusive, creative programmes of work.

Local authorities also manage public parks, swimming pools, playgrounds and other amenities and use these spaces to hold regular fun events for people of all ages and abilities.



St John's Park, Waterford City, late 1960s
(Waterford City and County Archives)



Items from the collection of Gunner James Fitzhenry, New Ross, County Wexford, who served in World War I (Wexford County Archive)



Marianne O'Kane Boal gives a creative writing workshop in Bundoran Library, for the children's festival of Cruinniú na nÓg, 23 June 2018.
(Courtesy of Christina Irwin)



Leanbh art workshop in schools, Louth Creative Ireland, 2018 (Louth County Council)



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Economic Development

In addition to these cultural offerings, local authorities play a key role in supporting local economic development – a role which has expanded significantly since the 1960s. County Development Teams were created, initially covering all or parts of 13 counties, mostly in the west, and later spreading countrywide.

In the late 1990s, *Better Local Government – A Programme for Change* led to a radical overhaul of structures, including the establishment of Community and Enterprise directorates within local authorities. Under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, county enterprise boards were replaced by local enterprise offices within local authorities.



Installation of footbridge at Tuam Road, Headford. 2018
(Galway County Council)



Ballyvoile Viaduct on the Waterford Greenway,
(Waterford City and County Archives)



Clare County Council officials and members of Feakle Community Council at the opening of Feakle Digital Hub 2018. It offers affordable office facilities and high-speed broadband.
(Clare County Council)



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Community Initiatives

Local authorities actively facilitate community and voluntary bodies through Public Participation Networks.

Programmes such as Peace IV and Interreg are unique initiatives of the European Union designed to support peace and reconciliation. Various services within local authorities, particularly in border counties, have been involved in such EU-funded projects for over 20 years.



In 1985 the loan of a portrait of W.B. Yeats by his father, John Butler Yeats was returned to the Irish Naval Service. (Sligo County Council Archives)



Members of Longford Comhairle na nÓg who participated in the commemorative weekend in Longford, 23-24 April 2016. They represented the local participants in the Easter Rising. (Longford County Council)



Clare County Council workers get on with spring planting (Clare County Council)



Reminiscence session in a railway carriage at Donegal Railway Museum for the Bealtaine Festival, 2018 (Donegal County Council)

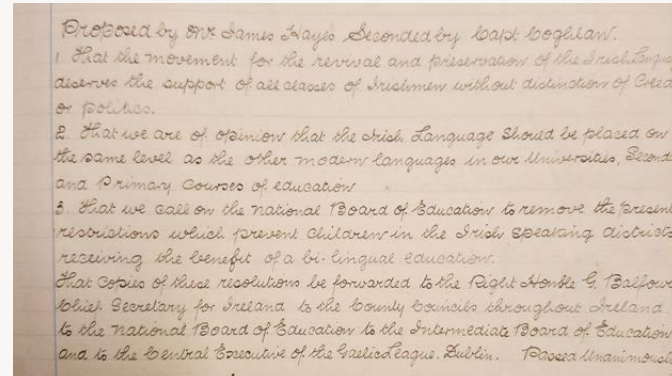
Creative Spark's Community Tapestry Project, Louth Creative Ireland, 2018 (Louth County Council)



The Irish Language and Local Government

As public bodies, local authorities are committed to serving their communities through the Irish language.

Since 1937 the Irish language has been recognised under the Constitution as the national and first official language of Ireland. The primary objective of the Official Languages Act 2003 was to ensure the improved provision of public services through the Irish language and was amended by the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. This aims to enable Irish speakers to interact with their public services with ease, through objectives such as ensuring that 20% of recruits to the public sector are competent in the Irish language by 2030.



Excerpt, minutes of the first meeting of Waterford County Council, 22 April 1899 (Waterford City and County Archives)



Author Cathal Pórtéir being interviewed by Dónal Ó Cnáimhsí in Gaoth Dobhair Community Library 21/02/2024 (image: Denis McGeady)



Cheathrú Rua library host an Irish Writers' Centre Peregrine Reading event with readings from Irish language writer Liam MacCóil and novelist and playwright Darach Ó Scoláí, November 2012. (Galway County Council)



Statue of Pádraic Ó Conaire, Irish language writer and Galway native (Courtesy of Galway City Museum)



The Irish Language and Local Government

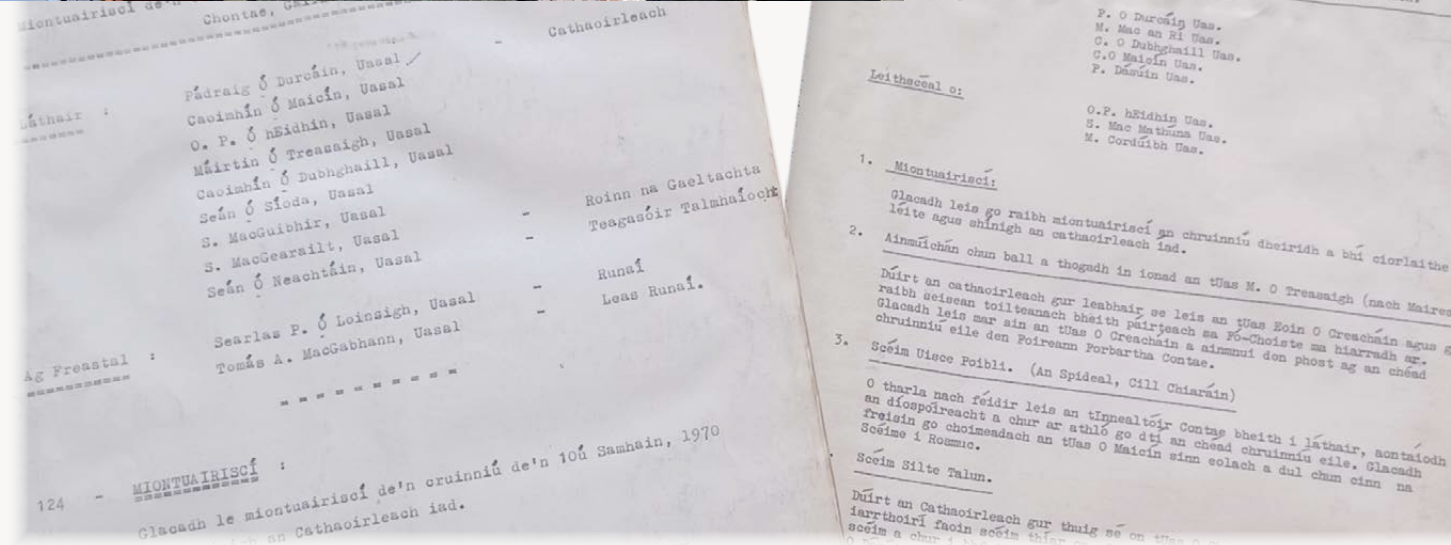
Many local authorities now employ Irish Officers, or Irish Language Development Officers, who ensure their respective organisations comply with obligations under the 2003 Act, as amended.

A number of local authorities have deeply-embedded Gaeltacht regions and provide extensive services through Irish.

Across the local authority network, there are a range of services fully available through Irish and English if requested, which include for example motor tax services, road safety promotional services, housing liaison services in Gaeltacht regions, and library services in certain places. Other services are partially available bilingually, these include for instance public counter services in Corporate Services, Planning, Housing and Roads. Brochures, information leaflets and applications forms and websites are available bilingually. All local authorities are required to accept correspondence in either Irish or English.



IPB Pride of Place judges' visit Inis Mór (Inishmore Island), Co. Galway, prior to the community winning in the Island and Coastal Communities category 2015. (Galway County Council)



Minutes for the Gaeltachta Sub-committee, 1971-1979 (GCCA CDT/15-17), of the Galway County Development Team. (Galway County Council)

