

Seoladh Suirbhé ar Úsáid na Gaeilge i mBaile Locha Riach

Seolfaidh *Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe, Gaeilge Locha Riach* agus *Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge* torthaí Shuirbhé ar Úsáid na Gaeilge le **Mait Ó Brádaigh** in Óstan Locha Riach Máirt 24 Samhain ag 7.30 i.n.

Rinneadh an Mórshuirbhé ar ***Chumas sa Ghaeilge agus a húsáid i mBaile Locha Riach*** le linn Mhí Bealtaine agus Meitheamh i mbliana i dtoghronna Bhaile Locha Riach Uirbigh agus Tuaithe. Tuigtear go bhfuil pobal uile an cheantair ag fanacht ar thorthaí an tsuirbhé le tamall.

Agus breis is 80% ag tacú leis an Ghaeilge sa chomharsanacht, tá olltacaíocht tugtha do phlean teanga i mBaile Locha Riach, do fhoireann agus forbairtí breise mar aon le foirgneamh. Ós rud é go bhfuil an oiread sin tacaíochta tugtha don Ghaeilge, moltar gur chóir toiseacht ar phleanáil teanga do Bhaile Locha Riach 2010 agus gurbh fhiú fíormhachnamh a dhéanamh maidir le scéim píolótach i dtreo Baile Dátheangach a bhunadh sa bhaile.

Molann an suirbhé go mbeadh an pobal uile rannpháiteach i bPleanail Teanga agus deis ag gach údarás, grúpa pobail, gnó, deonach agus príobháideach inchur a bheith acu sa phroiséal an oiread agus is féidir.

Cuirtear béim ar thábhacht an chóras oideachais i dtaobh theagasc na Gaeilge agus moltar go mbeadh forbairtí ag an phobal ar fad i bpleanáil teanga le tacaíocht a thabhairt do na scoileanna uile.

Moltar go dtabharfar aire speisialta do chainteoirí óga i '*dTearmainn Teanga*' sa dóigh is go dtig leo an teanga a fhoghlaim in atmaisféar sláintiúil agus go leanfaidh siad ag úsáid na Gaeilge go fadthéarmach agus go bhfoghlaimoidh siad na scileanna idirphearsanta le cumarsáid a dhéanamh le cainteoir Gaeilge ar bith.

Tá cló agus seoladh an tsuirbhé seo urraithe ag Foras na Gaeilge.

Launch of Irish Language Survey

Galway County Council, Gaeilge Locha Riach in co-operation with Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge will officially launch the Results of the Loughrea Language Survey Project by **Mait Ó Brádaigh** in the Lough Rea Hotel Tuesday 24 November 2009 at 7.30 p.m.

This in-depth survey on '*Ability in and Use of the Irish Language in Loughrea*' was conducted in May and June in the Loughrea Urban and Rural Electoral Districts. The results of this survey have been eagerly awaited by the entire community.

With over 80% stated to be in favour of the language, resounding support is given in the survey results to an Irish language plan for Loughrea, staffing and appropriate assistance, including a building. Based on the positive attitude to the language the survey also recommends that the Irish Language Planning Process for Loughrea begin in 2010 and that it be considered as a possible pilot case for the development of progressive Irish language planning.

The survey recommends that Irish Language Planning at community level be holistic with maximum participation and ownership of the process with organizations, state, private, business and voluntary.

Emphasis is placed upon the importance of the education system has been in teaching Irish and suggests that a new phase of planning will have to have community support channeled to help all schools.

It is recommended that younger speakers be cared for by the creation of '*language sanctuaries*' in order that they acquire Irish in a secure linguistic environment and that they remain using the language in the long-term and continue to acquire informal interpersonal skills in the language that will allow them to carry on conversations with any Irish speaker. The printing and launch of the survey is sponsored by Foras na Gaeilge.

Loughrea Sociolinguistic Survey – Main points

1. 32.1% of the surveyed population felt that they had at least 'some competence' in speaking Irish with 8.4%, a quarter of the 32.1%, or 1-in-12 people overall, reported being 'very or reasonably competent' in speaking Irish. This in line with Census results.
2. Highest competence was in reading, as opposed to speaking, understanding or writing Irish with 41.5%. At same time only 12% read Irish regularly.
3. Age group '41 to 50 year-olds' being between 8-12% above average, in other words the first generation to benefit from free Second Level education. Younger age groups not claiming similar levels of ability.
4. The survey results emphasize how important the education system has been in teaching Irish. But the 'School effect' on one's Irish doesn't seem to be lasting as long as it used to.
5. 'Home' comes in third place after 'school' and 'media' as the most significant factor in learning Irish but since mid-80's 'competence in Irish' amongst parents has not been passed on as much as it was before.
6. There is some use of Irish in Loughrea but not to any extensive degree.
7. 'Most Irish-speaking respondents accept the convention of being reluctant to initiate conversations' (Mac Gréil & Rhatigan 2009) – National survey's opinion seems to be backed up in Loughrea.
8. A new phase of planning will have to have community support channeled to help all schools.
9. Going to the Gaeltacht in the summer to be very important
10. Irish a core subject in the Leaving Certificate is under threat nationally while support in Loughrea for 'learning Irish at school being important' remains significant at 62%.
11. A need for 'Irish-only language sanctuaries' for youth outside-of-school in afternoons, evenings, holidays, weekends.

12. Attitude to Irish: Over 80% stated to be in favour of the language.
13. On one hand people have great respect for Irish speakers but the point was also made in the survey that children, even senior gaelscoil children, pick up an attitude from adults, that 'maybe one shouldn't be speaking too much Irish'.
14. TG4 is very popular with not alone sports programmes attracting viewers but 'soaps', children's TV and especially documentaries being supported. Could do a lot more for learners though.
15. Various internet initiatives on the language all have good support in the survey.
16. 20-year Plan for Irish, Plean 2028, national support for language planning may finally be put on a sound footing.
17. An Irish language plan for Loughrea, staffing and appropriate supports, including a building, all go hand-in-hand and all receive resounding support in the survey results with 77-80% deeming them at least 'important' with 36-40% going as far as saying that these three points are 'extremely or very important'.

Recommendations

That Irish Language Planning at community level be holistic with maximum possible participation and ownership of the process by not alone individuals but organizations, state, private, business or voluntary.

That the success of activities always be measured primarily by how they advance actual acquisition and use of Irish.

That the local Irish language leadership change direction slightly by giving a secondary role to campaigns to have an Irish language dimension in all community events. This Irish language dimension is important but the criteria of 'how much Irish is actually being acquired/used' should have primacy and priority when allocating scarce resources.

That all teachers of Irish in ordinary schools, and the local educational partners, be supported as much as possible and that the Harris proposals (2006) be implemented.

That local Irish Language organisations and the local community engage politically with the relevant regional and national agencies so as to remove any barriers to the acquisition of Irish in every school and also enhance the status of the language.

That specific and concrete steps be adopted in the primary teacher-training colleges, along the lines of six- to twelve-month immersion of all trainees in very small groups in various kinds of all-Irish speaking environments, inside and outside the Gaeltacht, so as to ensure that all teachers of the language are quite confident in and comfortable with their own competence in the Irish language.

That younger speakers be cared for by the creation of 'language sanctuaries' in order that they acquire Irish in a secure linguistic environment and that they remain using the language in the long-term and continue to acquire informal interpersonal skills in the language that will allow them to carry on conversations with any Irish speaker.

That all young people, who are studying Irish at school, have a chance to participate in immersion programmes in Irish outside of school-time through 'language sanctuaries' or otherwise.

That the local investment of time and resources in research continue. That also, arising from this study, Irish language agencies nation-wide, pay attention to the results and ensure that sociolinguistic research is not neglected, something, for instance, that the Welsh have invested quite an amount in.

That use of the new technologies in every part of Irish language acquisition and use be continued extensively.

That the Gaelscoil sector continue to be aware of the need to integrate its learners with the wider authentic Irish-speaking community.

That Irish language planners and language acquisition workers be trained locally and nationally so that a professional team be in place to carry out the work above.

That a national training course for professional facilitators of Irish Language after-school activities for youth and leisure-time activities for adults be set up so that towns such as Loughrea have a pool of trained staff to select from.

That a scheme similar to the Welsh Twf be developed in order to spread the use of Irish in the home and provide support for pre-school families.

That State agencies, health, education and others, and sports' bodies (GAA, etc) use as much Irish as possible, especially in dealing with Gaelscoil children.

That it is essential that the Gaeilge Locha Riach office be maintained and given a five- to ten-year financial commitment and further resources.

That the Irish Language Planning Process for Loughrea begin in 2010 and since the town and environs is well-positioned to commence such a process, once Plean 2028 is published, that it be considered as a possible pilot case for the development of progressive Irish language planning.