

The Gaeltacht Crisis: New approaches to old challenges

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The main point of my presentation is that a central aspect of the national project is now approaching collapse. The national project entailed the revival or survival of Irish from the basis of a vernacular speech community, termed the Gaeltacht. As a nation we need to face the fact that the Gaeltacht as it stands is now in terminal crisis.

The official response has primarily one of evasion since 2007 and can be considered a dereliction of care to the Gaeltacht. As well as evasion, there is a confusion of Gaeltacht issues with Irish learner requirements.

The fact that the Irish State is not able or unwilling to respond with effective measures to this crisis has resulted in a demoralised Gaeltacht. The concerns of the Gaeltacht people, the last surviving ethnic Gaels, need to be taken seriously by the Irish State of which they are a part. Current provision and State aid represent a disproportionate budgetary decrease of the previous status-quo. To put it bluntly, the Gaeltacht has no hope of survival within the parameters of the status quo.

Given the imminent social collapse in the Gaeltacht, it is vital that leadership be shown in order to bring about a new approach.

We recommend that a new approach will entail:

Protecting the social geography of Irish speakers, Tearmann na nGael

Clarify the socio-economic benefits of participation in Gaeltacht communities, Iontaobhas na nGael

Mechanism for assembly, Dáil na nGael

Advice and direction regarding language revitalisation, Acadamh na nGael.

As an honour to the efforts of past generations and in duty to future generations, we owe our best and most honest efforts to sustaining and revitalising real Gaeltacht communities.