

Tearmann: A Post-Covid Roadmap for Revival

BUATEOIRÍ
UILLE ÉIREANN 2005
CÚIGE ULADH 2006
UILLE ÉIREANN 2009
Glóir na nGaeil winners
All Ireland 2005
Ulster 2006
All Ireland 2009



AnDroichead



An Droichead

Creating safe space for...

The Community	4 – 9
Children and Families	10 – 13
Learning	14 – 17
The Arts	18 – 23
The Future	24 – 27
Feedback	28 – 29
Our Sponsors	30

An Droichead is an Irish language organisation that promotes the development of Irish language and culture through education, arts, family & community services, and outreach work. Focusing in particular on our immediate area of inner city south Belfast and our urban hinterland of greater south and east Belfast, the aim of An Droichead is to build the largest and most diverse community of Irish speakers in Ireland.

For more information about us please visit:
androichead.com

When the pandemic hit



The momentum of the Irish language sector suffered a major setback when COVID-19 arrived in 2020. Irish language centres around the country were forced to close their doors and, at least for the short to medium term, almost every event was put on hold indefinitely.

Like a lot of other groups, at An Droichead we managed to keep a limited selection of activities going online as we started to think of new ways to reach out to people. We want to use this opportunity to explain the arrangements we have made to date that allowed us to continue with our work. We also want to lay out the plans we have developed to keep the Irish language project in south and east Belfast moving forward.

We are particularly proud of the day care service which supported NHS staff in remaining at work since the beginning of the pandemic. Our team made sure that Gaeilgeoirí and the Irish language community in general would be leading from the front as usual when the time came to face the challenge of this emergency.

The theme we have chosen for this period of our work in advancing the growth in our community is ‘creating safe space’.

Ensuring that we can do that has been the central focus of all our efforts since the first lock down; it will remain the core of our strategy and of all our operations for the next couple of years at least.

As luck would have it, we had just launched a new three-year strategy in the months before the pandemic hit, one that we were very proud of. It would be unrealistic not to recognise that many if not most of the ambitious objectives contained within must be set aside for the time being.

And yet at the same time, creating safe space for the learning and use of Irish, or a ‘tearmann’ (sanctuary), is what An Droichead always did. We see the time ahead mainly as a period when we will have to amend our approach somewhat, and with all the difficulties come a range of new possibilities that didn’t previously exist – we are where we are. It is our responsibility as an Irish language community organisation to identify and capitalise upon the opportunities created by this new reality. We hope to show here exactly how we intend to do that for the benefit of our users and our community.

In this time of massive uncertainty, participation and a personal touch are more important than ever, and we believe that everyone can find comfort in experiences of the remarkable, unique and enduring culture that is ours. There is some certainty in that at least, and some hope. Our hope is that you remain safe and that you will stay on this remarkable journey with us.



Pól Deeds
CEO An Droichead Teo.

Creating safe space for the community

An Droichead's vision is of building the largest and most diverse Irish language community here in Belfast. Our mission is to inspire and support individuals, families and communities to make Irish language and culture an important part of their lives.

There is no doubt that the new restrictions on working after Covid presented a threat to that ambitious aim. At one point before the summer in 2020 we weren't even sure if we would be able to keep the dream alive. We knew that, no matter what, it was our duty to come up with ways around these new challenges of bringing people together as we had been doing for years.

The 'new normal'

Our youth events, the concerts programme, the coffee shop (An Taephota), holiday schemes and sport camps – it wasn't feasible nor was it safe to go ahead with these projects, each of which had continued to grow in 2019. It was clear that a very particular kind of provision was called for, and we came up with some new ideas.



TASTÁIL AIMSIGH COSAIN TREOIR CÉIM-AR- CHÉIM

Test ✓ Trace ✓ Protect ✓

HSC Health and
Social Care

1



AITHIN NA SIOMPTÓIM

Má tá síorchasacht nua, nó fiabhras ort, nó má chailleann tú do chumas blaiseadh nó bolú, ba chóir duit féin agus do gach duine i do theach féinleithsiú a dhéanamh láithreach.

2



IARR TÁSTÁIL ANOIS DÍREACH

Tabhair cuairt ar nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus le tástáil a chur in áirithe ar líne. Muna bhfuil tú ábalta tástáil a chur in áirithe ar líne cuir scairt ar 119.

3



LEITHLISIGH

Leithlisigh ar feadh 7 lá tar éis na siomptóim a bheith le feiceáil, níos faide má leanann an fiabhras (go dtí 48 uair ar a laghad tar éis do theocht filleadh ar ais mar a bhí). Ba cheart do dhaoine eile atá ina gcónaí leat leithlisiú ar feadh 14 lá.

4



FAIGH TÁSTÁIL

Déantar tástáil in ionaid tástála tiomáin tríd agus ní mór duit teacht i gcarr (ní de shiúl na gcós, ar iompar poiblí, i dtacsáí ná ar aon bhealach eile). Tá tástálacha baile ar fáil freisin.

5



FAIGH TORTHÁÍ

Ba cheart go bhfaighidh tú na torthaí laistigh de 72 uair an chloig. Má tá na torthaí diúltach maidir le coróinvíreas, ní bheidh gá duit agus do theaghlach leithlisiú níos mó.

6



CUIR MIONSONRAÍ AR FÁIL

Má tá do thorthaí dearfach maidir leis an choróinvíreas cuirfidh rianaithe teagmhálaithe na Gníomhaireachta Sláinte Poiblí (GSP) scairt ort ón uimhir 028 9536 8888. Iarrfaidh siad ort ainmneacha na ndaoine sin a raibh tú i dteagmháil leo ar na mallaibh a thabhairt dóibh.

7



CUIREANN AN GSP TEAGMHÁLACHA AR AN EOLAS

Má tá coróinvíreas ort, rachaidh an GSP i dteagmháil leis na daoine a raibh tú i ndlúth-theagmháil leo. Ní roinneofar d'ainm le daoine eile gan cead a fháil uait. Coinneofar na sonraí go léir go sábháilte.

8



IARRTAR AR DHLÚTH- THEAGMHÁLITHE LEITHLISIÚ

Iarrfar ar dhlúth-theagmhálaithe leithlisiú ar feadh 14 lá ón uair dheireanach a raibh siad i dteagmháil leat.

9



TEAGHLAIGH DHLÚTH- THEAGMHÁLITHE

Muna bhfuil aon siomptóim ar an dlúth-theagmálaí, ní gá do dhaoine eile sa theaghlach leithlisiú. Má thagann siomptóim ar an dlúth-theagmálaí, ba cheart dó/di na treoracha seo a leanúint, ag tosú le céim 1.

Nuair is féidir leat an baile a fhágáil, coinneigh slán agus lean ort de chomhairle sláinte poiblí a leanúint.

- Nigh do lámha go cúramach agus go minic agus ná leag do lámh ar d'aghaidh.
- Coinneigh amach ó dhaoine eile agus tú lasmuigh den bhaile.
- Úsáid d'uillinn nó ciarsúr páipéir le casacht nó sraoth a dhéanamh agus cuir an ciarsúr páipéir i mbosca bruscair.



Is féidir leat an víreas a scaipeadh fiú nuair nach bhfuil na siomptóim ort.

We spoke to the local community and took part in efforts to provide assistance to those who needed extra support. At the same time we contacted statutory agencies to make sure as much health and safety information as possible was translated in to Irish and made available to our community.

Focussing on our youth, we decided to run our annual summer camp online in 2020. The youth club team organised this for the club's teenagers as well as for children from the after school. All of the young people received a pack with art, sport and cooking materials, as well as a hoodie and some toys, and the workshops were delivered on zoom every Wednesday during July. The feedback was so good that we decided to arrange another camp at Halloween and another at Christmas.

We then started to plan a homework club for the young people and children we work with. We sourced funding for some new IT equipment like laptops, memory sticks and ipads. As this idea developed, it became clear that children and parents needed support with home schooling and so we set up our programme of Home-schooling Clinics. We set aside a space in the lárionad where children could come for supervised, socially-distanced support for an hour three times a week. We also host zoom sessions during the clinics for those who can't physically attend. All equipment and support is provided by An Droichead free of charge.

Looking at support beyond school, we have put together a training programme in partnership with Gaelchúrsaí, providing local young Irish speakers with extra skills that will increase their employability.





AniDr



oichead



Creating safe space for children and families

After a short period when we were completely closed at the end of March 2020, we began to gradually re-open our childcare services. At the start, we kept this emergency service for NHS staff, and throughout the summer of 2020 we were able to ensure childcare provision for them in partnership with Shaftesbury Recreation Centre and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

While we were able to keep some of our staff on furlough, a number of them were happy to come in to make sure this critically important service could be made available.

Working closely with the Belfast Trust, we drew up plans and put together new policies and procedures that would as far as possible ensure that there was a completely safe environment for children, parents and staff members. Since re-opening the childcare services again there hasn't been as much as one case of Covid that came from our building. On the two occasions so far that we had to close a room, they were re-opened a fortnight later and there was no cross-contamination.

By the end of the summer in 2020 all of our staff were back working hard to provide childcare to as many families as possible.

We weren't able to bring every single one of our families back due to restrictions meaning that we now had a lack of space. In consultation with parents we decided to postpone bringing in the pre-pre-school naíonra class. In the meantime, we produced and delivered learning and activity packs to every house that had a child who would otherwise have started in our naíonra in 2020. In these packs we had CDs, art materials, books, games and other items aimed at encouraging the children – and the parents – to have some fun with learning the basics of the language.

We understand how important it is at the minute to look after ourselves and those around us. We know as well that we need to support each other and, with that in mind, we designed a Health and Wellbeing Programme for An Droichead staff, which we delivered throughout November. This entailed facilitated in-house sessions in dance, yoga and mindfulness, and we bought in some healthy food so that we could prepare meals together. We have secured funding from Belfast City Council to run further programmes that will cater also for parents and local people.



It was thanks to the determination and dedication of our large childcare team that we were able to continue providing a safe space to children and families throughout the pandemic. They showed their commitment to continued development by undertaking several training programmes during what was an already-stressful time. These included child protection, planning for play and compassionate leadership & counselling. The staff also took ownership of developing our outside spaces so that we could provide safe, bright new play space outdoor in the fresh air. The recent launch of our My Nursery Pal app capped off a year where the An Droichead childcare team worked through a service-threatening situation to make our childcare more responsive than ever to the needs of parents.

In the time to come, both during the crisis period and afterwards, we will maintain our strong emphasis on the needs of parents and the development of children in our care. We will continue to share best practice, developing and protecting our large staff team, and cultivating the next generation of Irish speakers in this area.

You will see some of the activities we have planned at the bottom of this document.





Creating safe space for learning

At the start of lockdown we moved all of our classes online and we were stunned at just how successful they were. It was surely a sign of how motivated our learners are.

Even though Google Classroom and Zoom were new technologies for people, we learned quickly and by the start of April 2020 we had 10 classes and more than 120 learners attending them every week. It is thanks in the main to our excellent teaching team that we were able to achieve this.

High praise is also due to the learners in the academic classes, GCSE, AS and A Level, who continued to work towards their exams during this time. Whenever we were able to guarantee safe space for them, these classes came in to use the lárionad. However, we know that the ongoing changes in restrictions were especially challenging for this group. It is some achievement to secure a qualification during a pandemic and with distance learning, but our students did just that. We wish the most recent cohort all the best and we hope that they get the marks they deserve when the results come out! You all continue to do us proud.

The feedback from the online class provision has been very positive and, as well as the learning opportunity it seems that it was a valuable support for people who otherwise had little or no social contact because of lockdown or self-isolation.

To thank our learners we delivered a series of free seminars on the subject of grammar, via zoom again. Of course there is no substitute for being in the company of people for language tuition, and we look forward to welcoming learners back to the rooms in An Droichead. Having said that, this experience has shown us that there are possibilities in remote learning to explore in the future.

We were delighted to be able to organise a ‘socially distanced Gaeltacht trip’ during the summer. We put in place a number of measures to ensure that it was safe and we kept the numbers much lower than usual. Even so, it lacked nothing that learners can experience on our usual trips: there were classes, a trip, sean-nós dancing, sessions and a talk among other activities. It was a great chance as well to work once again with our partners at Teach Jack, who are doing their best to make the hotel and its facilities a safe space to enjoy.



We now have 13 different classes at all levels so that we can cater for all learning needs. We have also continued with our ‘scéim na bhFáinní’ (fáinne award programme) so that our learners can continue to show off their Irish language ability by wearing the fáinne. The scrúdú béil / oral exam and assessment was conducted entirely on zoom and the fáinní themselves were popped in the post, so distance learning overcame another hurdle to keep the learning of the language alive.

We have planned intensive courses that will use a mix of online tuition and physical attendance at classes in the lárionad. This is partly to start moving things back to full-time physical classes, but also to suit those who prefer to stay online. We conducted two surveys among our learners, and the feedback will help develop and refine our provision going forward. There is clearly a demand for both physical and online provision, with a strong preference among a lot of new learners for online only.

Covid wasn't able to stop Seachtain na Gaeilge / Irish language week and, as usual, An Droichead organised a range of events both for individual learners and for families. These included an online bingo with all the numbers called out in Irish, and special talks on specific language themes for learners. The highlight was a special ‘teach airneáil’ session of music and story telling that we recorded in Cumann Chluain Árd and broadcast on St. Patrick's Day.



Creating safe space for the arts

Reluctantly – although the decision was taken out of our hands – we had to cancel all of the events we had planned for the lárionad after March 2020, as well as the weekly traditional music trail in the city centre. Given the huge volume shift to online performances by artists and arts organisations all over the country in the early days of the lockdown, we sought new and alternative ways to provide access to our arts programme. We recognised that it is just impossible to replicate the experience of live music in An Droichead and so we decided not to present our concert programme online.

The entire arts world has been devastated by Covid and it remains one of the only sectors unable to fully re-open since March 2020. The ban on live music left many trad musicians with no source of income and ineligible for government support. In keeping some elements of our arts provision going online, we helped to support those who are the backbone of the trad arts sector.





One such initiative was the live broadcasts of the Trad Trail that we presented with support from Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI) and Tourism Ireland. Over 200,000 people from all corners of the earth tuned in over 12 different platforms, along with plenty of people from our local audience. Working with TNI during the summer we were able to organise a number of private performances of our Trad Trail for incoming press which allowed us to continue to promote our hugely successful Trad Trail and trad music itself to an international audience while we were unable to welcome members of the public.

We came up with some other forms of arts provision that wouldn't require bringing people together physically.

In partnership with the Irish Traditional Music Archive, we decided to record a series of interviews – The Belfast Flute Project – to explore the strong flute-playing heritage of Belfast with some stalwarts of the tradition. These are now available via our facebook page, as are a series of podcasts we recorded called Ar Chúl an Cheoil (behind the music). These feature Robert McMillen talking to some traditional music legends about their life and work. They are a fantastic resource and can be accessed online free of charge.

We organised some outdoor events and we plan to hold more in the months ahead. The first of these was a lovely event that we planned with Radius housing next door to An Droichead. Some An Droichead musicians and a dancer gave a display of traditional music and dance to the elderly residents who came to their front doors to watch. The craic was enjoyed by all and some of our daycare children even came out to listen to the music.

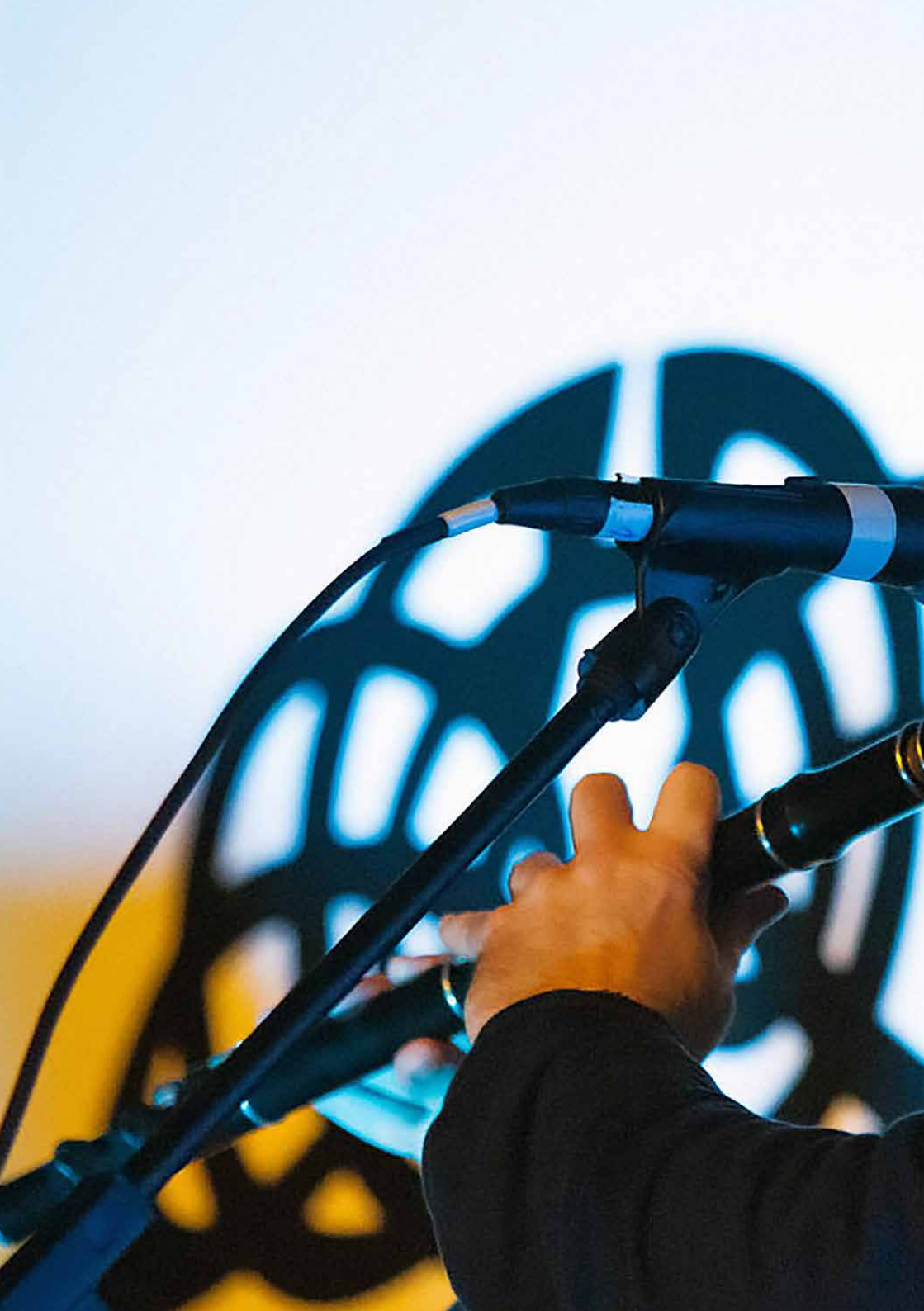
We also organised music sessions in Ormeau Park to coincide with a local community walking group's walks through the park, and they were pleasantly surprised to have the tunes helping them on their way.

Ceol na Nollag i gCúl Trá - building on our strong relationship with National Museums NI, we found opportunities for our musicians to get out playing again by arranging music sessions in the run up to Christmas, in the beautiful surroundings of the Ulster folk museum at Cultra.

Cleamaireacht cois Lagáin - as part of Belfast City Council's festive neighbourhood scheme we organised these festive performances with Cleamairí Bhéal Feirste. The Cleamairí entertained those using the facilities at the Lagan towpath with festive music and stories in their unique traditional way. Audience members commented how happy they were to find the music in such an unexpected location and most audience members commented that it was the first time they had heard live music since before lockdown.

This year, for the first time, An Droichead issued an open call for artists working in the traditional genre to create new works. We believe that this was an important intervention as it provided awardees with a chance for them to create and collaborate in a time when opportunities for paid performance and artistic output were extremely limited. These new works will premiered later in 2021.







Creating safe space for the future

So, what can you expect over the next number of months from An Droichead?

We have a variety of projects in the works, each building upon the lessons of 2020. Even though the Irish language project suffered a major setback, An Droichead learned to identify new ways to promote the language and to bring our community together.

We managed to secure financial assistance to make up for the significant loss of income in our events and childcare operations. We thought the time was right to use these resources in a way that would develop our capacity, especially in terms of our IT abilities. Although we lost out on a lot in 2020, An Droichead is stronger as an organisation and we are ready to begin to write the next chapter of the Irish language story in this area.

Here below are some of the things that we have in store over the next twelve months or so:

An updated website

We plan to add to our existing website so that we can carry out much more of our daily business without having to bring people in to the centre. Before long, our learners will be able to register for classes and pay for them online. Parents will also be able to enrol children in our childcare services online, as well as keep an eye on their bills, all through the new website.

The virtual lárionad: An Droichead in VR

We have embarked upon a new design project with a digital art company which will build an online virtual space in which all of our users, whether parents, learners or our loyal audience members, will be able to visit the lárionad and get a taste of everything we provide there. As well as that, our officers will be able hold meetings in the virtual space, and we can even host classes in it.

Helping to rebuild the trad arts sector

We plan to increase opportunities for artists to earn a living from their art form and to support their creativity while the re-emerging events industry takes on new forms. We also want to find alternative, new and safe ways to present and engage with the arts, keeping a focus on live music and in-venue experience.

An Droichead archive

We want to build an An Droichead arts archive, to contribute to the collection of archive material focussing on heretofore undocumented aspects of the tradition. This work will build upon our partnerships with groups like the Irish Traditional Music Archive (ITMA) and will also commission new projects aimed at conserving our Irish language and musical heritage.

Links with universities and support for local students

We are working on projects that will provide support to third-level students and that will encourage them to continue with their third-level study of Irish. This will include joint cultural projects as well as more financial support for students such as extending the assistance we provide through the bursary with Ulster University.

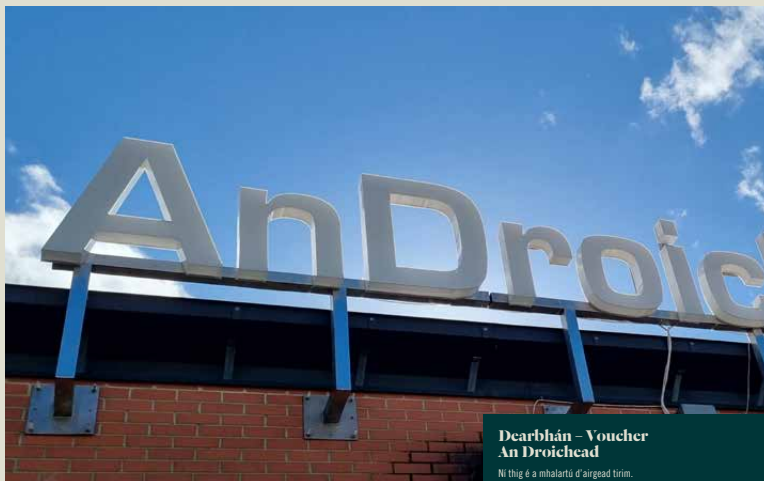
The An Droichead shop!

We are finalising plans to open an Irish language shop on the Ormeau Road. In the shop we will sell Irish language products with an emphasis on learning support and children's clothes with Irish on them. We hope this project will be of value especially to our school community and learners.

Vouchers

We have designed a new voucher so that people can pay for more online and email us the voucher instead of having to call in or handle cash.





Dearbhan – Voucher An Droichead

Ní bfuil a míbhairtí d'airgead trím.
Bailí ar leath bliana ón dáta ocaimhígh.
Canann be éiríochtair chofaí nó a bfuil.
Bailí d'airgead 1 bliana ón dáta d'airgeadair.

€50



20 Sraid Cooke, Béal Feirste, BT72EP
Guth: (0)28 3023 8818
Rph.co.uk@androichead.com
androichead.com

New classes

We are working on innovative ways to promote Irish language learning online and outside of our centre. As well as offering bespoke Irish classes to businesses and organisations in the community, we have begun to deliver one-to-one tuition online and we aim to provide former IME pupils with opportunities to gain qualifications.

An Droichead membership

We will extend the An Droichead membership scheme so that more people can avail of what is available through the scheme. Currently, a 50% discount on all classes and events is available with membership and we want to build on that this year.

Development plans

We have established a subcommittee to review and progress our capital development plans. We will be working closely with the Department for Communities to realise the vision of these proposals within the next couple of years. In the meantime, we will be carrying out more basic works in and around the lárionad to enhance the environment of An Droichead for all of our users.

Big thanks to our Sponsors...



Belfast
City Council



Foras na Gaeilge



Ag treisiú le
tógáil na Gaeilge



Get involved

For anyone who has taken part in any courses over lockdown tag us in a picture of your favourite activity using the hashtags below. Our favourites will be featured on our own social pages and our brand new website!

#AnDroichead #ADlockdown

Seoladh/Address

20 Cooke Street, Ormeau Road
Belfast, BT7 2EP

Tuilleadh Eolais/For More Info

028 9028 8818

www.androichead.com

eolas@androichead.com

[gaelphobalandroichead](https://www.facebook.com/gaelphobalandroichead)

[@an_droichead](https://twitter.com/an_droichead)

**Join us
on
socials**



