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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION:  
TOPONYMIC GUIDELINES FOR MAP AND OTHER EDITORS.

Toponymic Guidelines for Cartography

(Submitted by Ireland)\*\*/

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## 1 LANGUAGES

### 1.1 General remarks

Ireland is a bilingual country having two official languages according to the constitution. These two languages are generally referred to in the English language as *Irish* and *English*. Irish is described in the Constitution as *the first official language*.

Both English and Irish are compulsory school subjects. Dialectal forms of each are traditionally spoken but the standard form of each is taught.

Irish is the oldest recorded language in Ireland. The English language has been in Ireland since it first arrived around the year 1200. During the 19th century English became the traditional language of the majority of the population and is now universally understood in the country. Irish is now the traditional home language of less than 2% of the population and this is in small areas, mostly on the western sea-board. There is, however, a large minority of competent users of Irish spread through-out the country.

Each geographical name may have two forms, one in Irish and one in English. Usually the difference between the two forms is a difference of orthography only although in numerous instances the two forms represent two different names from different traditions which refer to the one feature, as in the case of the capital Baile Átha Cliath / Dublin. In some cases one of the apparently different names is actually a literal translation of the other as, for example, Dún an Rí / Kingscourt where the second form, the English, is a loose translation of the Irish Dún (*the fort*) an (*of the*) Rí (*king*).

The forms used by the Ordnance Survey, which is the national mapping-agency, are the official forms in both languages. Variant spellings may be encountered in some sources. One such source is the postal authority which uses a large number of variant English-language forms. These are included, but distinguished by differing type-face, in the concise *Gasaitéar na hÉireann / Gazetteer of Ireland* (1989) (See 3.2). For the Irish language the postal authority uses only the official standard Irish forms. (See 2.)

### 1.2 The Irish language

Irish is a member of the Gaelic branch of the Celtic group of the Indo-European family of languages. The Gaelic branch of the Celtic group is distinguished from the other main branch of the Celtic group which is the British, or Brythonic, branch. The British branch is represented in modern times by Welsh and Breton.

### 1.3 The English language

English is a member of the Germanic group of the Indo-European family of languages and is very different from Irish linguistically.

#### 1.4 The alphabet

The modern Roman / Latin alphabet is used to write both languages.

A a, Á á	H h	O o, Ó ó	U u, Ú ú
B b	I i, Í í	P p	V v
C c	J j	Q q	W w
D d	K k	R r	X x
E e, É é	L l	S s	Y y
F f	M m	T t	Z z
G g	N n		

Diacritic: The acute accent is the only diacritic normally used and this applies to Irish only. The diacritic indicates a long vowel in contrast with the corresponding short vowel. This contrast is a phonemic contrast, for example, Irish bá meaning bay is distinguished from Irish ba meaning cows. (Note: For use of the grave accent to denote stressing in English forms see 1.6.2.3.)

The so-called Gaelic script used in former times both in manuscript and in print was merely a graphic variant of the original Latin script. Its principal distinguishing characteristic is a point placed above certain consonants. This point was originally a superscript letter h written above the consonant to form a digraph and corresponds to the h referred to in paragraph 1.6.1.3.

#### 1.5 Rules (or conventions) applied in the writing of geographical names

##### 1.5.1 Use of capital letters (also known as upper-case letters)

Every word in a geographical name, whether in the Irish or in the English form, is written with a capital letter, except prepositions, and the definite article when it is not at the beginning of the name.

(The definite article in Irish has two forms, *an*, the universal singular, excepting *na* in the feminine genitive, and *na* which is the universal plural.)

##### 1.5.2 Lower-case letters prefixed to initial capital letters

Geographical names in Irish are written as units of grammatical language and therefore employ the orthographical conventions of the standard literary language. One convention which may need explaining is that of lower-case letters prefixed to the initial capital letters of words in Irish-language forms. The reason for this is that in some grammatical contexts initial consonant sounds of words are changed and initial vowel-sounds of words have certain additional sounds placed immediately before them. (Note: This feature does not occur at the beginning of a geographical name. It must be preceded by a word or particle.)

### 1.5.2.1 Lower-case letters prefixed to initial consonants

In some cases, in the spelling, a modifying letter or letters, representing the new initial sound, is prefixed in lower case, or in other distinctive type, to the original initial letter. The original initial retains its proper appearance, which in geographical names is always upper-case (that is, capital), for example Loch gCál / ,lox'ga:l /, Baile na nGall / ,bal'ənd'gal/. The following are the initial consonants which may be thus modified (each of the consonants has its proper modifying letter or letters prefixed) with the new initial sound given in square brackets using the International Phonetic Alphabet: mB- , [m] ; gC- , [g] ; nD- , [n] ; bhF- , [v] ; nG- , [ŋ] ; bP- , [b] ; tS- , [t] ; dT- , [d] . (By this process unvoiced stops and f become voiced, and voiced stops become the corresponding nasals.)

### 1.5.2.2 Lower-case letters prefixed to initial vowels

Words beginning with one of the vowels A, Á, E, É, I, Í, O, Ó, U, Ú may have either h, n or t in lower-case prefixed to them, depending on grammatical context, for example, Na hAoráí / ,nə'hi:ri: /, Loch nEathach / ,lox'n'əhəx/, An tAonach / ,ən'ti:nəx / . (For explanation of palatalized consonants, / n' / for example, see 1.6.1.3.)

### 1.5.3 Initial consonants modified by the addition of the letter h

In a second type of initial modification certain consonant sounds are changed. This change is represented in spelling by the letter h in lower-case being placed immediately after the consonant thus forming a digraph. These digraphs are described in 1.6.1.5. For example, Cluain and An Chluain are basically identical names although referring to different places. In the second instance the definite article (An) causes the modification to the initial letter because cluain is a feminine noun rather than a masculine one. (Note: As in 1.5.2, this feature does not occur at the beginning of a geographical name.)

### 1.5.4 Use of the hyphen

The hyphen is rarely written in geographical names in modern Irish. In compound names it is used to link words in situations where identical letters would otherwise come together in the spelling, for example, An Bhreac-chluain .

In English the hyphen is used in names such as Newmarket-on-Fergus where Fergus is the name of a river. The hyphen may also be used to link associated words in a compound name, as in Six-mile-bridge , but the principle is not applied consistently as forms such as Sixmilcross and Six Mile Water also occur.

### 1.5.5 The writing of names as combinations of words

Geographical names in Irish are written as units of grammatical language as far as possible and the words are written separately. This principle is followed to a large extent also in writing English language names but is not consistently applied as can be seen in the examples in 1.5.4.

### 1.5.6 The writing of names as single words

In Irish, generally speaking, a name which is written as a single word, with or without the article, is either a simple or a compound word, or else is a name the meaning of which is not understood.

This is also the case in English. In general, all names derived from the Irish language are written in English as a single word. For example : Tiobraid Árann / Tipperàry ; Dún na nGall / Donegàl .

### 1.5.7 The alphabetization of Irish-language forms

For the purpose of alphabetization the definite article at the beginning of a name is disregarded. In lists, for convenience, it may be placed after the basic name and preceded by a comma. Likewise, a prefixed letter (see 1.5.2), or an added h (see 1.5.3), following the definite article at the beginning of a name is disregarded. An Dún is alphabetized Dún , An ; An tAbhallort is alphabetized (t)Abhallort , An ; An Cheathrú Rua is alphabetized C(h)eathrú Rua , An .

The hyphen is disregarded in alphabetization.

## 1.6 Pronunciation

Pronunciation key: In these Toponymic Guidelines approximate pronunciation is shown using The International Phonetic Alphabet.

### 1.6.1 The pronunciation of the Irish-language forms

The Irish-language forms of the geographical names are related directly to the standard literary language as most names are composed of standard dictionary words. Therefore, for those competent in the language, the written form is a guide to proper pronunciation.

The pronunciation of the Irish forms of the names as given in *Gasaitéar na hÉireann / Gazetteer of Ireland* (1989), and as explained in the preface to that book, is a recommended pronunciation based on a standard pronouncing dictionary published by the Department of Education in 1986. This recommended pronunciation differs in some respects from traditional local pronunciation but the overall difference is insignificant and such a situation can hardly be avoided when national standardization is the objective.

Nonstandard and dialectal forms of words often occur as, or in, geographical names; so also do elements which are of unknown origin or meaning. In both these cases the spelling usually reflects the traditional local pronunciation.

## 1.6.1.1 Vowels

Irish has a vowel-system consisting of five long vowels, five short vowels and one neutral vowel.

The combinations ae, ao, eo are regarded as genuine digraphs in this standard pronunciation. They are pronounced / e: /, / i: / and / o: / respectively.

In stressed position:

á;	and a before rd, rl, rn, rr .....	/ a: /	a, ai, ea .....	/ a /
ó, eo;	and o before rd, rl, rn .....	/ o: /	o .....	/ o /
ú;	and u before rd, rl, rn .....	/ u: /	u .....	/ u /
é, ae;	and ei before rd, rl, rn .....	/ e: /	e, ei .....	/ e /
í, ao .....	.....	/ i: /	i, io, ea .....	/ i /

In unstressed position:

a, o, u, e, i, are pronounced ..... / ə /

For explanation of so-called 'slender vowels' ( e, i ) flanking broad vowels, and of 'broad vowels' ( a, o, u ) flanking slender vowels in orthography, see 1.6.1.3. These flanking vowels are silent; they merely qualify adjacent consonants in writing. Generally, they do not form diphthongs with adjacent vowels. In these combinations of two, or three, (or, rarely, four) vowel-letters the vowel marked with the acute accent or one of the three genuine digraphs referred to above gives the essential vowel-sound of the syllable.

The following are examples: Inis Meáin is pronounced /,in'is'm'a:n'/. Buíonach is pronounced /'bi:nəx'/. Cúil Ghréine is pronounced /,kú:l'g'r'e:n'ə'/. An tIúr is pronounced /,ə'n't'ur/. Dún Chaoin is pronounced /,du:n'xi:n'/. (For explanation of palatalized consonants, /n'/ for example, see 1.6.1.3.)

## 1.6.1.2 Diphthongs

There are four phonemic diphthongs in Irish. Consonant-letters are used in the representation of two of the diphthongs and these two, therefore, may not be obvious to the eye which is not familiar with the orthography of Irish. The following spellings, when they occur in stressed syllables, represent the diphthongs indicated:

a(i)dh, a(i)gh .....	/ ai /	(e)abh, (e)amh .....	/ au /
e(i)dh, e(i)gh		obh, odh, ogh, omh	
o(i)dh, o(i)gh			

The following, whether in stressed or unstressed syllables, represent diphthongs:

ia(i) .....	/ iə /	ua(i) .....	/ uə /
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## 1.6.1.3 Consonants

Each of the consonant letters used in Irish has two types of sound. The two types are commonly termed broad and slender for which the technical terms are respectively velarized and palatalized.

In the International Phonetic Alphabet the palatalized consonants are indicated by a following raised 'j'. In the phonetic transcription used here the palatalized consonants are indicated by a following tick / ˈ / similar to the symbol for a geometrical minute. In broad transcription the velarized consonants are not marked but consonants which are not marked as palatalized are to be understood as velarized.

In writing, velarized consonants are preceded by, or followed by, or are both preceded by and followed by, one of the letters a, o, u. The palatalized consonants are preceded by, or followed by, or are both preceded by and followed by, one of the letters e, i.

Words of Irish origin do not contain the letters h, j, q, v, x, y, z. These appear only in loanwords and in names of foreign origin; sometimes in Irish they are represented by other letters, or combinations of letters. Their pronunciation usually approximates the pronunciation in the language of origin. The letter k of foreign words and names is invariably written as c in Irish-language dictionaries.

The letter h in Irish orthography has a particular function resembling that of a diacritic. Written immediately after certain consonants it forms digraphs with the consonants. These digraphs represent a range of sounds different from those represented by the basic consonant-letters as shown below. The h signifies that the stops and m are fricative, and that f is silent, for example: Baile Átha Cliath /ˈbalˈaːhəˈkˈlˈiːə/; Gaillimh /ˈgalˈiːvˈ/; An Fhairche /əˈnˈarˈəxˈə/.

b	/b, bˈ/	bh	/v, vˈ/
c	/k, kˈ/	ch	/x, xˈ/
d	/d, dˈ/	dh	/ɣ, ɣˈ/
f	/f, fˈ/	fh	/-, -/
g	/g, gˈ/	gh	/ɣ, ɣˈ/
l, ll	/l, lˈ/		
m	/m, mˈ/	mh	/v, vˈ/
n, nn	/n, nˈ/		
p	/p, pˈ/	ph	/f, fˈ/
r, rr	/r, rˈ/		
s	/s, sˈ/	sh	/h/
t	/t, tˈ/	th	/h/



## 1.6.2 The pronunciation of the English forms

The English language forms of the older geographical names of Ireland came into existence over the period from the 12th to the 19th centuries according as the sphere of English administration extended in Ireland. Although partially regularized for English in the 19th century this spelling is still a miscellaneous accumulation representing different periods and various orthographical conventions, many of which are now obsolete in modern standard English. This frequently leads to conflict between false book-pronunciation and traditional pronunciation whether in English or in Irish. Because of the great difference between the phonological structures of Irish and English, pronunciation based solely on the English spelling of geographical names derived from Irish tends to be artificial unless supplemented by information from other sources.

### 1.6.2.1 Some points concerning the orthography of the English forms

The digraph gh was intended to convey a strong fricative sound (similar to the final sound in German Bach) as in Lough Finn /<sub>1</sub>lɔx'fin /, Togher /<sub>1</sub>to:xər /. Alternatively, the gh is frequently silent as in Armagh /<sub>1</sub>ar'ma: / . The gh was never intended to convey a k sound.

The letter r is never silent. After a vowel it is pronounced clearly as in Cork / kɔrk /, Ardmòre /<sub>1</sub>ɑ:rd'mo:r /, Kilcàr /<sub>1</sub>ki'l'kar / .

The digraph kn has not retained its intended sound / kn / at the beginning of names, and in English is universally pronounced n as in Knock / nok / .

In general the vowel letters retain their older English values in traditional pronunciation although often they are also given modern book-pronunciation by those who disregard traditional knowledge.

Thus, the ending -ane conveys the sound a as in modern English càr, for example, Strabàne /<sub>1</sub>strɑ'bɑ:n / .

The digraph ea represents the sound e:, for example Killèa /<sub>1</sub>ki'le: / .

The letter y represents the sound i:, for example Tyrone /<sub>1</sub>ti:'ro:n / .

The endings -o, -oe and -ow in unstressed positions represent the neutral vowel as in Kildimo /<sub>1</sub>ki'l'di:mə /, Ogònnelloe /<sub>1</sub>o:'gonlə / and Mallow /<sub>1</sub>malə / .

### 1.6.2.2 False impressions

To those familiar with the English language it may appear that some Irish names, in their English-language forms, contain English words. In some cases it is so. For example (English forms first), Broadford / An tÁth Leathan, Brideswell / Tobar Bhríde : in these the real English words broad, ford, well occur; Bride is a proper name. In the names Longford / An Longfort, Craughwell / Creachmhaoil the words long, ford, well seem to occur but, in fact, do not occur: their appearance as English words is merely an accident of orthography. This factor often leads to incorrect pronunciation.

### 1.6.2.3 Stressing

The orthography of the anglicized forms of the names usually gives no indication of the correct stressing in the names, that is, indication of the syllables which should be emphasized. In the concise gazetteer *Gasaitéar na hÉireann* 'Gazetteer of Ireland' (1989) syllables to be emphasized in addition to the initial syllable are marked with a grave accent, for example, Donegàl.

## 2 NAMES-AUTHORITIES AND NAMES-STANDARDIZATION

The national names-authority is *An Coimisiún Logainmneacha*, (The Placenames Commission). This body is appointed to advise the Government on the subject of placenames and had its origin in the need to establish an official Irish-language spelling for the geographical names of the country following the setting up of the independent Irish state in the year 1922. When Ireland was under British government an anglicized (that is, an English-language) standard spelling for the names was established by the British mapping-service in the first half of the 19th century. This orthography is still the English-language orthography on official maps of Ireland. The Commission was originally intended to perform the linguistic and cartographical research necessary towards establishing the official Irish language-orthography but this task was found to be too great for a voluntary body.

A research office was attached to the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (the national mapping-agency) in 1955 and the Commission was directed to work in an advisory capacity with particular regard to policy concerning the Irish-language forms of the names. Close contact is maintained between the Commission and the Ordnance Survey, principally by reason of the fact that both are responsible to the Government Minister for Finance, and also that the head of the placenames research office in the Ordnance Survey acts as secretary to the Commission. This situation is wellsuited to the work in general and also to the ideal of standardization. In fact, it is very similar to one of the systems recommended in the United Nations publication International Cartography XXI.

A law was passed in 1973 giving power to the Minister for Finance to make orders concerning the correct official Irish forms of placenames. Only one order has been made so far under this law. In 1975 the Minister made an order listing the official Irish forms of the names of places where post-offices were situated. These official forms were adopted exclusively in the Post-office Guide from 1977 on.

Until the year 1982 the Placenames Commission did not consider names in category (c) (see 2.1) as coming within their terms of reference. Then, because it was estimated that, by the end of the 20th century, the majority of the population would have such names as addresses, the Commission decided to regard such urban names as important placenames. Later a special sub-committee was formed to deal with this subject. In 1992, following much consultation with local authorities, the Commission published a bilingual booklet of guidelines aimed at rationalization and standardization.

## 2.1 The principal categories of geographical names

The geographical names are of three principal categories:

- (a) important natural and man-made features and social features
- (b) administrative units of central government and of local government
- (c) urban features

Of categories (a) and (b) by far the greater part seem to have originated in the Irish language which has a written literary tradition dating from the 5th century. It is likely that some geographical names from previous languages have survived to the present day but onomastic research has not identified and analysed such names with certainty. The tendency to preserve the patent meaning of geographical names is a feature of the Irish linguistic tradition and therefore, if such prehistoric names survive, they are embedded in the mass of Irish toponymy.

Names in category (c) are mostly of modern origin. A large proportion of these are from the 20th century but many are much older. In Ireland names of this nature, names of streets, of other urban features, and of suburban housing estates come within the scope of local authorities which have the power to assign names to new features of this category. The authorities exercise this power generally and frequently they approve names proposed by property-developers and by residents. In naming new features they often try to adapt existing placenames. The local authorities are responsible also for providing the corresponding forms of the names in both official languages. At present, in line with requests from the appropriate Government Minister, the local authorities are developing a more positive approach in relation to giving streetnames, roadnames and names of housing-estates a structured position in the planning system.

## 3 SOURCES

### 3.1 Maps

The Ordnance Survey is responsible for the official mapping of the state and publish the following series:

#### 3.1.1 Large-scale mapping

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1: 1 000  | Mapping of urban areas (approximately 1,700 sheets).  |
| 1: 2 500  | Mapping of rural areas excluding some heath and mountain areas (approximately 17,000 sheets).   |
| 1: 10 560 | Mapping on the scale of six inches to one mile covering all Ireland (approximately 1,600 sheets). This series is no longer being updated. |

Note: The Ordnance Survey large-scale mapping archive is currently being digitized and will be stored in a sheet-free and scale-free environment. From August 1992 the maps will be available in sheet-size A4 to A0 and on scales ranging from 1 : 500 to 1 : 10 000.

### 3.1.2 Medium-scale and small-scale mapping

- 1: 50 000 This series, consisting of 89 sheets for all of Ireland is currently being prepared and is scheduled for completion by the year 1999.
- 1: 126 720 This series, on the scale of half an inch to one mile, covers all Ireland on 25 sheets.
- 1: 250 000 This series covers all of Ireland on 4 sheets.
- 1: 575 000 This covers all of Ireland on one sheet.

### 3.2 Gazetteers

There is no comprehensive map-related gazetteer of Ireland. The most substantial gazetteer-type publication is the Topographical Index which is directly related to the map-series 1 : 10 560 described in 3.1.1. In this the names of about 60,000 basic administrative units of land (townlands) are listed alphabetically in their official anglicized form (see 2) although with reference to an administrative system which is now partially obsolete. This book does not list physical features.

The official Irish forms of the names are being determined by the Ordnance Survey as described in 2 and are being published in book form for large administrative units (counties) according as the research on the unit is complete.

A concise gazetteer, *Gasaitéar na hÉireann / Gazetteer of Ireland*, was published in 1989 which, among other purposes, was intended to comply with the request of the United Nations for such a concise gazetteer. This book gives the official Irish-language and English-language form of 3,500 names of centres of population and of physical features; it gives also co-ordinates on the national grid, descriptive terms and guides to pronunciation. The International Standard Book Number of this gazetteer is 0.7076.0076.6.

## 4 GLOSSARY OF IRISH WORDS USEFUL FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF MAPS AND OF CADASTRAL PLANS

### Irish/English

Abhainn, 'river'	Galfchúrsa, 'golf course'
Aill, 'cliff'	Iascaireacht slaithe, 'angling'
Ardeaglais, 'cathedral'	Imlinte comhairde, 'contour lines'
Bealach, 'track'	Ionad dearctha, 'view point'
Bóthar, 'road'	Ionad eolais turasóireachta, 'tourist information centre'
Brú de chuid An Óige, 'Youth Hostel'	Ionad páirceála, 'parking'
Buaircíneach, 'coniferous'	Láithreán carbhán, 'caravan park'
Campáil, 'camping'	Láithreán picnicí, 'picnic site'
Coillte, 'woods'	Leithreas poiblí, 'public convenience'
Cosán dúlra, 'nature trail'	Loch, 'lough, lake'
Cosán, 'path'	Mainistir, 'abbey'
Crann teilifíse, 'television mast'	

Cuaille triantánachta,  
 'triangulation pillar'  
 Droichead coisithe, 'footbridge'  
 Duillsilteach, 'deciduous'  
 Eaglais, 'church'  
 Foirgnimh, 'buildings'

Oifig phoist, 'post office'  
 Scoil, 'school'  
 Séadchomharthaí, 'antiquities'  
 Siúlbealaí le comharthaí,  
 'waymarked walks'  
 Sruthán, 'stream'  
 Teileafón poiblí, 'public telephone'

## 5 ABBREVIATIONS USED ON MEDIUM-SCALE AND LARGE-SCALE MAPPING

Br. = Bridge / Droichead  
 Cas. = Castle / Caisleán  
 CG = Coast Guard / Garda cósta  
 CH = Club House / Clubtheach  
 Ch. = Church / Eaglais  
 Cott. = Cottage / Iostán  
 Ho. = House / Teach  
 Hosp. = Hospital / Ospidéal  
 Is. = Island / Oileán  
 L. = Lough, Lake / Loch  
 LC = Level Crossing / Crosaire  
 comhréidh  
 Lo. = Lodge / Lóiste

MS = Mile Stone / Cloch mhíle  
 Mtn = Mountain / Sliabh  
 NT = National Trust  
 P = Post Office / Oifig phoist  
 PC = Public Convenience / Leithreas poiblí  
 PH = Public House / Tábhairne  
 Pt = Point / Pointe  
 R. = River / Abhainn  
 Rds = Roads / Bóithre  
 Sch. = School / Scoil  
 Stm = Stream / Sruthán  
 TH = Town Hall / Halla baile

## 6 ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS

Traditionally Ireland comprises 32 geographical counties as shown on the accompanying outline map. Of these, the counties marked with an asterisk in the following list do not lie within the jurisdiction of the state.

### Irish/English

Ard Mhacha / Armagh\*  
 Aontroim / Antrim\*  
 Baile Átha Cliath / Dublin  
 An Cabhán / Cavan  
 Cill Chainnigh / Kilkenny  
 Cill Dara / Kildare  
 Ceatharlach / Carlow  
 Ciarraí / Kerry  
 An Clár / Clare  
 Cill Mhantáin / Wicklow  
 Corcaigh / Cork  
 Dún na nGall / Donegal  
 An Dún / Down\*  
 Doire / Derry\*  
 Fear Manach / Fermànagh\*  
 Gaillimh / Galway

An Iarmhí / Westmèath  
 Laois / Laois  
 Loch Garman / Wexford  
 Liatroim / Leitrim  
 Luimneach / Limerick  
 An Longfort / Longford  
 Lú / Louth  
 Maigh Eo / Mayo  
 An Mhí / Meath  
 Muineachán / Monaghan  
 Port Láirge / Waterford  
 Ros Comáin / Roscommon  
 Sligeach / Sligo  
 Tiobraid Árann / Tipperary  
 Tir Eoghain / Tyrone\*  
 Uíbh Fhailí / Offaly

In addition to the units listed above, other major administrative units exist in urban areas such as county boroughs, boroughs, urban districts and towns.



