

## **Statement to Public Accounts Committee**

**Stiofan Ó Cúláin Príomhfheidhmeannach, Údarás na Gaeltachta**

**9 October 2014**

A Chathaoirligh agus baill den Choiste

We thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Údarás na Gaeltachta's audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2013.

Accompanying me today are two members of our management team, Gearóid Breathnach, Financial Controller and Séamus Mac Eochaidh, Enterprise and Employment Manager.

I want to take this opportunity to give you an overview of the work of Údarás na Gaeltachta as well as a brief synopsis of the possibilities and the challenges facing us in the future.

### **Summary**

It has been recognised for some time that stabilisation of the economic base through the creation of employment is the best way to preserve the population in the Gaeltacht and that this in turn is the foundation for achieving the preservation and extension of the language, which is central to the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language.

### **Economic Impact and Employment Creation**

Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies created 611 new full-time jobs last year. At year end, total employment in Údarás client companies stood at c. 7,650 (of which 6,969 were full-time jobs and 680 were part-time jobs). Significantly, 2013 saw the lowest rate of job losses in thirty years in Gaeltacht client companies.

### **Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas**

The Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General has audited the financial statements of Údarás na Gaeltachta for the year ended 31 December 2013 under Paragraph 18 of the Údarás na Gaeltachta Act, 1979.

He has expressed the opinion that the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with applicable law. There was nothing to report in regard to those matters upon which reporting is required by exception.

**Focus for 2014/2015**

In 2014, Údarás have continued and will continue in 2015 to fund a range of enterprise development and employment creation initiatives, with a particular focus on the aquaculture, fish processing, life sciences, food, tourism and creative enterprises (media, arts, language-based/culture-based) sectors. The language planning process will continue and a range of community and local development programmes will be supported, which have the objective of up-skilling and capacity building at community level in a range of enterprise and language planning initiatives.

### **Strategic Developments & Decisions**

Particular emphasis has been placed on the development of our natural resources which are found in abundance along the Gaeltacht coastline. In order to develop the seaweed industry, for example, significant new investment and the acquisition of new scientific expertise and marketing ability is required. This was the primary driver of the decision to sell our seaweed processing subsidiary company, Arramara Teoranta, to an investing company which has the resources and the expertise to properly develop the sector, to create value added products and new employment in the Gaeltacht.

### **Summary**

Údarás's Board and Staff have the capability and motivation to create more employment and to initiate a language planning process in the Gaeltacht if the appropriate resources are available to us for this purpose.

Specifically, it is possible to create up to 1,000 additional jobs over a period of 5 years and to increase the use of Irish by 25% as a vernacular language over a period of 20 years with the appropriate budget and the necessary infrastructure being provided, particularly high-speed broadband at affordable costs, ready to occupy enterprise accommodation and having an appropriate staff structure in place from 2015 onwards.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to acknowledge the support of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, IDA Ireland, Solas and the Department of Social Protection for their support in implementing our enterprise development programme in the Gaeltacht during 2013.