

PAC-R-1676 Correspondence 3C.1 [A].
meeting 149 29/01/15.

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**BRIEFING FOR
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

2013 Appropriation Account

Vote 33

Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

21 January 2015

VOTE 33

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS, HERITAGE AND THE GAELTACHT

1. Functions and Role of Department

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht was established on 1 June 2011 on foot of the reorganisation of Government Departments announced by the Taoiseach in March 2011, bringing together functions from the then Departments of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.

The Department oversees, and has policy responsibility for the conservation, preservation, protection, development and presentation of Ireland's heritage, culture and language.

In broad terms, the Department provides funding supports to

- sustain the arts, including the film and television sector, and our national cultural institutions;
- protect and preserve our natural and built heritage, and, in that context, to address relevant EU compliance requirements;
- promote the Irish language through supporting delivery of the goals in the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030*;
- sustain employment and promote job creation in Gaeltacht regions;
- assist in maintaining sustainable communities on our offshore islands; and
- promote the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and the St. Andrew's Agreement through continued North-South co-operation across the sectoral areas falling within the Department's remit.

The Department's expenditure is important in helping to sustain and grow cultural tourism as one of the most important elements of Ireland's tourism product. In that context, it helps contribute to our economic recovery and to enhancing our national reputation.

An overview of the subheads funded in 2013, including comparable financial data in respect of 2014 (provisional outturn) and 2015 (Revised Estimates provisions) is included in the attached Appendix.

2. Key achievements in 2013

Key achievements of the Department in 2013 included the following:

Arts, Culture and Film

- Co-ordination, development and delivery of Ireland's Cultural Programme for the EU Presidency.
- Supports through the Arts Council to some 450 individuals and 470 organisations (including performance organisations, art venues, festivals, events and arts organisations) throughout the country across the range of art forms.
- Assistance from the Department to a number of regional arts infrastructure projects, including St. John's Square, Limerick, the Garage Theatre, Monaghan, and the Athlone Art Gallery and Studios.
- Delivery by the Department of a Small Arts Capital Grant scheme, with an outturn of almost €207,000, covering 29 individual projects.
- The launch, in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills, of the *Arts in Education Charter*, with a High-Level Implementation Group, chaired by Professor John Coolahan, Professor Emeritus, NUI Maynooth, appointed to oversee its implementation.
- Support through the Irish Film Board to 12 Irish feature films, 6 creative feature co-productions, 17 feature documentaries, 2 TV dramas and 8 animated projects.
- Authorisation to the Revenue Commissioners, under the Department's role in certifying projects for the Section 481 Film Tax Relief Scheme, of 66 audiovisual projects, resulting in Irish expenditure of over €183m on goods and services, which helped to maintain jobs in the film sector.
- An increase in visitor numbers to the national cultural institutions, with a total of some 3.6 million during 2013, representing a 4% increase on the 2012 figures.
- The recording by the National Museum of Ireland of a very significant milestone in 2013, when it welcomed in excess of 1m visitors across its four sites.
- The achievement by the national cultural institutions or other bodies supported by the Department of taking 7 out of 10 places on the list of Fáilte Ireland's most popular free visitor attractions in 2013.
- The advancement of actions relating to the National Gallery of Ireland, the Irish Museum of Modern Art and the Crawford Art Gallery under the Government's Public Service Reform Agenda, including preparation of draft Heads of Bill to reflect a number of reform proposals and the signing by the three galleries of a formal Service Level Agreement to promote a greater shared services approach to their activities.
- The establishment of a new Human Resources Shared Services Unit in the Department to provide HR support to the National Museum of Ireland, as well as the preparation, as part of the Government's Public Service Reform Agenda, of draft Heads of Bill to reflect a number of reform proposals relating to the National Museum of Ireland, the National Library of Ireland and the National Archives of Ireland.
- The holding of *Culture Night 2013* in 34 locations across the island of Ireland, in 3 UK cities and in Leuven in Belgium, and the establishment, for the first time, of a partnership with RTÉ in relation to the event.

Heritage

- Significant progress achieved, in conjunction with the Peatlands Council, on the development of a suite of initiatives to address peatlands policy issues - which led to the publication early in 2014 of a draft *National Peatlands Strategy*, a draft *National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) Management Plan* and a *Review of the Raised Bog Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)*.
- A 45% reduction achieved in the amount of illegal turf cutting on Ireland's 53 raised bog SACs in 2013, with some 250 plots cut on 24 protected bogs (compared to 453 plots cut in 2012 on the same number of bogs).
- 4,124 payments and 442 turf deliveries made to qualifying applicants under the Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme, with 1,692 legal agreements issued to applicants (of which 1,190 were returned during the year) and once-off incentive payments of €500 made in respect of 957 applicants.
- Delivery of a focused programme of capital works at National Parks and Nature Reserves (with expenditure of some €1.11m on over 30 discrete projects) so as to secure the conservation of our natural heritage, enhance visitor experiences and improve our tourism product offering.
- Continued progress achieved on key capital projects, including the refurbishment programme for Killarney House; works to restore the Bangor Trail; and the installation of a circular walk at Grantstown Wood and Granston Lough Nature Reserve in Co Laois.
- The commencement of *The Living City Initiative*, a targeted pilot tax incentive aimed at promoting the regeneration of urban historic areas on a pilot basis, initially in locations in six cities - Dublin, Galway, Cork, Kilkenny, Limerick and Waterford.
- Launch of the heritage-led regeneration pilot project, the *Historic Towns Initiative*, initiated in Listowel, Youghal and Westport, in partnership with Fáilte Ireland, the Heritage Council and the 3 town councils.
- The ongoing maintenance of the statutory list of recorded monuments is effected through the Department's National Monuments Service. The total number of records collated was some 150,800 at end-2013, with over 1,500 additional records added during the course of that year.

Irish Language, Gaeltacht and Islands

- Publication of a progress report on the implementation of the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030*, as well as 11 implementation plans from the relevant Departments.
- Signing of a Service Level Agreement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, giving this Department responsibility for Irish language training and proficiency testing for the civil service.
- Maintenance of 7,650 jobs (6,970 full-time and 680 part-time) in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies during 2013, with 616 new full-time jobs created during the year.
- Supports provided for transport services to 20 offshore islands, with 10 new contracts agreed during the year,

North-South Co-operation

- Delivery by Waterways Ireland on its target of ensuring that over 99% of the navigable waterways remained open during the main boating season, as well as a capital works programme, including dock wall repairs at Grand Canal Basin;; and provision of 840 metres of additional moorings.
- Sponsorship by Waterways Ireland of over 110 events, including 3 triathlons, attracting over 6,000 participants and 25,000 spectators; the *Waterways Ireland Classic Fishing Festival* on Lough Erne; the *Scarriff Harbour Festival*; and the *Waterways Ireland Docklands 2013 Summer Festival*, attracting over 80,000 people to the Grand Canal Basin in Dublin.
- Launch by Foras na Gaeilge of the online version of the new English-Irish dictionary on www.focloir.ie.
- Delivery by the Ulster-Scots Agency of support for 15 summer schools, with an outreach to over 1,000 young people.

3. Key priorities for 2015

With regard to the 2015, the Department remains committed, within the resource provision available to it, to maintaining front-line services, continuing to advance the reform process, and focusing on the contribution that it makes to supporting employment in cultural tourism and in the Gaeltacht.

The key programme activities for 2015 are set out below.

Arts, Culture and Film

Ongoing support will be provided to the national cultural institutions, where the priority will be to preserve the national collections and to maintain front-of-house services to the public, so as to ensure that these institutions can continue to draw large numbers of people, including overseas and domestic tourists. €9m in capital funding has been provided to fund the re-development of the National Gallery Historic Wings in 2015. This project will ensure that the Gallery's important collections can be shown and protected in an appropriate forum. It will also enable the Gallery to host international exhibitions and, in the longer term, to increase its contribution towards the country's cultural tourism offering

The Arts Council accounts for the largest part of the Department's current expenditure on arts and culture, which, in turn, is channelled to bodies such as the Abbey Theatre, events such as the Wexford Opera Festival and Dublin Theatre Festival and a wide range of local festivals, which are also key elements of our cultural tourism product. The Council's valuable work supporting the intrinsic cultural, tourism and economic value of the arts throughout the country is reflected in its increased 2015 allocation, which will also enable the Council to develop a specific programme around the theme of commemorations.

A provision of more than €11m has been made available to the Film Board, in recognition of its importance from both a cultural and employment perspective. One of the key reasons Ireland continues to be chosen as a film location is the work the Irish Film Board does to promote Ireland at international film and television markets. The positive impact of this work

is three-fold in terms of creating jobs in Ireland, creating spend on local goods and services, and promoting Ireland on the big and small screens to audiences of millions internationally.

The international promotion of our arts and culture through the Department's *Culture Ireland* programme will continue also.

Commemorations

Work will continue on delivering the Government's commemoration programme, with particular emphasis on *Ireland 2016*, a national initiative to mark the year of the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising, which is being rolled out during 2015 in partnership with key Departments, State agencies, local authorities and other key players.

A significant allocation of capital funding from the Arts subheads will be channelled towards a number of flagship projects aimed at providing a significant and enduring acknowledgement of the 1916 Rising and the birth of the Irish State. These include

- the development of a cultural/interpretative centre in the GPO;
- the refurbishment of Richmond Barracks as a cultural, educational, training, tourist and community facility;
- the completion of a proposed new visitor centre at Teach an Phiarsaigh, Ros Muc;
- the development of 14 Henrietta Street as a centre for the exploration of tenement life in North Inner City Dublin;
- redevelopment works at the National Concert Hall, to include the refurbishment of the Kevin Barry recital room where the Treaty Debates took place; and
- initiating phased development works at the Bishop Street HQ of the National Archives, which will provide state of the art exhibition and storage facilities.

Other commemorative events for relevant Decade of Centenaries anniversaries will also be supported.

Heritage

Within the level of resources available, priority is being given to meeting the legal requirements of the EU Habitats and Birds Directives, the maintenance of key archaeological and built heritage services, and the operation of visitor service attractions provided in national parks and reserves. There will be a particular focus on ensuring that Ireland's built and natural heritage is promoted as a key tourism asset.

Key natural heritage outputs in 2015 will focus on the operation of Ireland's 6 National Parks and 78 Nature Reserves, the monitoring of protected areas and the protection of wildlife in the countryside. Funding will also be targeted at conservation-related scientific work and reporting to meet our obligations under EU Directives, including important scientific wildlife surveys. Capital expenditure in 2015 will continue to focus on peatland protection and national park investment. The protection of Ireland's unique raised bog SACs is a key concern, as is the avoidance of fines by the European Court of Justice. Priority will continue to be given to the operation of turf cutter compensation schemes and investment in alternative turf cutting sites for affected cutters.

Built heritage priorities will be focused on providing continued support for the Heritage Council, together with the support, protection and advisory services which the Department provides for Ireland's built and archaeological heritage. This includes policy input in support of cross-Government sustainability objectives. Other built heritage capital investment will support certain activities of the Heritage Council and provide some limited funding for structures at risk and archaeological excavations.

Irish Language, Gaeltacht and the Islands

The Department will continue to prioritise the delivery of language-based supports, both within and outside of the Gaeltacht, through its various Gaeltacht Support Schemes and Irish Language Support Schemes. A dedicated fund will continue to support the implementation of the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* through a diverse range of actions. The 2015 capital provision will also allow the Department to fund, on a limited basis, the maintenance and development of language-based centres in the Gaeltacht.

In addition, the Department will continue to support the activities of Údarás na Gaeltachta, the body responsible for the implementation of the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* within the Gaeltacht. In terms of the capital resources available, the main focus will be on assisting job creation in the Gaeltacht.

The Department will also continue to provide funding for Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga to enable it to fulfil its statutory role.

Support will be provided, within the resources available, for the maintenance of transport infrastructure on the offshore islands and the continuation of lifeline transport services.

North-South Co-operation

The 2015 allocation will enable the agencies of An Foras Teanga (Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency) to continue to fulfil their statutory obligations in regard to the promotion on an all-island basis of the Irish language and the Ulster-Scots language and culture. Waterways Ireland will also be supported to deliver on its core activities and targets, which include keeping the waterways open for navigation during the main boating season, effecting improvements to waterways infrastructure and promoting increased use of the waterways for recreational purposes.

Work will also be prioritised on increasing North-South engagement across a range of actions in the areas of arts, culture, heritage and commemorations.

4. Key Challenges Facing the Department

A consequence of the significant fiscal challenge facing the country in recent times is that the level of resources available to fund the Department's programme areas has been severely curtailed. Notwithstanding the challenging fiscal environment, the Department made every effort to ensure that the delivery of its key services was not compromised

The task ahead is how best to balance the ongoing maintenance of the Department's core functions and the range of services provided to the public with the various pressures on expenditure and resources.

In that context, the Department will continue to place particular emphasis on:

- supporting jobs to the greatest extent possible - in the audio-visual and wider arts sectors and in the Gaeltacht;
- investment in the culture and heritage sectors that will also support cultural tourism as one of the most important elements of Ireland's tourism product;
- compliance with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, including investment in alternative solutions for those affected by the cessation of turf cutting in raised bog SACs; and
- supporting the protection of the built heritage, the strategic development of our National Parks and the development of our navigable waterways.

There will undoubtedly be a number of significant sectoral challenges over the coming period, including the following.

Arts, Culture and Film

- advancing the development of a new National Cultural Policy '*Culture 2025*';
- ensuring the optimal use of the resources allocated for artistic, film and cultural endeavours and the preservation, conservation and display of the movable national heritage, while continuing to give priority to maximising the potential in the arts, cultural and creative industries to create growth and jobs;
- facilitating synergies between the arts and cultural sector and other sectoral areas, most notably in the area of tourism product development and cultural tourism; and
- developing a policy framework for the promotion of Irish art abroad

Commemorations

- securing positive engagement by the public, relatives, arts & cultural organisations and other key players with the roll out and delivery of the *Ireland 2016* commemorations programme, as well as ensuring the delivery of the flagship capital commemorations projects.

Heritage

- continuing to promote Ireland's built and natural heritage resource as a key national asset, which is fundamental to our nation's well-being and attractiveness as a country;
- working effectively with all the partners - Departments and State agencies, local authorities and non-governmental organisations, local communities, the business and the farming sectors - who share ownership and responsibility for protecting the built and natural heritage;
- while recognising the importance of heritage conservation in terms of conserving the past, both for economic growth and for strengthening national cultural identity, to continue to promote its evolution as a vehicle for achieving broader ends, including urban and rural revitalisation, job creation, cultural stewardship, business incubation and sustainable tourism;
- working with relevant partners to ensure that agricultural policy and practice achieves greater compatibility with nature conservation and that Ireland is in compliance with EU law on nature conservation; and
- promoting nature conservation, not as an imposition on a traditional way of life, but as an opening up of new possibilities to appreciate the beauty of our countryside, and the rich heritage of nature, as something which we celebrate and which can bring new sources of income to local communities.

Irish Language, Gaeltacht and Islands

- continuing to implement the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language* within available resources; and
- continuing to support the provision of transport services to the offshore islands within available resources.

North-South Co-operation

- continuing to support, within available resources, the North-South Ministerial Council in its Language and Waterways sectors, given our role in co-funding and supporting the two North South implementation bodies under our remit; and
- delivering on our commitment to exploring ways of increasing the level of North/South co-operation across the full range of activities for which we have responsibility and to broadening contact with all relevant organisations and groups in Northern Ireland.

5. Bodies under the Department's Aegis

Much of the work of the Department is delivered through a range of intermediary bodies, including a number of statutory bodies and agencies funded from the Vote, as listed in the table below.

Body	Website
An Coimisinéir Teanga	www.coimisineir.ie
Arts Council	www.artscouncil.ie
Chester Beatty Library	www.cbl.ie
Crawford Gallery	www.crawfordartgallery.com
Foras na Gaeilge	www.gaeilge.ie www.forasnagaeilge.ie
Heritage Council	www.heritagecouncil.ie
Irish Film Board	www.irishfilmboard.ie
Irish Manuscripts Commission	www.irishmanuscripts.ie
Irish Museum of Modern Art	www.modernart.ie
National Archives	www.nationalarchives.ie
National Concert Hall	www.nch.ie
National Gallery of Ireland	www.nationalgallery.ie
National Library of Ireland	www.nli.ie
National Museum of Ireland	www.museum.ie
Tha Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch	www.ulsterscotsagency.com
Údarás na Gaeltachta	www.udaras.ie
Waterways Ireland	www.waterwaysireland.org

The Department has developed robust reporting arrangements with these bodies and agencies, so as to manage their performance and governance. In so doing, the Department has sought to adopt an approach that focuses on outputs and outcomes, and includes meaningful performance indicators. In this regard, a series of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) has been developed, which is agreed with the bodies and agencies in Q1 of each year. The relevant line divisions also meet with the bodies and agencies on a quarterly basis to review progress and address any issues arising.

The purpose of the SLA is to ensure firstly that resources are used in an effective and cost effective manner to deliver quality services to the public. The SLA also sets down the key deliverables for the body/agency and outlines the Department's requirements in relation to reporting arrangements for both corporate governance and financial issues. It also outlines what the body/agency can expect from the Department.

During 2013, the Department undertook a review of the implementation of the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* in the bodies funded from its Vote Group (with the exception of the North South implementation bodies, which are subject to separate compliance regimes). The Secretary General of the Department wrote to the Directors and Chief Executive Officers of the various bodies, outlining the background to the review and copying the Chair of the board. Each body was requested to complete a template comprising a detailed checklist for good practice corporate governance, which reflected the provisions of the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies*.

The Department reviewed the completed templates and supporting documentation submitted by the bodies and held follow-up meetings where necessary. Each body was presented with a draft report setting out the findings of the review and making recommendations. Some recommendations were generic and relevant to all bodies, while others were specific to reflect the unique circumstances of each body. Each of the bodies and the relevant line divisions in the Department were given an opportunity to comment on the draft findings of the individual

reviews. The composite review was completed in 2014, following which the Secretary General wrote to the Directors and Chief Executive Officers of the bodies and to the Chairs of the boards to present the findings of the review and to request the implementation of its recommendations. Each body will be requested to present a report to the Department setting out the progress achieved in implementing the recommendations in 2015.

