

**Speaking Notes for Ms. Heather Humphreys, T.D.**

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht**

**Joint Oireachtas Committee on**

**Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs**

**4 October 2017**

**Check Against Delivery**

## **Opening remarks**

- As Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to address the Committee in relation to the Performance Expenditure and Targets of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs during the first half of 2017.
- As the members are aware, responsibility for the Regional Development and Rural Affairs functions of my Department transferred to the new Department of Rural and Community Development with effect from 27 July 2017 and my Department was re-named the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht with effect from 1 August 2017.
- The report provided to the Members by my Department outlines details of performance and expenditure across all programme areas during the first half of 2017.

- The 2017 Revised Estimates provides for a gross allocation of over **€368** million for the Department of Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in 2017. In addition, a further **€13.548 million** in capital funding was carried over from the 2016 provision.
- Gross total expenditure incurred by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in the period to 30 June 2017 was €143 million - this expenditure represents 39% of the overall 2017 gross allocation.
- In addition, the sum of €3.478 million has been expended in this period in respect of the capital carryover provision from 2016.
- 2017 has been a very significant year for my Department. The heightened sense of identity, pride and goodwill generated by the very successful Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme has been harnessed and further developed as part of Creative Ireland – a whole of Government legacy initiative aligned with *Culture 2025 - Éire Ildánach* and framed within the Programme for a Partnership Government.
- The core proposition is that engagement with and participation in arts and culture drives personal and collective creativity with

significant implications for individual and societal wellbeing and achievement.

- My colleague, Government Chief Whip and Minister of State Joe McHugh and I will now speak about the highlights of each programme area during the first half of 2017. We will commence with the Arts, Culture and Film programme, and are happy to expand later on any matter that Members may wish to raise.

## Programme A: Arts, Culture and Film

- Over **€158m** is provided in 2017 for Arts, Culture and Film, with a further **€11.548m** provided by way of capital carryover.
- Total gross expenditure for Programme A up to the 30 June 2017 was €77.621m, 49% of the 2017 programme allocation.
- Due to the scale and complexity of once-off aspects of both the capital and current programmes, some adjustments have been made to allocations within this programme. For example, savings have arisen in Subhead A.7 Cultural Infrastructure and Development due to a combination of outside factors and also in Subhead A.16 Cork Event Centre which has not progressed as promptly as anticipated. Sanction has been received from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to use these savings to address emerging pressures in other programme areas.
- I have already made reference to the Creative Ireland programme but I would now like to address this initiative in a little more detail.

- As I have already mentioned, it is a whole of Government initiative, led by my Department, which places creativity at the centre of public policy.
- It aims to bring an enhanced level of coordination, focus and leadership to existing policies and initiatives across national and local government, State agencies, the arts and culture sector, Gaeltacht and Irish language organisations.
- Under the initiative, Culture Teams have been established in each Local Authority to promote culture and creativity and 31 local Culture and Creativity Plans for 2018 were published in May 2017.
- Cruinniú na Cásca, a day of cultural events and programmes was celebrated across the country on Easter Monday 2017.
- A Writers and Artists Social Welfare Pilot Programme was launched in June to make it easier for artists and writers to access social welfare supports.
- A number of launches are scheduled under the Creative Ireland Programme for later this year, including a capital investment programme for the culture and heritage sector and a Creative Children programme to enable every child in Ireland to access tuition in music, drama, art and coding - this is a joint initiative

with the Departments of Education and Children and Youth Affairs.

- The National Gallery of Ireland re-opened its doors to the public in June 2017 on completion of a €30m investment project to provide much needed environmental upgrades and new exhibition spaces.
- The public response to the new and improved spaces has been overwhelming positive, with the Gallery reporting an 89% increase in visitor numbers over the period June to August 2017 compared to 2016.
- The new Cultural and Heritage Centre at the Bank of Ireland, College Green is progressing well, with a building hand over anticipated by the end of this year. An exhibition on Seamus Heaney by the National Library of Ireland will open the Centre in 2018.
- The design phase of the phased capital investment plan for the Kildare Street premises of the Library is underway in partnership with OPW.
- I was very pleased to announce over €10m in funding under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme in 2017 - 62 arts and culture centres across the country benefitted from funding under Strands

1 and 2 of the scheme which I announced in February while a further 60 local arts organisations benefitted under Strand 3 of the Scheme which I announced in August 2017.

- Our National Cultural Institutions continued to attract large number of visitors through their doors to sample the many and varied treasures on display – total visitors in the first half of 2017 were just under 1.7 million.
  
- I am happy to expand on any issues Members would like to raise in respect of this programme area before proceeding.

## Programme B: Heritage

- Funding of over **€45.5m** has been made available for my Department's Heritage Programme. This includes **€35.7m** allocated for current expenditure; **€9.8m** for capital expenditure and a further sum of **€2m** by way of capital carryover.
- Total gross expenditure for Programme B up to the 30 June 2017 was €7.102m, 16% of the 2017 programme allocation.
- In addition, approval has been received from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to apply capital savings of €4m to Subhead B.5 Natural Heritage (National Parks and Wildlife Service). This additional funding is being used in part to meet the costs arising in 2017 of Government agreed compensation for turf cutters affected by measures implemented to support compliance with the EU Habitats Directive and as well as to provide for essential works at our National Parks and Reserves.
- Sanction has also been received to apply further capital savings of €2m to meet additional demand under Built Heritage Schemes.
- The first half of 2017 has been extremely busy at the National Parks and Reserves, with visitor numbers for the full year expected to exceed 3 million.

- The development of the strategic partnership with Fáilte Ireland in regard to the national parks continued apace in the first six months of the year as did the planned programmes of investment.
- A highlight of that investment was the opening to the public for the very first time of the historic rooms at Killarney House. Since officially opening the rooms on 4 July over 17,000 visitors have seen them.
- Work on our outdoor recreation facilities at the Parks also continued, with several extensions to trails and other visitor amenities.
- National Monuments sites operated on my Department's behalf by the Office of Public Works have also enjoyed a record year, with visitor numbers set to exceed 3.2 million. There is also a strategic investment partnership with Fáilte on our national monuments and capital funding is now going into much needed improvements in visitor facilities and interpretation at key sites.
- Work in relation to the natural environment also continues and I look forward to publishing the National Biodiversity Action Plan tomorrow at the Botanic Gardens.

- I should also mention the work on international compliance, particularly in relation to SACs. Indeed, it was my privilege in the last number of weeks to launch the Living Bog project which will oversee the rehabilitation of significant tranches of raised bog in the midland region.
- This year will be a historic year for investment by my Department in built heritage and over €4 million (leveraging a further €3 million) will be invested by the end of this year in important heritage buildings and structures.
- My Department has also progressed work on a national heritage plan and I look forward to reverting to the committee on that matter in due course.

## **Programme C: Irish Language Gaeltacht and the Islands**

My colleague, Minister of State Joe McHugh TD, will speak about the relevant aspects of the Gaeltacht, Irish Language and Islands estimate.

## Programme D: North-South Co-operation

- Turning now to **North-South Co-Operation**, a provision of more than **€38.6** is made available in 2017 to support the two North-South implementation bodies, An Foras Teanga (comprising Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency) and Waterways Ireland.
- These are also subject to the approval of the North/South Ministerial Council.
- Total gross expenditure for Programme D up to the 30 June 2017 was €16.192m, 42% of the 2017 programme allocation.
- Approval has been received from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to apply capital savings of €2m to Waterways Ireland to provide for essential works to the waterways network at a range of locations.
- Our waterways heritage is an essential component of Ireland's unique selling point and Waterways Ireland's programme of maintenance, investment and marketing of these hugely important and historic bodies of water is critical in this regard.

- I am happy to expand on any issues Members would like to raise.

ENDS