



**An Roinn
Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta**
**Department of
Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht**

Oifig an Ard-Rúnaí
Office of the Secretary General

PAC32-R-2588 B Meeting 05/12/2019

Mr. Kieran Lenihan
Clerk to the Public Accounts Committee
Committee of Public Accounts
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2
D02 XR20

27 November 2019

Dear Mr Lenihan,

I refer to the Committee's letter of November 13th regarding the PAC meeting of November 7th 2019 at which the post-project review of the Pálás Cinema project was discussed. The review was published in October alongside the Budget as part of the 2019 Spending Review by the Department of Expenditure and Reform. The Committee requested further information on following:

1. An update on the implementation of the recommendations listed on page 3 of the review, and;
2. A note on considerations given to the matter of the four empty properties immediately adjacent to Pálás cinema.

In relation to the first request, the review was completed in September 2019 and published alongside the Budget on 8 October. Work has already commenced to implement the recommendations, listed on page 3 of the review. This builds on strengthened governance arrangements which have been introduced in the Department following an increased capital allocation to this Department under Project Ireland 2040, and on foot of the C&AG findings, and PAC recommendations in relation to Pálás. Key developments are as follows:

1. As part of Project Ireland 2040, the National Development Plan has committed €1.2bn in capital funding to the Department, which includes funding to invest in cultural infrastructure.

23 Sráid Chill Dara, Baile Átha Cliath 2
Guthán: (01) 631 3809
Facs: (01) 676 4334
Íosghlao: 1890 273000 - lasmuigh de
limistéar 01
Gréasán: www.chg.gov.ie
R-phost: ard.runai@chg.gov.ie

23 Kildare Street, Dublin 2, D02 TD30
Tel: (01) 631 3809
Fax: (01) 676 4334
Lo-call: 1890 273000 - outside 01 area
Web: www.chg.gov.ie
E-mail: secretary.general@chg.gov.ie

Recognising the significant scale of the investment proposed over the ten-year period and building on lessons learned from previous projects such as Pálás, it is critical that the Department develop the required capacity to deliver this investment in the most efficient and cost-effective manner to ensure value for money for the exchequer. To this end, the Department has established a new Project Ireland 2040 Unit, which is providing rigorous appraisal and evaluation of capital projects under Project Ireland 2040, in line with the Public Spending Code.

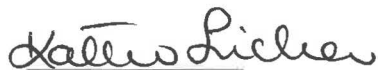
2. This includes the consideration of all available options prior to committing funding to a project as well as an evaluation of the financial and economic implications of a project in advance of the project proceeding.
3. New arrangements have been put in place whereby all recommendations arising out of reviews - such as this review - undertaken by the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service Evaluation Unit will be tracked through the Department's annual Quality Assurance Process (QAP). The QAP monitors all Departments' compliance with the Public Spending Code. The QAP is signed off at Secretary General level and submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and is then published. The Department will use the Quality Assurance Process (QAP) process as a tool to monitor implementation of recommendations on an annual basis, thereby reinforcing the value of evaluations and ensuring high levels of compliance.
4. Training in the Public Spending Code is mandatory for all staff involved in grant management. A training course on the Public Spending Code has been developed and delivery commenced in November with training for staff in the Department's Galway offices and is being rolled out the next six months to cover all Departmental locations.
5. In relation to the development of performance metrics, the Department's Evaluation Unit is undertaking research on performance metrics with a view to updating existing indicators and developing new measures where required. This process will encompass all programme areas in the Department as well as the agencies under the Department's aegis.

While the Review is only completed and published within the last two months, I can assure the Committee that the Department is working to progress all of its recommendations as a matter of priority.

Regarding the Committee's second query in relation to the four properties immediately adjacent to Pálás cinema, these are owned by Galway City Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht does not have any involvement in the plans for those properties. These were referred to in the review in the context of the of plans by Galway City Council, as set out in their strategy "*Everybody Matters A Cultural Sustainability Strategy Framework For Galway 2016-2025*", to develop those properties as artists' studios and residences, which was considered as a positive development. I understand that Galway City Council will bring forward proposals for the use of the terrace of houses in early 2020.

I trust that the information provided is of use to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Katherine Licken".

Katherine Licken
Secretary General