

Speaking Notes
for Mr. Sean Kyne, T.D.,
Minister of State at the
Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on
Regional Development, Rural Affairs, Arts and the Gaeltacht,
28 September 2016

Thank you.

Approximately **€51.2m** has been allocated in 2016 to the Programme for Irish, the Gaeltacht and the Islands. This includes current funding of **€34.3m** as well as **€16.87m** in capital expenditure. Overall expenditure to 30th June 2016 under Programme C amounted to €16.1m, 40% of the provision for 2016. By the 31st August 2016, this had increased to €23.314 million, or 50% of the provision for 2016.

Included in this is funding for a range of language-centred programmes and organisations, whose aim is to promote the Irish language as the main household and community language of the Gaeltacht in the context of the implementation of the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language.

20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language

In relation to the Strategy itself, it is of course the foundation for my Department's approach to Irish and the Gaeltacht. There is over €11m available to be spent this year on the Irish language and Gaeltacht Support Schemes in order to support

- the implementation of the Strategy both within the Gaeltacht and outside of it, especially the development of the language planning process under the Gaeltacht Act;
- the promotion of Irish in the digital sector; and
- the completion of the plan to end the Irish-language derogation in the European Union.

In addition, the amount allocated for the Strategy itself almost doubled from €551,000 in 2015 to €1m in 2016. This budget will help my Department to progress the wide range of measures and initiatives relating to the provision of support under the Strategy and under the language planning process.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

An increased provision of €18.51m has been made available to Údarás na Gaeltachta this year to assist them in achieving their employment and language targets in the Gaeltacht. As the Committee is aware, through the Revised Estimates process I secured extra funding of €1m in Údarás na Gaeltachta's capital budget earlier this year. In addition, I am pleased to say that I

have been given approval to provide a further €1m to Údarás this year in capital funding. This will undoubtedly enable the organisation to progress some of the capital projects that they currently have underway, which means that the jobs which already exist will be protected and, at the same time, new jobs can be created - it is expected that 500 new jobs will be created in Gaeltacht areas this year.

I should also refer to the visitors' centre being built at Pearse Cottage in Ros Muc as part of the Government's Ireland 2016 Commemorations. I understand from Údarás na Gaeltachta, which is responsible for the completion of the project, that they are confident the construction and fit-out work will be finished by the end of October 2016. It is also expected that the new centre will be officially opened in November.

Islands

In relation to the offshore islands, my Department provides current and capital funding, including funding for transport services to 19 islands comprising passenger and cargo ferry services and air services. Of course, the Aran Islands' air service has been in the news a lot in recent times and a tender process is currently underway, led by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP), for a four-year contract for those islands. I am pleased that I could announce this week that the current contract is being extended by three months to the end of the year.

Regarding capital, I am pleased to say that a fund will be made available in the coming years to develop the pier at Inis Oírr - an important project for the island's community. It pleases me also that this week I was in a position to offer €6m to Galway County Council as a final resolution to the demands for extra expenditure to cover development works carried out some years ago on the piers at An Caladh Mór and Kilronan. This year my Department has continued to fund relevant local authorities so that they could undertake infrastructure projects on the islands - such as improvement works to roads and quays. A sum of €6.644m is available under the capital budget in 2016, a significant increase on the sum available in 2015.

