

Opening Statement

Joint Committee on Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht

13.30, 29 May 2019

1. Introduction

Thank you chair.

I am grateful for the opportunity to attend this session of the Joint Committee and to discuss the Department's work in relation to our Statement of Strategy and the implementation of our investment programme under Project Ireland 2040- *Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage*. I look forward to the discussion ahead and hearing the views of the Committee members.

I would first like to introduce my colleagues here with me today.

Conor Falvey is the Assistant Secretary with responsibility for our Culture programme encompassing Culture Policy, oversight of the National Cultural Institutions, Culture Ireland, the Creative Ireland Programme, the Audio-visual Action Plan among other areas.

Niall Ó Donnchú is the Assistant Secretary for the Heritage Division which includes responsibility for the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the National Monument Service, the Heritage Council, our National Parks and Nature Reserves, as well as support for all aspects of our built and natural heritage.

Representing the Gaeltacht and Island communities, as well as promoting the use of the Irish language outside of the Gaeltacht are Mícheál O Conaire (Príomhoifigeach, An Ghaeilge taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht), Sorcha de Brúch (Príomhoifigeach, Oileáin, Foras Teanga agus Logainmneacha) and Seán Mac Eoin (Príomhoifigeach, Gaeltacht agus Pleanáil Teanga).

2. Overview of the Department

The Department plays a key role in protecting, preserving and promoting Ireland's culture, language, built and archaeological heritage, as well as our biodiversity and unique landscapes. It encompasses a wide range of functions from support for the arts and culture, to conservation and safeguarding of our biodiversity, to supporting sustainable communities. Its remit also extends to Ireland's global identity and national well-being, as well as fostering enterprise and tourism development.

The work of the Department speaks directly to our understanding of ourselves, to our national identity. It anchors us to our past, through our safeguarding of our cultural, built and archaeological heritage, gives context to our present, through the Department's Decade of Centenaries Programme, and sets out the values we want to protect in our future, through our National Heritage Plan – Heritage 2030, among others.

The Department is also a key driver of well-being across Government, through opportunities to experience and participate in arts and culture, to engage with our natural environment in our National Parks, and to appreciate our language and heritage.

It occupies a unique space within Government with its very broad policy and programme remit, as well as a presence in every part of the country in our national parks and monuments, in cultural centres, schools and local authorities, and through our direct involvement in Gaeltacht and Island communities.

The Department delivers on its broad remit to support and promote culture and creativity in Ireland in partnership with the eight National Cultural Institutions, the Arts Council and Screen Ireland. It works closely with the Heritage Council and Waterways Ireland to protect and safeguard our built, archaeological and natural heritage. In supporting and sustaining Gaeltacht communities, it works with Údarás na Gaeltachta, while also partnering with Foras na Gaeilge in promoting the Irish language more generally. An Coimisinéir Teanga, which has a statutory role to play in safeguarding the Irish language, also falls within the aegis of the Department.

Our work engages directly with communities across the country, through the work of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the National Monuments Service, and our colleagues in Gaeltacht Division. We work directly with and through local authorities, most recently to deliver on a national programme of fostering creative communities.

3. Statement of Strategy – Functions & Structure

Our Statement of Strategy, covering the period 2018 to 2020, was prepared in accordance with the Public Service Management Act following the appointment of Minister Josepha Madigan to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. We are now just over one year into its implementation.

The Department's overarching mission is to *promote, nurture and develop Ireland's arts, culture and heritage; to support and promote the use of the Irish language; and to facilitate the development of the Gaeltacht and islands*. Our core functions are:

- to provide policy and funding support for the development of the arts, culture and creativity, including cultural infrastructure development;
- to provide oversight of Ireland's National Cultural Institutions;
- to protect and preserve Ireland's natural heritage in line with national and EU legislation, national policies and strategies, and to support sustainable development;
- to preserve our built heritage as part of the regeneration of our cities, towns, villages and countryside, in accordance with the principles and values of Project Ireland 2040, and to protect our unique archaeological heritage;
- to support the Irish language and strengthen its use as the principal community language of the Gaeltacht;

- to assist in the sustainable development of island communities, including through the provision of transport links, and
- to promote North South co-operation through the work of Waterways Ireland and An Foras Teanga.

These functions are translated into action through a number of policies and strategies. These include Culture 2025, the Audio-visual Action Plan, the 20 year strategy for the Irish Language and associated 5-year action plan, the Tourism Interpretive Master Plan for the National Parks, the National Biodiversity Action Plan, and Heritage 2030 which is at consultation stage.

To deliver on this policy framework, we structure our work across three policy divisions supported by a corporate division. These are – Culture Division, Heritage Division and Gaeltacht Division. Each division is led by an Assistant Secretary or Director and we meet weekly as a management board to oversee and monitor our progress.

4. High level goals and Departmental priorities

Each division has responsibility for a particular high-level goal or goals under the Statement of Strategy.

Goal A which falls to our Culture Division provides that the Department will support and develop engagement with, and in, arts, culture and creativity by individuals and communities' thereby enriching individual and community well-being, and to promote Ireland's arts and culture globally.

Goal B which relates to the work of our Heritage Division sets out to conserve, protect, manage and present our built and natural heritage for its intrinsic value and as an inspiration to creativity and environmental appreciation as well as a support to local communities, regional economic development and sustainable employment

Goals C and D rest with our Gaeltacht Division and provide that we will support the use of the Irish language throughout Ireland, will strengthen its use as the principal community language of the Gaeltacht, and will facilitate the sustainable development of island communities.

And Goal E which involves both Gaeltacht and Heritage Divisions provides that we will work to promote North-South cooperation, particularly through the work of an Foras Teanga and Waterways Ireland.

Core to the delivery of these strategies will be the development and enhancement of our cultural, linguistic and heritage infrastructure under the Department's €1.2 billion programme of investment for *Project Ireland 2040*. Other priority areas for the Department are the delivery of supports for the arts and culture, including the audio visual sector, the delivery of the Creative Ireland Programme to promote individual, community and national wellbeing, and the completion of the *Decade of Centenaries* commemorative programme. In the Heritage area, we are in the process of developing a new national heritage plan, *Heritage 2030*, on protecting, preserving and promoting national heritage into the future. We have just completed a comprehensive consultation and will be developing the plan in due course. Our activity on the Irish language will continue to focus on implementing the five year action plan for progressing the 20 year strategy for the language.

5. Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 represents a once in a generation opportunity for the Department to protect, preserve and enhance our cultural, linguistic and heritage infrastructure. It has the potential to be a transformative investment; conserving our unique culture and heritage and enhancing opportunities to experience it, while also stimulating tourism and our local economies.

The Department's investment plan under Project Ireland 2040 is an important vehicle in delivering these sustainable communities, valuing our built heritage through regenerating town centres, creating spaces for people to express themselves artistically or through the Irish language, while also providing direct supports for the development of local enterprise.

It has also been transformative for the Department, bringing together for the first time all aspects of our heritage – cultural, linguistic, built and natural – under a single programme of investment with an holistic vision.

A cornerstone of the Department's investment programme is the €460 million that has been set aside for the regeneration of the National Cultural Institutions.

This year we have made progress on a number of key projects. We will see the completion of phase 1 of the National Library and the commencement of subsequent phases. There has also been significant progress on the National Archives project, which will complete the decanting of its collection this month to facilitate the construction phase. I understand that we will see that project tender completed this year.

The Department continues to progress other projects through the appraisal and evaluation stages of the project lifecycle, including the Natural History Museum and the Crawford Gallery in Cork. We also support the development and enhancement of regional cultural infrastructure through a number of schemes and initiatives.

In terms of our culture and creativity programme, we have a major new strategy on the audio-visual industry which is guiding the €200 million Project Ireland investment in expanding this vital creative industry. This year alone, the Department will provide funding support of over €16 million to Screen Ireland to deliver on this strategy and to support the Government's ambition to develop Ireland as a global hub for the production of film, TV drama and animation.

We are looking forward to the launch of Galway 2020 in September, as our European Capital of Culture. Although it has been through some difficult times, a feature which is common among many Capitals of Culture, the programme will be ambitious and will commence in late 2019.

A further strand of our programme under Project Ireland is the investment of €285 million over ten years in our built and natural heritage.

An important delivery vehicle for this investment is the tourism interpretative masterplan for key tourist sites and heritage amenities in our national parks, in partnership with Fáilte Ireland. This will

see us leverage our investment to maximise the value for money of projects across the Parks and Reserves network for the enjoyment of the 4 million visitors every year. We are also working closely with colleagues in the Department of Rural and Community Development on investing in a wide range of new trails and other visitor amenities in our National Parks and Nature reserves.

In addition to work on our National Parks and Wildlife Reserves we are working to deliver on commitments to protect our Built Heritage through the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and Historic Structure Fund which leverage private funding, local authority structures and central government grants to protect our built heritage while utilising local craft and construction resources.

The National Planning Framework under Project Ireland specifically recognised the importance of protecting our unique Gaeltacht and Island communities, underpinned by a funding provision of €178 million to 2027. In this regard, we are working to deliver key capital actions in the 5 year action plan for the Irish Language, while also supporting Údarás na Gaeltachta in fostering enterprise and supporting communities across the Gaeltacht. Údarás will invest some €10 million in these communities this year.

In addition, we are working in partnership with Dublin City Council, Conradh na Gaeilge and others to develop a flagship Irish Language and Culture Centre in Dublin City Centre. The project has recently completed its feasibility study and is preparing to go to planning.

Over the lifetime of the Project Ireland, we will invest in a number of piers projects to enhance access to our island communities. These are complex projects which require significant planning in terms of environmental impact, sustainable development, and community engagement. They are also some of the most complex in terms of construction, given their location and often challenging sea conditions.

This is just a snapshot of what we are seeking to deliver and progress throughout the year and into 2020. We continue to work closely with colleagues in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the overall management and oversight of the programme.

6. Organisational Capability Review – ensuring we have the capability to deliver

With the growing ambition for the Department under Project Ireland 2040, we need to ensure that the Department is capable of delivering on these ambitions. To that end, we have undergone an organisational capability review over the past six months. This review process, part of a wider Civil Service Renewal initiative, has seen us look closely at our capabilities in terms of demonstrating leadership in our sectors, developing policy and strategy, and implementing and evaluating our work. The review was undertaken by a team from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, with our support, and was overseen by an independent External Review Panel. It is at the final stages of drafting and will be presented to Government once finalised. This has been a useful experience, and one which will enable us to enhance the Department's capability to deliver on its Statement of Strategy.

7. Conclusion

Increasingly, it is clear just how broadly our work impacts on the lives of everyone in Ireland, as well as on how we view ourselves and how we present ourselves on a global stage. With such a broad remit, our collaborative approach with our National Cultural Institutions and agencies, with other Government Departments, with our North South Bodies and across the Public Sector continues to be essential to the delivery of the high level goals of our Statement of Strategy and Project Ireland 2040.

I thank you for your time and attention.