



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

**Speaking Notes for Ms. Josepha Madigan, T.D.**

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

**Joint Oireachtas Committee on**

**Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht**

**2 October 2019**

## **Opening remarks**

As Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the Committee in relation to the 2019 Mid-Year Review of Expenditure for my Department.

The functions and responsibilities of my Department are many and diverse, ranging from support for the arts and culture, to conservation and safeguarding of our heritage and language, to supporting sustainable island communities.

2019 has been a very busy year for my Department with many notable achievements including a new impetus to the promotion of our culture and creativity, both at home and abroad.

The work of the agencies under the remit of my Department such as the Arts Council, our National Cultural Institutions and Screen Ireland goes from strength to strength, with innovative exhibitions, inclusive education and outreach programmes and an ever growing diversity of creative engagement initiatives.

In addition, ambitious capital investment projects as part of Project Ireland 2040 are either underway or planned at many of these agencies.

A number of programmes and projects funded and/or managed directly by my Department also continue to yield very positive results – for example, the work of Culture Ireland; the expansion of the Per Cent for Arts Scheme; the extension of the Social Welfare Scheme for Self Employed Artists in conjunction with the Department of Social and Family Affairs; the expansion of the Creative Schools initiative in

partnership with the Department of Education and Skills and the ongoing development of Cruinniú na nÓg – the first national day celebrating children and young people’s creativity.

The new national heritage plan, Heritage Ireland 2030, will guide our heritage priorities and investment over the next decade and beyond. In March of this year, a series of 70 public workshops in relation to the Plan came to a conclusion. There was an unprecedented level of response and engagement, with over 2,000 organisations and individuals making submissions on what heritage means to them.

The need to address heritage impacts, the loss of biodiversity and the erosion of our heritage in general are very strong themes to emerge from this consultative process, as is a strong call for support for education and youth engagement with heritage. The analysis of the submissions is ongoing within my Department, laying the foundations for what will become the overarching policy for Ireland’s built and natural heritage for years to come.

In terms of our language and islands, good progress continues to be recorded on the implementation of the Five Year Action Plan for the Irish Language; and supports for the Irish language and our Gaeltacht and island communities continue to be provided and enhanced to the greatest extent possible.

This year has also seen progress on a number of key projects under my Department's investment plan as part of Project Ireland 2040. I spoke to Committee members earlier this year about the potential transformative impact of this investment plan, bringing together all aspects of our

culture and our heritage – built, natural and linguistic – under a single programme of investment with an holistic vision.

As Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, I look forward to continuing progress under this Investment Plan and indeed across all strands of my Department's work programme during the remainder of the year and into future years.

In terms of my appearance here today, the Members have been provided with a report by my Department outlining details of performance and expenditure across all programme areas during the first half of 2019.

The 2019 Revised Estimates provides for a gross allocation of just under **€339** million for the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in 2019. In addition, a further **€700,000** in capital funding was carried over from the 2018 provision.

Gross total expenditure incurred by my Department in the period to 30 June 2019 was €153.2 million - this expenditure represents 94% of profiled expenditure and 45% of the overall 2019 gross allocation. In addition, the capital carryover sum of €700,000 was expended in full.

This expenditure has increased to €205.7 million as at 31 August 2019 representing 97% of profiled expenditure and 61% of the 2019 gross allocation for my Department.

My colleague, Minister of State Seán Kyne T.D., and I will now speak about the highlights of each programme area during the first half of

2019. I will commence with the Culture programme, and am happy to expand later on any matter that Members may wish to raise.

## **Programme A: Culture**

Total funding of just under **€189m** is provided in 2019 for the Culture programme area. 95% of this funding, some €180 million is used to directly support arts and culture in Ireland.

Gross direct programme expenditure for Culture up to the 30 June 2019 was €86.4m, representing 48% of the corresponding 2019 programme allocation. This percentage had increased to 63% (€113.56m) as at 31 August.

As Committee members will be aware, a cornerstone of my Department's culture investment programme under **Project Ireland 2040** is the €460 million that is being set aside for the renovation of the National Cultural Institutions, the protection of the national collections and the enhancement of visitor experiences and services.

Whilst much of the work in 2019 continues to be focussed on the appraisal, planning and design of projects, the first phase of enabling works to prepare for the National Archives' Repository Redevelopment was completed earlier this year, with much of the State's papers and documents being moved to temporary storage in order to facilitate the preliminary site works. The project is intended to deliver new purpose-built storage facilities at the National Archives premises in Bishop Street, Dublin 8 and will build-in the potential to develop and construct additional storage in the future.

In terms of our **audio-visual industry**, European Commission approval was received to extend the Section 481 Film tax credit for 4 years, from its original end date of 31 December 2020 to 31 December 2024. This

will provide certainty for production companies regarding the future availability of the credit and helps to ensure the Irish film industry continues to grow.

Also in support of this Government's ambition to make Ireland a global hub for the production of Film, TV Drama and Animation new film regulations aimed at supporting broader regional development of the audio-visual sector in Ireland were introduced by the Revenue Commissioners earlier this year. The Regional Film Development Uplift, announced as part of Budget 2019, will be available to productions being substantially undertaken in areas designated as assisted regions obliging production companies to make training and skills development a key part of their projects, and ensuring our film industry will benefit from the additional activity long after these productions have concluded.

**Cruinniú na nÓg** – the first national day celebrating children and young people's creativity – took place again in June this year with a programme of over 750 free creative activities for under 18's across the country. Although only in its second year, the initiative under my Department's Creative Ireland programme is already a great success and a firm fixture in the Culture calendar. Its success is due in no small part to the really impressive range of events for all ages and interests curated by the *Culture and Creativity teams* across the 31 Local Authorities.

Events included workshops, exhibitions and performances and were kicked off by our Cruinniú na nÓg ambassadors– **Sarah Fitzgerald** in Cork, **Adam Cunningham** in Galway city and **Ben de Barra's** first film *The Happy Garden* premiered in Dublin as part of Cruinniú.

2019 has also seen the appointment of **Cultural Ambassadors** from Ireland's arts and culture community to promote Ireland globally as part of the Government's Global Ireland 2025 initiative and to provide advice and input on strategic cultural initiatives and participate in key events and projects.

**Martin Hayes, Shelley McNamara, Yvonne Farrell, Ruth Negga and Paul Muldoon** all accepted the role of Cultural Ambassador in January of this year for a period of three years. I greatly appreciate each Cultural Ambassador's acceptance of the role. In continuing to do what they do best, they will be among Ireland's greatest representatives globally.

At the start of this year, I was pleased to announce the publication of the guidance of the **Expert Advisory Group on Decade of Centenaries (1919 – 1923)**. Consistent with this advice, I am committed to ensuring that the State's approach to remembering all of those who lost their lives during the Independence Struggle, and the significant events and themes associated with this period, will be based on the respectful, sensitive, proportionate and authentic approach that has become the hallmark of my Department's Decade of Centenaries commemorative programme

The collaborative approach between the State, local authority network and community organisations to the commemorative programme has been critical in its successful delivery to date and to this end I was very pleased to be able to announce a funding allocation of €10,000 for every local authority in 2019, to support their role in leading the development of commemorative activities at county level under the **Community Strand of the Decade of Centenaries programme**.

Finally, in terms of the Culture programme, it would be remiss of me not to mention **Galway 2020 European Capital of Culture**. I was very pleased to launch the Cultural Programme under Galway 2020 last month. The programme presents a wealth of artistic talent inspired by and nurtured in Ireland, as well as the work of artists from other cultures. It represents both Galway city and county, including the islands, as well as spreading across Ireland and adopting an all-Ireland approach.

Galway 2020 is supported by Government through my Department. It is recognised not alone as an EU event but also one which fits within the Government's Global Ireland initiative which aims to increase Ireland's global profile by 2025. The programme promises to be an exciting one, including many free events, and will hopefully attract visitors from around the world who will experience first-hand the many and varied aspects of Irish culture.

I am happy to expand on any issues Members would like to raise in respect of this programme area before proceeding.

## **Programme B: Heritage**

Total funding of over **€54m** has been made available for my Department's Heritage Programme area in 2019. This includes **€38.7m** allocated for current expenditure and **€15.4m** for capital expenditure.

Total gross Heritage programme expenditure up to the period ending 30 June 2019 was just under **€10m**. This figure had increased to just over **€13m** as at 31 August 2019. The rate of expenditure is slower than anticipated due to a number of timing issues which are expected to resolve before year end.

Ireland's first **National Biodiversity Conference** took place at Dublin Castle in February of this year, and attracted over 500 delegates and 4,500 live streamers. Jointly organised by my Department and the Irish Forum for Natural Capital, the event brought together all key stakeholders from Government, public bodies, business and NGOs to identify measures to help reverse biodiversity loss and implement *the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 – 2021*.

The momentum generated by the conference was sustained by the publication of the interactive report from the conference by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department on 22<sup>nd</sup> May last, the **International Day for Biodiversity**.

The report details the conference charter, '*Seeds for Nature*', which includes a suite of commitments from 14 Government Departments, state agencies, businesses and NGOs that go above and beyond current work

programmes to take action for nature and support the implementation of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021.

The work of the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** of my Department continued apace in 2019, with responsibility for the ongoing management of some 87,000 hectares across our National Parks and Nature Reserve network. Annually, these parks and reserves attract 4 million visitors and support a broad range of enterprise and employment opportunities for the communities in which they are situated.

A new **twinning arrangement** has been established between the National Parks and Wildlife Service (**NPWS**) and **Parks Canada** to connect Connemara National Park and the Marconi Station in Ireland respectively with Terra Nova National Park and Signal Hill National Historic Site in Newfoundland and Labrador. The twinning arrangement will promote bilateral cooperation and exchanges for the mutual benefit of these national parks and historic sites, which have an important role in habitat protection and the conservation of iconic species, as well as in cultural heritage of both countries.

**Connemara National Park** is set for major development in the coming years, largely due to significant funding from Fáilte Ireland and this twinning arrangement. This Park has seen an increase in visitor numbers this year of nearly 5% from last year and the Visitor Centre is to remain open all year round, for the first time ever this year in response to its increased popularity.

His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales, again enjoyed the magnificence of our national parks this year when he visited Wicklow Mountains

National Park in May. Wicklow Mountains National Park is Ireland's largest National Park covering over 22,000 hectares of the Wicklow uplands, comprising mainly bog and heath with smaller areas of native woodland, mountain streams.

Our historic buildings and structures remain a vital part of our unique heritage. While the primary responsibility to care for and maintain our built heritage structures rests with the owner, the **Built Heritage Investment Scheme** and the **Structures at Risk Fund** funded by my Department and administered by local authorities, invest essential capital in our built heritage.

478 heritage projects across every county in the country will benefit from a combined €4.3m under this year's *Historic Structures Fund (HSF)* and *Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS)*.

The funding will support the owners and custodians of historic and protected structures as they carry out hundreds of small-scale, labour-intensive projects to repair and conserve our historic built environment. These projects provide vital support for local jobs in conservation, traditional skills and construction.

The Heritage Council is once again working in partnership with the Department to administer to **Historic Towns Initiative** in 2019. Six historic towns will share in €1million in capital funding in 2019, supporting programmes of heritage-led regeneration and bringing economic benefits to help our historic towns to prosper through increased visitor numbers and decreased numbers of vacant buildings and commercial premises

All of these initiatives will work towards ensuring that our historic buildings remain alive and in use so that they are ultimately handed on to future generations in better condition than we found them.

I am happy to expand on any issues Members would like to raise in respect of this programme area before my colleague, Minister of State Seán Kyne TD, will speak about the relevant aspects of the Gaeltacht, Irish Language and Islands programme area.

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

Minister of State Seán Kyne TD

I welcome this opportunity to address the Committee today on issues relating both to Programme C of the Department relating to the Irish Language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands and Programme D relating to Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency.

Total expenditure for Programme C at 30 June 2019 was €18.4m. Current expenditure at mid-year was €13.6m or 99% of profile and 37% of the overall allocation for 2019, while capital expenditure amounted to €4.8m or 70% of profile and 36% of the overall allocation.

In terms of our language, good progress continues to be recorded on the implementation of the **Five Year Action Plan for the Irish Language**, with the first annual progress report currently being prepared for publication.

Regarding the **language planning process**, of the 26 Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, 16 plans have been approved with a target of 23 to be approved by year end.

Significant progress has also been made with the drafting of the **Official Languages (Amendment) Bill**, while the schedule to the 2003 Act has been updated for the first time since 2006 and is currently proceeding through the Houses.

The **Report from the European Commission to the European Council** on the Union institutions' progress towards the implementation of the gradual reduction of the Irish language derogation was published in July and I updated cabinet on the report shortly afterwards. The report was broadly positive, noting that:

- The first two increments towards ending the derogation have been implemented in full;
- Significant progress has been made in all aspects of the action plan aimed at ending the derogation;
- While the rate of progress in terms of recruitment of permanent staff has been lower than expected, the institutions are committed to bringing the derogation to an end;
- Delivery to date has been greatly facilitated by Ireland's commitment and cooperation.

Finally, the first meeting of the newly established **Interdepartmental Committee on Island Development** took place last week and was attended by representatives from a range of Government Departments. A wide ranging consultation process will now be undertaken to inform the development of the policy and action plan.

With regard to Programme D, the important work of both **Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency** has continued to benefit communities from both traditions on the island this year and the spend to mid-year is in line with the profile agreed.

## **Programme D: North-South Co-operation**

Finally, a provision of **€40.4m** is made available in 2019 to support the North South Co-operation programme area. 95% of this funding is used to support initiatives by 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 programme expenditure under North South Co-operation up to the period ending 30 June 2019 was just over €19m, representing 50% of the 2019 programme allocation.

This expenditure had increased to €25.3m as at 31 August 2019.

**Waterways Ireland** continues to focus on delivering its core activities and maintaining front line services.

In addition to the organisation's statutory function, Waterways Ireland has a strong community and business outreach and partnership policy which it continues to implement in 2019.

As part of this policy, Waterways Ireland continues to engage with and deliver services for communities adjacent to the waterways to create social, recreational, health and economic benefits.

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

ENDS