

General Scheme of the Tailte Éireann Bill 2020

Briefing for Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage

16 September 2021

OPENING STATEMENT

(Ms Emma Reeves, Principal Officer, Housing, Local Government and Heritage)

Good morning and thank you for the invitation to brief the Committee. My name is Emma Reeves. I'm a Principal Officer in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage with responsibility for the project leading to the establishment of Tailte Éireann. I am accompanied by Mary Hurley, Assistant Secretary of the Department Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

We welcome the opportunity to brief the Joint Committee on the General Scheme of the Tailte Éireann Bill 2020. The Bill provides for the merger of the Valuation Office, Property Registration Authority and Ordnance Survey Ireland, through the establishment of a new organisation called Tailte Éireann.

The Valuation Office, Property Registration Authority, and Ordnance Survey Ireland together manage a comprehensive set of property and spatial data. By combining all three in Tailte Éireann it will:

- Optimise the benefits of land information for the continuing economic and social development of Ireland
- Provide citizens, businesses and policy makers with ease of access to and use of location information including property and title information, property valuation data, maps and aerial imagery
- Lead, develop and maintain national spatial information infrastructures, and
- Support better land management

The Government Decision of 20 January, 2015 approved the drafting of the Tailte Éireann Bill 2014 along the lines of the General Scheme attached to the Memorandum for Government (16.01.2015) and proposed by the Department of Justice and Equality.

That General Scheme included proposals to:

- establish a new body called Tailte Éireann to effectively merge the functions of Ordnance Survey Ireland, Property Registration Authority and the Commissioner of Valuation;
- continue the statutory office of Commissioner of Valuation;

- establish an office of Registrar of Deeds and Titles combining the separate offices of Registrar of Deeds and Registrar of Titles that had existed prior to the establishment of the Property Registration Authority in 2006;
- establish an office of Chief State Surveyor to include the current survey / mapping functions of Ordnance Survey Ireland with the functions of the Boundary Surveyor (an office held by the Commissioner for Valuation); and
- establish Tailte Éireann with a Board and a Chief Executive.

In 2015 the Department of Justice provided a briefing to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality regarding the 2015 General Scheme. I have provided the Committee with a copy of the Opening Statement provided by that Department at the time and the supplementary brief dated 27 February 2015 which includes additional information in relation to similar mergers in other jurisdictions.

On 1 January 2018, Ministerial Orders (SI 573 of 2017, SI 574 of 2017 and SI 575 of 2017) transferred responsibility for the Valuation Office, Property Registration Authority and Ordnance Survey Ireland to the then Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The General Scheme of the Tailte Éireann Bill 2020 intends to establish a fully integrated land, property and spatial information services organisation, and includes a number of broad changes to the governance arrangements for Tailte Éireann from those that were proposed in the 2015 General Scheme.

Tailte Éireann is to be established as a scheduled office under the Public Service Management Act 1997, with the Chief Executive as the Head of Office.

The role of the Board is strategic and advisory. It will promote high standards of internal control and governance in relation to the provision by Tailte Éireann of its services and advise the Minister when necessary in relation to policies of Government affecting the functions of Tailte Éireann.

As with the original scheme the 2020 Heads of Bill propose the dissolution of Ordnance Survey Ireland and Property Registration Authority. However unlike the original General Scheme which proposed separate statutory officers to carry out these functions, the revised Heads of Bill propose that all functions previously performed by those organisations will become functions of Tailte Éireann.

Whereas the original General Scheme proposed the continuation of the office of the Commissioner of Valuation as a statutory office, the revised Scheme proposes that the statutory functions of the Commissioner of Valuation will become functions of Tailte Éireann.

The functions of Tailte Éireann will be the functions previously performed by the Property Registration Authority, Ordnance Survey Ireland and the Commissioner of Valuation.

Tailte Éireann will provide a comprehensive and secure property title registration system, an independent rateable valuation system and authoritative location information and geospatial infrastructure. These are central to the effective management of the property, planning, agriculture, local government, environmental and construction sectors of the State's economy.

A Project Board was established under the chairmanship of the Department. The Project Board is comprised of senior departmental officials, officials from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Commissioner of Valuation and the Chief Executives of the Property Registration Authority and Ordnance Survey Ireland.

The purpose of the Project Board is to oversee the establishment of Tailte Éireann as a fully integrated land, property and spatial information services organisation. The Board is responsible for defining and realising benefits, and monitoring risks, quality and timeliness.

A number of working groups are now in train to drive forward the merger.

In conclusion, I should point out that this is largely a technical piece of legislation which is primarily designed to establish the merged Tailte Éireann organisation in the most efficient way. Accordingly, there are no significant new policy initiatives contained in this legislation. Rather, in line with similar legislation, the general scheme is focused on the statutory provisions necessary to bring about the merger of the three existing organisations into the new Tailte Éireann organisation, the governance of the new organisation when it is established and the carrying out of its functions into the future.

My colleague and I welcome the opportunity to address any questions which the Committee may have in relation to the General Scheme of this Bill and the establishment of Tailte Éireann.