

## **DRCD Supplementary Estimate 2023 - Opening Statement from the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD.**

Chairman and members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to present this request for a supplementary estimate for the Department of Rural and Community Development.

There are quite a number of movements, reflecting the number of schemes operated by my Department.

### **The proposed supplementary estimates cover:**

1. A supplementary estimate for €11 million in current funding for Ukraine Supports, with €10 million for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme and €1 million for Volunteer Centres;
2. Movement of €16 million capital into the A.4 Rural Supports subhead to meet demand under the Local Improvement Scheme. The €16 million is made up of €14.3 million in capital funding originally allocated for A.7 Rural Regeneration & Development; €0.5 million capital from A.8 Islands, and; €1.2 million capital from B.10 Libraries Development;
3. Movement of €6.175 million capital from the A.7 Rural Regeneration & Development subhead to B.11 Community Enhancement Programme, to meet demand under the Community Centre Investment Fund;
4. Movement of €2 million capital from the A.7 Rural Regeneration & Development subhead to meet demand under the A.5 LEADER subhead;
5. Movement of €2 million capital from the A.7 Rural Regeneration & Development subhead to B.4 for once-off funding of dog control infrastructure;
6. Movement of €1.258 million from current to capital within the B.6 Support for Disadvantaged Communities subhead which funds the Dublin North East Inner City Initiative, and finally;
7. Movement of €1.723 million from current to capital within the B.8 PEACE subhead.

The **substantive supplementary estimate** of €11 million includes €10 million in additional funding for SICAP, which helps ensure appropriate supports to Ukrainian refugees, while protecting services to existing groups under the programme.

This funding was agreed as part of Budget 2023 but was not provided for in the Revised Estimate and is, therefore, now being dealt with through a supplementary estimate.

To date in 2023, the €10 million under SICAP has helped Local Development Companies support over 6,300 Ukrainians and over 70 community groups working with Ukrainians.

The Local Development Companies have also used this funding for over 320 events and over 180 children and family activities, all to help Ukrainians integrate into their local communities.

The supplementary estimate of €11 million also includes an additional €1 million for volunteering supports.

This is being provided to help the network of 29 Volunteer Centres across the country to provide a range of community integration initiatives to support people arriving from Ukraine and volunteers working in the area.

Separately, there are also **a number of technical supplementary adjustments**, which involve the reallocation of resources from one area to another.

These all involve capital resources, and are required to ensure that the Department can put its resources to best use as expenditure during the year differs from the original estimate for an area.

Firstly, the original budget for the Local Improvement Scheme was €12 million and this technical supplementary estimate will allow additional funding of €16 million for the scheme.

This total funding of €28 million will allow improvements to over 600 roads in 2023. As noted at the outset, the €16 million in savings mainly relates to funding previously allocated to the A.7 Rural Regeneration and Development sub-head.

The next technical supplementary relates to the Community Centre Investment Fund.

Under this scheme, funding of €45.8 million has been approved for 861 projects. Expenditure to date this year is €20 million, and it proposed to transfer €6.175 million from the A.7 Rural Regeneration and Development sub-head to the B.11 Community Enhancement Programme sub-head, to meet demand under the programme. This will bring total expenditure on the CCIF in 2023 to €26.175 million.

Separately, the original estimate for the LEADER programme in 2023 was for expenditure of €46 million, and this now needs to increase to €48 million to meet the additional demand in 2023.

This €2 million will be moved from the A.7 Rural Regeneration and Development sub-head, to the A.5 LEADER programme to meet demand in that area.

Next, I intend to move savings of €2 million from the A.7 Rural Regeneration and Development sub-head to the B.4 SICAP sub-head, to provide one-off funding for dog control infrastructure.

The funding is consistent with recommendations from a report published in March by a cross-Government Working Group on the Control of Dogs, with eligible costs including infrastructure, vehicles and equipment for dog control purposes.

Finally, there are two movements of funding within sub-heads, from current to capital, for the PEACE programme and Dublin North East Inner City. These movements reflect the fact that funding decisions are made external to the Department and so initial estimates are amended as projects are approved.

**With regard to the savings which are being utilised here**, as I have made clear, the majority of capital savings relate to the A.7 sub-head, which funds the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, Town and Village Renewal and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme.

Total expenditure across these three areas in the A.7 sub-head is expected to be €81 million – meaning a saving of €24.5 million on the funding available for 2023.

The pandemic delayed a number of projected start dates for projects and these delays continue to have an impact.

However, I have acted quickly to make sure funding is put to good use, and I have focussed on ensuring delivery is accelerated.

In addition, I have engaged with Local Authorities throughout the year to emphasise the need for much quicker delivery of projects, and the importance of local authorities delivering on the commitments they make when applying for the funding.

My officials met with representatives of the CCMA just three weeks ago, and again emphasised the importance of accelerated delivery if we are to maintain and grow our capital funding.

There are currently 38 major RRDF projects on site, with approved funding of €119 million, and this will ensure a strong flow of funding claims in the future.

I am seeing completed projects now on a regular basis – and my focus is on ensuring this flow of completions continues, and that we all get the message out about the value of this investment for rural Ireland.

**In closing**, I would like to thank the Committee for taking the time to consider the supplementary estimate for my Department. Myself, and Minister Joe O’Brien, are happy to answer any questions that might arise.