

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM CHULTÚR, OIHDREACT AGUS GAELTACHT

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, HERITAGE AND THE GAELTACHT

Dé Céadaoin, 3 Deireadh Fómhair 2018

Wednesday, 3 October 2018

The Joint Committee met at 1.30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Seán Canney,	Senator Fintan Warfield.
Deputy Michael Collins,	
Deputy Danny Healy-Rae,	
Deputy Martin Heydon,	
Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív,	
Deputy Niamh Smyth,	

DEPUTY PEADER TÓIBÍN IN THE CHAIR.

Business of Joint Committee

Chairman: Comharlaím ar chomhaltaí a ghutháin phóca a mhúchadh ionas nach gcuireann siad isteach ar an gcóras fuaimne agus ar craolacháin na cruinnithe. We have to discuss the Estimates for the year for the Department of Arts, Heritage and Culture. Before doing so, I suggest we go into private session to discuss some internal housekeeping business. Is that agreed? Agreed.

The joint committee went into private session at 1.45 p.m. and resumed in public session at 1.50 p.m.

Mid-Year Review of Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht: Discussion

Chairman: Táimid ag déanamh plé leis an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta maidir le Vóta Meastúcháin 33 - Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta, athrú lár bliana 2018. Cuirim fáilte rompu as teacht isteach anseo inniu. Mar is eol do na comhaltaí, caithfidimid tosnú le cúrsaí dlíthiúil ar dtús. By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by it to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or an entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. I also advise them that their opening statements and any other document they have submitted to the committee may be published on its website after the meeting.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

Chun tús a chur leis an gcomhrá, tugaimid cuireadh anois don Aire a chur i láthair a dhéanamh.

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I thank the joint committee for its invitation. As Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to address it on the performance and expenditure targets of the Department during the first half of 2018. It has been a very significant year for my Department, with the launch of Project Ireland 2040 which, as we know, is a comprehensive national planning framework and associated ten-year national development plan. It explicitly recognises that our culture, language and heritage are essential parts of the sustainable development of the country and acknowledges the centrality of culture and creativity to our national development. For my part, it has afforded my Department an unprecedented opportunity to invest over €1 billion in our cultural, linguistic and heritage infrastructure to safeguard and future-proof this precious resource for generations to come. Of this investment, some €725 million will be invested directly in our cultural infrastructure, creative industries and enhancing the cultural experience for citizens. An investment programme of €285 million over the period of the plan emphasises the amenity value of our natural and built heritage. A further €178 million is being provided to support and protect the Irish language, Gaeltacht communities and communities on

offshore islands. This is particularly fitting in 2018 as we celebrate Bliain na Gaeilge.

In April this year I was delighted that the Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, Deputy Paschal Donohoe, could join me in launching the historic capital investment plan for my Department on foot of Project Ireland 2040. The level of investment proposed will transform our cultural and heritage infrastructure across the country and represents an important statement for this and future generations. I look forward to implementing this programme of investment and seeing stakeholders and citizens alike reaping its rewards in the years ahead.

For my appearance today, 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 2018. The 2018 Revised Estimates provide for a gross allocation of just under €303 million for my Department. In addition, a further €700,000 in capital funding was carried over from the 2017 provision. Gross total expenditure incurred by my Department in the period to 30 June was €143.5 million. This expenditure represents 47% of the overall 2018 gross allocation. My colleague, the Government Chief Whip and Minister of State, Deputy Joe McHugh, and I will speak about the highlights in each programme area during the first half of 2018. I will commence with the culture programme and will be happy to expand later on any matter members may wish to raise.

Funding of €167.3 million is provided in 2018 for the culture programme. Total gross expenditure on programme A up to 30 June was just under €85 million, representing 51% of the 2018 programme allocation. A cornerstone of my Department's culture investment programme under the national development plan is the €460 million 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. The funding programme will build on the success of the renovation of the Milltown and Dargan wings of the National Gallery of Ireland and include significant capital investments across many of the institutions. This is a critical year for the appraisal, planning and design of these flagship projects, with a view to moving to the implementation phase in the following years. We have made progress on a number of key projects, including the redevelopment of the National Library of Ireland and the renovation of the National Archives. We are also moving other projects through the appraisal and evaluation stages, including the Natural History Museum and the Crawford Gallery in Cork.

Under a new culture and creativity programme, an investment of €265 million will be made in enhancing regional cultural infrastructure to ensure people in all parts of Ireland will enjoy opportunities to engage with the arts and culture; in the digitisation of the national collections to ensure they are preserved and made available to a global audience and in the expansion of the audio-visual sector as a key element of the Government's creative industries investment. In June this year my Department launched a major new strategy for the audio-visual industry which will guide the €200 million Project Ireland 2040 investment in expanding this vital creative industry.

The Creative Ireland programme goes from strength to strength and continues to enable increased creativity and access to cultural activity across communities. The funding provided for the programme has meant huge progress under pillar 1 - creative youth. Working in partnership with my colleague, the Minister for Education and Skills, Deputy Richard Bruton, and the Arts Council, we launched Creative Schools in March. Some 10% of all schools in the country applied for inclusion in the pilot programme and 150 were chosen from 400 applications. Over 38,000 students will have access to this initiative during this year and into next year which will

explore the potential impact of the arts and creativity on school life.

Funding provided for local authority culture teams from my Department and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has led to the development of ambitious and challenging five-year culture and creativity strategies for each local authority. All 31 were launched last week by me, the Taoiseach and my colleague, the Minister for Housing Planning and Local Government, Deputy Eoghan Murphy. With the additional funding provided this year, local authorities have risen to the challenge of rolling out the Creative Ireland programme in communities all over Ireland and already doubled the initiatives to over 500, with more expected by year end. On 23 June Cruinniú na n-óg was the first national day celebrating children and young people's creativity and it was a great success. The funding provided allowed local authorities to hold over 500 events and initiatives throughout the country free of charge. Events ranged from photography to theatre and drama to coding. The culture teams in the local authorities showed imagination and innovation in their approach.

In May I launched the Creative Ireland programme scheme seeking new partnerships across the various creative activities. There was huge interest expressed and I will make a formal announcement in the coming weeks of up to 30 new partnerships focusing on creative industries, the environment, film and media, heritage, music, theatre and drama, the arts, including the visual arts, and, of course, mental health. I look forward to feeding the learning from the new partnerships into wider Government policy, making the Creative Ireland programme a real cross-government initiative.

This year will also see the presentation of Culture Ireland GB18, a special year long programme to celebrate and renew the unique cultural relationship between Ireland and Great Britain. Over 100 Irish artists are touring England, Scotland and Wales in celebration of this unique cultural connection, as well as forging new connections which it is hoped will be further developed in future years, ensuring our close cultural bonds for the future.

In the context of the culture programme, it would be remiss of me not to mention the new cultural and heritage centre at the Bank of Ireland, College Green which opened its doors to the public in July. Bank of Ireland has generously made space available to the State for the centre for a ten-year period, during which time my Department will manage and animate the space. The first exhibition in the centre is "Listen, Now, Again", an exhibition exploring the life and works of the Nobel prize winning poet Séamus Heaney which is being run and curated by the National Library of Ireland and certainly worth visiting.

I am happy to expand on any issue members would like to raise in respect of this programme area before proceeding, or I will move on to the section on heritage, if the Chairman prefers.

Chairman: We might first examine programme A and allow a couple of questions. If we are to go through it programme by programme, I ask that we keep contributions to five minutes because if they continue for ten on every programme, we will be here for a long time.

Deputy Martin Heydon: What is the plan?

Chairman: The plan is to go through section A. The information has been broken into a number of different sections, A, B and D, and section C will follow later, discussed by, An tAire Stáit, Deputy McHugh. Perhaps Deputy Heydon's question did not pertain to section A.

Deputy Martin Heydon: It did. I want to make a couple of points on culture and another on heritage. I thank the Minister and Minister of State for their engagement with us today. The

Estimates process is very important.

On Galway 2020 projects, it has been disappointing to see changes in the management team. I understand the Minister, Deputy Madigan, met the chair of Galway 2020 to discuss the CEO stepping down and the cultural leadership plans. It is essential that leadership matters are resolved as soon as possible. The appointment of a new CEO yesterday is a positive development, but it is crucial that Department officials finalise the performance delivery agreement with Galway 2020 promptly. Galway can be a fantastic European Capital of Culture if all parties work together in a positive and proactive way. It has been a disappointing couple of weeks, but I believe we have turned a corner and I encourage the Minister to continue her very proactive approach to it.

There should be increased funding for small-scale local festivals and summer school schemes. The big events get the headlines, but small events in local communities, in the areas children are from, are critical. They help bring culture and creativity to life. Big events in big cities are great, but I ask that consideration be given to increasing funding at smaller-scale events such as local festivals and summer school schemes.

I commend the work of the Creative Ireland programme, including its work on Cruinniú na nÓg in June. It was very successful, and it was great to see children being encouraged and celebrated in their local communities.

I will speak about heritage later.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: I thank the Deputy for his comments and questions. He acknowledged the fact that I met the chair of Galway 2020, Ms Aideen McGinley, on 13 September to discuss recent developments on Galway 2020. It is obvious that my Department, as the biggest funder of the event, has a keen interest in making sure it is a success. The European Capital of Culture project is very important. The Deputy also acknowledged the appointment of Ms Patricia Philbin yesterday as the new CEO of Galway 2020. She was seconded from Galway city council, where she worked as the director of services, and she has been welcomed by the current board.

I agree with the Deputy's comments on the performance delivery agreement. My Department is acutely aware of it and wishes to expedite its signing. We hope to have that done by the end of September. It is important that we are in a position to support this programme as much as possible. It is a very ambitious programme. Galway will be in a European and possibly global spotlight, so we want to make sure it is carried out in the best way possible. There has to be accountability for all of the funding we have given. My Department has committed €15 million. We have spent more than €250,000, and the rest of the money will be spent in 2019 and 2020. I believe it will be a success.

Redundancies or resignations can occur at any stage of such a programme, particularly at the beginning or at the delivery and implementation phase. We are very aware of what is going on. It is important to point out that an EU monitoring committee is involved as well, ensuring that it is progressed in a proper way.

My Department has a very small budget for festivals - some €50,000 - and the main funder in that space is the Arts Council. I am in the process of negotiating with the Minister, Deputy Donohoe, to increase moneys to the Arts Council, although I cannot make any guarantees about that. The Arts Council provides funding to support festivals throughout the country. I agree

with the Deputy that small-scale festivals are very important. I have spoken to the Chair about it also. We launched local authority programmes recently which provide moneys for small-scale festivals as well. My Department provided €2 million and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government provided €1 million towards those festivals.

Chairman: The Government, as I understand it, has a plan to double the amount of investment in the arts over a seven-year period. That period has already begun. Is the Government on target to achieve its aims?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: At the moment the situation is that proceedings are pending. I am mid-negotiation with the Minister, Deputy Donohoe, so I would not like to comment on the current spend. I have been given €1.2 billion for capital expenditure over the next ten years. The aim of the Government is to increase spending over seven years, and I hope we are on track to do that, but I am not in a position to comment at the moment.

Chairman: My next question straddles two particular sections within the Department's spend. I want to contrast the two. The Arts Council has, thankfully, received a 50% increase in funding over recent years. Foras na Gaeilge, however, has gone in the other direction. These two bodies have had very different experiences, although they are under one Department. One section has received a welcome increase to its funds, but the other has been reduced radically. How does the Minister propose to fix that?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: The Arts Council has received a 20% increase in its funding. I believe it went from €51 million to €68 million.

Chairman: Foras na Gaeilge is going in the other direction.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: The spend on capital has been €178 million. The Minister of State may wish to respond on the question of Foras na Gaeilge.

Chairman: The question I am asking straddles two sections of this Department, but Foras na Gaeilge and the Arts Council have had radically different experiences in terms of their expenditure levels. I am not suggesting anything should be taken away from the expenditure on the Arts Council, but one has had its allocation increased over the last number of years while the other has had its allocation decreased. How can we ameliorate that?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Foras na Gaeilge is funded on a 75-25 basis with the Northern Irish Assembly. That is my information.

Chairman: I have done a massive study to find out where that rule exists in law.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: I do not have the details of that. I can provide it to the Chair afterwards.

Chairman: I would be obliged. It does not exist in the Good Friday Agreement and it does not appear to exist in law.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: I do not have that information in front of me, but I will get it to the Chair.

Chairman: If it is true that our hands are tied in that regard-----

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy

Joe McHugh): To be helpful, the funding arrangement was decided via agreement within the North-South Ministerial Council. The agreement was made that 75% of the funding would come from the Republic of Ireland and 25% would come from the North. Obviously the Assembly is not sitting. We would welcome ideas or suggestions. The €14 million awarded through the budgetary process is a figure from 2016.

Chairman: My suggestion, and I hope it is taken on board, is that a coiste na Gaeilge is set up within the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to look at the sections that have suffered due to the inertia of the North-South Ministerial Council and to see how worthy Irish language organisations, which would have been funded by Foras na Gaeilge, can be funded in another fashion. The danger is that the whole sector gets stuck while the stasis in the North continues.

Deputy Joe McHugh: The Chair will be aware that the Irish Government cannot operate unilaterally on any decision taken by the North-South Ministerial Council.

Chairman: I am not suggesting that that funding stream be changed. I suggest that a separate funding stream be added for Irish language organisations through the Department of Culture, Heritage the Gaeltacht. Otherwise, we are just saying they must lump for the coming years something that has nothing to do with them, over which they have no influence and on which Brexit is probably the main influence currently until we get the North-South Ministerial Council up and running. The Government can provide another source of funding to these organisations.

Deputy Joe McHugh: We need to be very sensitive at what is a very sensitive time, especially when the philosophy and the agreement surrounding the North-South Ministerial Council is that it is joint and must involve joint decision-making. I know that even without the assembly up and running, the officials in Foras na Gaeilge are still working away and spending money and there is still a budget there. I would just be very careful.

Chairman: The Minister of State might consider the matter anyway, even if he is cautious about it.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: It is important to note also the €178 million going to the Gaeltacht sector in general through the €1.2 billion investment, which is unprecedented in this area.

Chairman: I appreciate that, but if one looks at the breakdown of the allocation in this document from 2018, my understanding is that over the year, the pieces of the pie going towards the Irish language are shrinking somewhat in comparison with the other elements.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: My understanding is that they have been increasing year on year. That is-----

Chairman: Increasing in real terms, I think, but in percentage relationship terms I think the experience is different.

I have one other question about the decade of centenaries. I see the share of the 2018 allocation spent is 17%. Perhaps the Minister could update the committee as to where the whole process is at present.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: What whole process?

Chairman: The decade of centenaries: the committee, the drive, the development, the plans.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: We intend to remember the significant historic events and the themes of the period 1919 to 1923 and we will continue to be informed by the guidance of the expert advisory group on the centenary commemorations, chaired by Dr. Maurice Manning. I wish to acknowledge the very significant work the group has done in this area over the past year in formulating its guidance to the Government. We are looking at the group's recommendations and I expect to bring a memo for consideration to my Government colleagues shortly.

I will also convene a meeting of the all-party group on commemorations next Thursday, I hope, to approach the coming period. I think Deputy Brophy has recently joined the group, so we now have the entire group together. I am of the view that it is very important that the commemorative programme over the remainder of the decade adopts a broad focus and acknowledges the military activity as well as the many other dimensions that are interwoven with conflict, including its political, social and cultural impacts. The State's approach will continue to encourage reflection on the multiple identities, traditions and perspectives that are a part of the overall Irish historical experience.

This is a very complex and sensitive period in Ireland's history, and we must ensure that it is remembered appropriately, proportionally and with sensitivity. I envisage that there will probably be some formal State ceremonial commemorations and that they will be focused on significant points on the historical timeline. Some of the details of these commemorations still have to be worked out. There will be historical exploration, community engagement, community participation and artistic endeavours. It will be a very important contribution to the national conversation about these events and the local context.

One of the cornerstones of the State's approach to commemorations in general over the coming years will involve further reconciliation on the island of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain, particularly taking into account Brexit, which I think a member here mentioned. We will also take account of sensitivities across the communities in Northern Ireland, continue to recognise that very different perspectives exist, and try to be as inclusive as we can in the commemorations in this regard. That worked especially well for the 1916 commemorations and we want to ensure that continues. The local authorities and the national cultural institutions - the institutions of learning and the custodians of records - will have a role to play along with artists. I hope there will be a very authentic engagement in this regard.

Chairman: Go raibh maith agat as sin, a Aire. Glaoim ar an Teachta Niamh Smyth.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I thank the Minister for her presentation. I will use my time to ask questions and get answers, if that is okay - no speeches. Perhaps the first question is for the Minister of State, Deputy McHugh. On the first item, Bliain na Gaeilge, I note-----

Chairman: I apologise for interrupting the Deputy. We are just looking to ask questions under section A. Bliain na Gaeilge comes under section C.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: This is still on the expenditure of €178 million on Bliain na Gaeilge.

Chairman: That is section C, is it not?

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Section A. I am just after reading it.

Chairman: I stand corrected. I apologise.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: The objective is to protect and support the Irish language in Gael-

tacht communities. Does the Minister of State have any idea of the number of Gaelscoileanna that were set up this year, considering it is Bliain na Gaeilge? As for promotion of the Irish language, does he have any idea whether many Irish language primary schools have been set up, given the year that is in it? This is really more of a comment. I noticed over the summer months that the one post office in the Gaeltacht area in County Kerry was closed. It is very disappointing to see that post office close when we are spending so much money, which is welcome, to support and protect the Irish language in Gaeltacht communities. The post office is one thing for which there should have been special protection, considering it was in a Gaeltacht area.

Will the Minister expand on the €700,000 carry-over, how it occurred and what it came from. There are 38,000 students engaging in the creative schools for March 2018. That is very welcome. From my experience working in the arts, continuity is hugely important. During 2018 to 2019, 38 students have accessed the initiative. Will these 38 students be involved repeatedly or are these once-off projects? Continuity is what will mark the success of Creative Ireland.

Cruinniú na Cásca was set aside and we were introduced to Cruinniú na nÓg. Is Cruinniú na Cásca gone off the agenda for Creative Ireland? If so, will Cruinniú na nÓg continue year on year or will it be wiped out next year?

I refer to the small festivals funding from Creative Ireland. As the Minister will know from our debates and discussions in the Chamber, I feel very passionate that the Arts Council should continue to do the job it has been anointed to do. To me, to start handing out small grant funding from Creative Ireland is to duplicate the role of the Arts Council. Small as it might be, I think the Minister said she has €50,000 to spend. To me, this is the role of the Arts Council and should not be the role of Creative Ireland. Will the Minister expand on this?

We have seen the debacle in Galway. I was at the Galway International Arts Festival this year, and we had John Crumlish and Paul Fahy at our last committee meeting. They do wonderful work to promote the arts nationally and of course to promote Galway city. At that time the excitement was palpable around the city because of it being a 2020 European Capital of Culture. It is very disappointing to see how it has unravelled in recent months. This is more of a comment, but I believe the Minister sees that the Government could play a huge part in bringing people together there. There needs to be someone who will wrap his or her arms around everyone, as it were, and get everyone singing from the same hymn sheet because not only is this important for Galway city, the eyes of the world, particularly the European Union, will be on Galway and Ireland as a county and a nation in 2020.

I support what the Chairman said about the roadmap for Arts Council spending. The Taoiseach himself outlined that in six years from now we will be back at double the amount of spending, and I emphasise the fact that that is current spending and not a muddle of current and capital.

Those are my questions. I would like to get comments back on them.

Chairman: A Aire Stáit, ar mhaith leatsa tosnú?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Yes. I will take the questions in reverse order, if that is okay with the Deputy. She asked about a €700,000 carry-over on the islands capital side. That will be spent. Much of it is being spent at present. The councils make applications and work ranges from piers to roads to small minor works and so on. It is in the process of being spent.

The second question was about post offices and there is a commitment from An Post that if post offices close in a Gaeltacht, the services as Gaeilge will be provided in the next nearest post office. This is relevant to Deputy Healy-Rae's constituency. I am happy to follow up on that.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: It is important. It is pointless to spend money on promoting the Irish language while seeing a post office closing in those areas. It is a place where people can engage with the language every day.

Deputy Joe McHugh: If the An Post service is viable, there is an independent mechanism for someone in the area-----

Deputy Niamh Smyth: It should be given special status.

Deputy Joe McHugh: If there is no post office, what would be the special status? There must be a service from An Post. I do not speak on behalf of An Post but the company has said there is an independent mechanism and anywhere a post office has been closed, a proposal can be made. It will be assessed. If the services have been taken from a post office in a Gaeltacht area, the services will be provided for native Irish speakers in the next nearest post office, wherever that is. I know there is a complication as there is a massive gap in services if the last remaining post office is taken from a particular Gaeltacht area. I am conscious of that.

The Deputy raised the issue of the number of established Gaelscoileanna. That comes under the Department of Education and Skills but I am happy to get those figures for the Deputy.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: This is Bliain na Gaeilge so will new schools be established?

Deputy Joe McHugh: This comes under the remit of the Department of Education and Skills. I am happy to find out the number of extra Gaelscoileanna being built this year if the Deputy is asking the question.

The Deputy mentioned Bliain na Gaeilge and there has been a commitment to €530,000 in funding, a big percentage of which is being spent across a broad spectrum of areas. These include Beo: Gaelach agus Bródúil, the Electric Picnic programme of bespoke Irish language events, and Bliain na Gaeilge elements, with €50,000 dispersed in a round of funding and €75,000 distributed in the second part of Bliain na Gaeilge, launched in Glencomille. I was part of that. There was a wide range of events. The councils have been very much involved as well. Even as recently as last Saturday, in the local resource centre of my parish, there were many different promotional activities.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: The local authorities have a role to play in this. They were designated to do something to promote the Irish language.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Yes. The message came quite clearly from the Houses of the Oireachtas through the committee and from politicians that Bliain na Gaeilge was not a Government-owned initiative but was very much about trying to build on the enthusiasm that exists, whether it is inside or outside the Gaeltacht.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: What tools is the Minister of State putting in place to measure the success of Bliain na Gaeilge?

Deputy Joe McHugh: One mechanism of measuring the success of the Irish language is through the census. Our five-year action plan will be our measurement of the effectiveness of the resources we are putting into preschools, na naoínraí. We are identifying how to put

resources into younger learners and give support systems to parents wishing to raise their children through Irish when they are not proficient themselves. The five-year action plan we have launched is the mechanism for us to measure. Unfortunately, it takes time if there is a two year old or a three year old in a naoinra.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Are there any specific measures for the end of Bliain na Gaeilge to see how the language has been promoted? How many more schools, for example, have come about as a result of this? Is there a measurement?

Deputy Joe McHugh: There is not a direct correlation between construction of schools and the language.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I am only using that as an example and I am sure the Minister of State has his own examples.

Deputy Joe McHugh: We are constantly evaluating the schemes. Even in the mid-term review today we are looking at where we spend our money. There is a phenomenal budget across a broad spectrum. We are advertising to fill 72 positions for translators and interpreters in Brussels and Strasbourg. We should be honest that it is a challenge but we constantly encourage people to go for these posts. With the amending Bill to the official languages legislation coming up and which we hope to publish this session towards the end of the year, we will look at a 20% recruitment drive for Irish speakers in all Departments and sectors in the public service. A measure will be how many people we get to provide a service to people inside and outside Gaeltachtaí. The ultimate measure of a language is the daily use and whether people use it daily. The census asks that specific question.

Chairman: We are over the five minutes but the Deputy is waiting for another answer.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: There were a few questions from the Deputy. The last question she asked related to Galway 2020. I expanded on a question to Deputy Heydon already. As I stated earlier, my Department has a key role in ensuring the success of Galway 2020 and I will do all I can to ensure parties work together and see that it is a success. I can reassure the Deputy in that regard. We are in close contact with the chair and we very much welcome the new chief executive officer as well.

The Deputy and I have spoken many times in the Dáil and on Question Time about Creative Ireland and the Arts Council. Creative Ireland is not intended as alternative funding to the Arts Council. Creative Ireland has a budget of €6 million and the Arts Council has €68 million. There is no question of Creative Ireland in any way undermining what the Arts Council does, nor should it. It is a cross-Government policy and it aims to put creativity at the heart of policy-making, as the Deputy knows. The Arts Council is at arm's length and makes its own decisions, and it is important it has the opportunity to carry out its roles through funding from my Department. I am looking at what I am going to be in a position to give the council. I do not know what that is as of yet.

As I stated, I will announce a number of creative partnerships as well and they will be aimed at developing some of the objectives of creativity, well-being, innovation and cross-Government objectives. The Deputy also mentioned small funding and festivals. Creative Ireland funding for local communities comes directly through local authorities. This Department does not make local decisions relating to that funding. It is a matter for the local authority or cultural teams. It should be noted that this cuts across heritage, culture and library services. The aim is

to broaden not just the arts but the funding that complements the Arts Council support to local authorities as well.

The Deputy mentioned the Creative Schools programme and the idea is to build on and expand it over the coming years. It has been very welcome across the sector. As I mentioned in my opening statement, 150 schools were selected for the pilot and these schools have approximately 38,000 pupils. It is a diverse range of schools.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: It is a pilot scheme, so what measures are being put in place to see that this is being effective?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: That is the point of a pilot scheme. It is monitored and we will get feedback to see what is working.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: There is constant monitoring.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Yes. It is something that has been very much welcomed across the board. There is every type of school and there are diverse backgrounds. They include DEIS schools and schools in rural and urban areas. It is something we want to roll out in future because it is such a success. The cost of the creative associate expertise for schools ranges from €4,100 to €5,211, depending on the school size. It is a pilot programme and the impact and cost of the model must be reviewed before being rolled out in any large way. The schools in the programme in Cavan and Monaghan include Coláiste Dún an Rí in Kingscourt, Knocktemple national school, St. Patrick's national school and St. Mary's national school in Ballyhaise. Those are the participating schools in the Deputy's constituency of Cavan-Monaghan.

Chairman: I will have to ask the Minister to stop there as we are gone way beyond the allowed time.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Cruinniú na nÓg was a great success this year. As a result of that success, we anticipate rolling out it rather as Cruinniú na Cásca.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I welcome the Minister and I thank her for her presentation. On the doubling of funding, I accept that the Minister cannot give any commitments this close to the budget despite the seven-year commitment in this regard but Governments have a responsibility not to make promises they cannot keep and to keep every commitment they make. When the Taoiseach referred to a doubling of arts funding was he referring to a doubling of departmental funding, capital and current, or to a doubling of funding for the Arts Council? I ask the Minister to outline what she believes the commitment of a doubling of funding entails, in terms of allocations rather than areas.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Senator Warfield is correct that the Taoiseach made the announcement in June 2017 that funding for arts, culture and sport would be doubled over the course of seven areas. The Department is in the process of negotiations in regard to the forthcoming budget so I cannot comment on my allocation for this year. I will give the Senator a flavour of what is happening. In 2017, the current allocation increased from €237 million to €249 million, a 5% increase, and the capital allocation increased from €51 million to €54 million, a 5.8% increase. I do not yet know the shape of this year's allocations. However, €1.2 billion is a great start in terms of the capital investment over ten years for culture, heritage and the Gaeltacht. It is a real signal of intent on making good a promise by the Government to deliver. It is unprecedented. Ultimately, everything the Department does is with a view to implementing the Government's commitment. The Senator will be aware of the steering group's oversight of the

national development plan and delivery in this regard. As I said earlier, the National Library of Ireland has already commenced its plan and many of the other national cultural institutions are also working on their master plans.

Senator Fintan Warfield: If I work for the Heritage Council or I rely on its support for local projects can I be confident that the Taoiseach's commitment to a doubling of funding, which the Minister has clarified is arts, culture and sports funding, includes funding for the heritage area?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Absolutely. It includes funding across the board. It is funding for culture, heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Senator Fintan Warfield: And sport.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Yes. I am not the Minister for sport. I can only concentrate on the areas that come within the remit of my Department. I am doing what I can to secure funding but not only for the cultural sector which tends to get more attention than the heritage sector. I am also seeking funding for the heritage sector and I believe the Government will deliver on its promise in terms of doubling the investment over the next seven years as indicated in June 2017.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I welcome the Minister's comments regarding Project Ireland 2040. Will the Minister accept that there is a notable absence in Project Ireland 2040 around capital funding for artist spaces? The local authorities, including Dublin City Council, do very good work in this regard. The Dublin City Council development plan makes provision for artist spaces but there is much more to be done at a local level. Does the Minister accept that artist spaces are absent from the plan?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: No, I do not accept that. The sum of €265 million is provided for under the NDP for a culture and creativity investment programme, within which one of the areas for investment is the programme for regional arts and cultural facilities. The aim of this provision is to enhance opportunities for people and communities to participate in Irish culture life. There is also investment in the creative industry, within which there is an emphasis on the audiovisual industry. I do not accept what the Senator says. There is also a €40 million programme specifically in regard to artists' studios, as well as archives, museums and galleries and this will be delivered on.

Senator Fintan Warfield: Under what programme is the €40 million provided?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: The culture and creative investment programme includes a €40 million programme of investing in cultural infrastructure across all regions. It will provide support for the maintenance and development of regional arts centres, theatres, regional museums, galleries, archives, multi-use facilities and, specifically, artists' studios. This is set out on page 32 of Project Ireland 2040. The investment in national cultural infrastructure will be informed by the statutory regional spatial and economic strategy to ensure alignment with the development priorities within the national planning framework and to meet local population needs.

Senator Fintan Warfield: The Minister also mentioned the protection of collections, which is set out on page 5. From my reading of the plan I do not get a sense that there is a commitment to a shared national storage facility. We are hearing from our national institutions that there is an unprecedented storage crisis as collections continue to grow. We all know that without intervention those collections are at risk of degradation or damage and, perhaps, permanent loss.

The consortium of national and university libraries made a proposal a number of years ago about a shared national storage facility to be delivered within the timeframe of 2022 to 2025, with the cost of maintenance of this facility to be shared by the institutions, which includes the National Library of Ireland. Is the €10 million to €15 million identified by the consortium of institutions as the required State investment in this facility - a memory store - provided for in the plan?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Under cultural priorities, there is investment of €460 million for the national cultural institutions. There is also investment of €10 million for the digitisation of our national collections. The Department is working closely with the OPW on the protection of collections, including the major investment referenced by the Senator in the National Library of Ireland, which is ongoing in terms of records being decanted from the National Archives and various other projects to suit its needs as a national museum. We will consider other options but it is certainly provided for in Project Ireland 2040, and very important that it is.

Senator Fintan Warfield: The Minister mentioned the digitisation of collections. When I leave this meeting I will be going to the Seanad for the debate on the Copyright and Other Intellectual Property Law Provisions Bill 2018. I accept that this does not come within the Minister's remit but her Department did some work in this area under the former Minister, Deputy Humphreys. Fianna Fáil passed an amendment in the Dáil which states that a feasibility study would be conducted around a legal digital deposit 12 months after the legislation is passed. As I understand it, it takes at least one year to complete a feasibility study. In light of the Department's consultation and the overwhelming support for a legal digital deposit, what is the Minister's position on it? Will she engage with that feasibility study if it remains in the legislation?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: The Department has met with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation to discuss the copyright issue the Senator raised, and the conversations are ongoing.

Senator Fintan Warfield: Given the conversations about the policy of "arm's length", and given that it is curated by the Department, will the Bank of Ireland space go out to tender? How does the Minister see the space being "animated", as she said in her speech? Can we expect that space to be run at an arm's length as well? It is a major cultural space in this city.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: It is. The Heaney exhibition will be open for a couple of years. The use of the Bank of Ireland is for a ten-year period. If there are specifics the Senator would like to know about it we can provide them to him. It is ultimately a matter for the National Library of Ireland because it is under its remit.

Senator Fintan Warfield: All the exhibitions will be under its remit in the ten-year period.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Yes, in the Bank of Ireland.

Chairman: I call Deputy Danny Healy-Rae.

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae: I welcome the progress that has been made with Killarney House by the Minister's Department. It is a great attraction for the town and the county of Kerry. My father ensured it was put on the investment programme in late 2010, and it has progressed well since then. On behalf of the people of Kerry I welcome the final stages in the gardens and so on.

The national park was given over to the State free of charge. It is 26,000 acres and while it

is a wonderful place and a great attraction it needs to be maintained. There is much work that must be carried out to ensure the product is to a high standard. The rhododendrons are still a big issue there, and considerable investment is needed to rid the grounds of this plague.

The deer situation has been exacerbated beyond all control, and there needs to be significant culling to ensure the safety of people travelling on our roads, whether they be on the Ring of Kerry or on the other roads around Killarney, such as N72, the Killorglin road and the N22, the national primary road. Lives are important and the volume of the traffic is growing. More investment and a big cull are needed to ensure people can travel safely on our roads.

Deer are also affecting adjoining landowners who are robbed, beggared and broke by them. Putting out costly fertiliser is no good because the deer are coming from the national park into their lands and they create havoc with crops, soilage and so on. Farmers in these places cannot keep half the stock that they kept heretofore. I ask the Minister to ensure this issue is dealt with. Lyme's disease which is spread by a tick that is prevalent in deer has a serious effect on so many families, young children, mothers, expectant mothers and many other people. It is sad our doctors and our medical service do not even properly recognise this disease and, therefore, many people must travel abroad to get treated for this disease which is emanating from the deer. It is only right I highlight this on behalf of the people I represent here in this important committee.

I would like to return to the Minister of State, Deputy McHugh, about the post offices if that is alright.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: On the important deer issue first, there is a significant challenge in attempting to balance the demands of agriculture, forestry and conservation to ensure the deer populations occupying the land are managed at a sustainable level and in a responsible and ethical manner. Where the deer are increasing in range and number, depending on the annual count and the incidence of damage by deer to habitats, especially woodlands, culls are necessary on occasion to ensure the deer populations do not reach a level that is unsustainable or that would have a negative ecological consequence. Every year the deer numbers have to be reduced as part of the ongoing management of the deer population within the park. On foot of a number of recent reports and surveys of the deer population, the National Parks and Wildlife Service has undertaken a significant cull this year in the Killarney National Park, in which more than 120 deer have been culled to date. Both the sika and red deer are included in that cull.

I appreciate the Deputy's comments on roads, about which there is an ongoing dialogue with Kerry County Council. We must ensure the safety of people within the area also. We continue to erect public notices about the issues the Deputy raised such as Lyme's disease.

The Deputy also mentioned Killarney House, the second phase of which we will look at after the opening of the exhibition last week. We will look to the gardens also and see what we can do. The opening has been a great success and the house has been completely renovated and rejuvenated, according to people in Kerry. It has brought much extra tourism into the area, which is a bonus.

Chairman: Ar mhaith leis an Aire, dul ar ais go dtí programme B, oidhreacht?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Funding of more €47.1 million has been made available from my Department's heritage programme in 2018, including €36.7 million allocated for current expenditure and €10.4 million for capital expenditure. The total gross expenditure for programme B until 30 June 2018 was just over €6 million, which is slower than anticipated due to a number

of tiny issues which are expected to be resolved before the year end. Through the National Parks and Wildlife Service, my Department manages some 87,000 ha across our national parks and nature reserve network. These parks annually attract 4 million visitors and support a broad range of enterprise and employment opportunities for the communities in which they are situated.

Following on from the highly successful visit by the Royal Highnesses, the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall, to Killarney National Park in June, August saw the completion of the major restoration project at Killarney House, to which I alluded, with the opening of the spectacular 18-room visitor centre exhibition. The exhibition serves as the main visitor and interpretative centre for the national park. It highlights the beauty and interprets the richness and significance of its landscapes, habitats, flora and fauna.

Killarney House now links the national park directly with the town and is a significant new asset in the south west's tourism offering. As the committee will be aware, this final phase of the Killarney House project follows on from the successful opening of its restored ornamental gardens in April 2016 and the opening of three refurbished historical rooms last July. More than 375,000 people have visited the ornamental gardens since their opening in April 2016. Early indications are that the visitor centre and exhibition in the house will be an equally important attraction.

In July last, as part of our strategic investment partnership with Fáilte Ireland, which is aimed at enhancing and promoting the tourism offering at Ireland's national parks and conserving and protecting the natural environments of the parks for the enjoyment of future generations, my Department published a document entitled *Experiencing the Wild heart of Ireland*, which is a tourism interpretative master plan for the national parks and nature reserves. The plan sets out a framework that will guide the phased development of enhanced visitor experiences and improved visitor facilities at our national parks and nature reserves, taking into account our conservational objectives and based upon research into international best practice.

The plan recommends a suite of capital projects of varying size from smaller scale interventions, such as the installation of viewing platforms, to larger projects such as the development of new boardwalks and trails and the construction of new visitor centres. From these proposals, projects will be funded jointly by my Department and Fáilte Ireland through a multimillion euro investment package over the coming years.

The first such project is a €2.1 million investment in the Wild Nephin-Ballycroy National Park, which was announced on 31 August of this year. The aim of the project is to develop a continuous 53 km walking and cycling trail from Newport to Ballycastle on the Wild Atlantic Way through the national park. The project will eliminate the need on the western way to walk the busy R312 route by creating a spur that will provide a more direct and safe route on quiet tracks through bogland and forests. The outcome of this project will be an off-road continuous cycling and walking trail in challenging terrain that will link the popular Great Western Greenway with the Wild Atlantic Way.

Our historic buildings and structures are also a vital part of our 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 invest essential capital in our built heritage and help the owners and custodians of historic structures to safeguard them into the future for the benefit and enjoyment of communities and the public. There are almost 50,000 protected structures around the country. Many of them are in great need of investment

to ensure their preservation and continued use so that they remain a living part of our history and community life into the future. Last April, funding of some €3.3 million was allocated to 431 projects across every local authority area under the built heritage investment scheme and the structures at risk fund. These projects are well under way with funding due to be drawn down in the final quarter of the year. I am pleased to note the structures at risk fund will be revised and refreshed as the historic structures fund for 2019. This will offer improved supports to those who work hard in our communities to ensure our historic buildings remain alive and in use so that they are passed to future generations in better condition than we found them.

I will be pleased to expand on any issues members would like to raise in respect of this programme area before my colleague, the Minister of State, Deputy Joe McHugh, speaks about the relevant aspects of the Gaeltacht, the Irish language and the islands programme area.

Chairman: Go raibh míle maith agat an t-Aire faoi sin. I will pick up on a point made by Senator Warfield about repositories and cultural institutions. I raised previously with the Minister a large former IT factory in Ballivor, County Meath, that has lain empty for some years. The factory is in good shape and is similar to the former Motorola factory that currently hosts the National Museum of Ireland's repository. If, as I understand, the State is looking for a new repository, the former factory in Ballivor could be an option.

The amount expended by the Department seems very low. While I acknowledge that much of the allocated was targeted for the second half of the year, it is significantly lower than profile. There must be a concern that the Department's spending objectives will not be met.

Yesterday, we had a conversation about the importance of the Hill of Tara and the time a project at the site is taking. Since I raised the issue with the Minister last March, a small amount of research has been done on the plan. I imagine she must find it frustrating that, notwithstanding our objectives and worthy projects, it takes forever and a day for the wheels of the State to turn. The Minister would leave behind a fine legacy if she ensured these projects proceeded in a more timely fashion.

Does the Department have responsibility for greenways or is it just when they traverse national parks?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Responsibility lies with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Chairman: The Minister mentioned a project at the Nephin range. Is that within her remit because it is located in a national park?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Yes. The Nephin range is part of the national park.

Chairman: I ask the Minister to respond to the other points I raised.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: The Chairman referred to a vacant factory in County Meath. Was it an IT factory?

Chairman: Yes, it is the former NEC plant in Ballivor. It is a purpose built factory that now lies idle but is in good shape. It is pretty much the same genre as the Motorola factory, which is the current repository of the National Museum of Ireland's materials that are not on show.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: That is not a matter for me. The Chairman may wish to contact the Office of Public Works as the sourcing of an appropriate building is a matter for it. It may

be worthwhile for the Chairman to make the suggestion to the OPW. The factory may well be a suitable venue and it is worth consideration.

The Chairman is correct that we discussed the Hill of Tara in the Dáil yesterday when he and another Deputy raised the matter. He is also correct that he raised the matter previously. A management plan is at draft stage and an online survey was conducted recently to ascertain what people want to be done at the Hill of Tara, the symbolic capital of Ireland. As I mentioned yesterday, a balance must be struck between the conservation perspective and all of the issues that pertain to Meath County Council such as parking. We received approximately 400 responses to the online survey, which will be fed into the conservation management plan. We have a draft plan and we hope to have the matter sorted as soon as possible.

The issue is complex and I have asked my officials to redouble their efforts in this regard. I appreciate the Chairman's forbearance and patience but, as I am sure he will appreciate, because the Hill of Tara is so special, we must ensure the plan that is put in place is appropriate and take into account the sacred nature of the site. I will meet the chief archaeologist to discuss the project over the next coming days. We will discuss where we take the project from here. I appreciate the comments and concerns expressed by the Chairman.

Chairman: Mayne Bog is located in County Westmeath and a prehistoric road was identified when work was being done on the bog. A large extraction company is operating in the vicinity and on part of the site. Steps have been taken to stop works around the prehistoric road. The discovery of the road is one example of how something wonderful can be hidden just beneath view in many parts of the country. Anybody who drives or walks past the site would not have sense of the value of the find. I have raised previously the possibility of providing some form of interpretative facility at this site and other sites. I am not proposing intense or deep interpretation but perhaps information panels that people could read. However, the site seems to have fallen between a number of stools, with some arguing that the responsibility lies with Westmeath County Council, while others say it is a matter for the Heritage Council or Department. It would be wonderful if someone could take control of that.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: I appreciate the Chairman's comments. Officials from the National Monuments Service met representatives from Westmeath County Council in August to discuss possibilities for the site. Further research is also ongoing in co-operation with the landowner. The status of the development of the bog remains before the courts. The National Monuments Service considers that the prospect of preservation *in situ* of ancient trackways or toghers that traverse an open working bog and have been dissected along their length by approximately 45 open drains is severely limited. These ancient features only come to light during peat extraction. Once a bog has been drained to facilitate such extraction, the conditions that ensure the preservation of the wooden toghers are no longer present, with the result that they will inevitably decay slowly over time. The Department will continue to focus its efforts on seeking detailed information on the toghers through appropriate methods of recording.

Chairman: The Minister had the opportunity to visit Dowth Hall during the blazing warm summer. It was wonderful to see the national monuments that were found at the site, including Neolithic art in stone. I hope it will be protected so that future generations will be able to see the heritage there. However, I am told that the German Government currently spends more on research and investigation into these types of monuments in County Meath than the Irish Government. Could the Government put in place funding streams to enable archaeologists and experts to further investigate the heritage of the area? The Minister will recall that during the dry weather in the summer a drone was able to identify a circle feature hidden underground.

The area has a large amount of valuable heritage and archaeology. It is startling that the German Government is spending more on research in the area than the Irish Government.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: I do not want to comment on the German Government's spending, which is a matter for it. However, I agree that the finds in Dowth were extraordinary. We are planning a major effort of interpretation of 66 new national monuments that were discovered in counties Meath and Louth this year. This is a remarkable development and significant funding will be required to ensure they are protected. There are moneys in the national development plan for heritage spending. No one expected these finds to be made but now that we know about them, we must ensure they are protected for future generations. Approximately €30 million has been provided in the national development plan for national monuments. A special conference will also be held on this issue in the coming months.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: My first question relates to capital expenditure on heritage. By the end of June only 18% or €1.811 million of the allocation of €10.12 million for heritage had been spent. Does the Minister have more up-to-date figures? Those figures are so historical, they could be put in a museum. Will the Minister indicate what was the capital spend under subheads B3 to B8, inclusive, at the end of September? We should have discussed this figure in July, if at all, because it is historical.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: I assure the Deputy we will spend the full allocation.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I was hoping it would not all be spent because I have a better use for it.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: I can give the Deputy a copy of the figures before me. The 2018 capital spending estimate is €10.12 million. I do not know if the members have this information but I can provide it. It may be useful for a forensic examination of expenditure. I can go through the figures if the Deputy wishes.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Will the Minister give me the bottom line figure? How much had been spent by the end of September?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: A total of €3.099 million had been spent on capital, which is 90%-----

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Let us forget about profile. Only €3 million of the €10 million allocation had been spent. An issue arises, which has been ongoing in the public service for a long time. The Minister is not the first to come up against it because I came up against it in my time as a Minister. If the Minister has only spent €3 million of €10 million in nine months, which is 30% of the allocation in 75% of the time, one of two things must be happening, and both are totally unacceptable. Either all the work is being packed into the final three months of the year or the agencies are not billing the Department for the work as it is done. Either one is bad practice because if the work is not being done in the first nine months of the year, particularly during the good weather months and long days, the craziest thing happens, and it is a practice I have seen myself. This involves the work being done in December and people are paid overtime to work in dark, cold winter nights. If the agencies are not sending in the bills, that is bad accountancy practice because it means the Department is taking people's word that they will spend all the money. If they have spent €5 million or €6 million - they should have spent €7.5 million by this point - they should have submitted bills for that amount and the Department should have paid them. Will the Minister explain why this always happens with capital? This is

not an isolated case. This practice occurs across the Estimates. The Minister would be correct to point out that it also happened in my time. While that is true, I fought against it, just as I am fighting against it now. It is bad practice.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Profile is important because it is what we predicted. We continue to predict that the allocation will be fully spent. We have reached 80% of profile. This level of expenditure is what we expected by now so we believe we are on track. The bills are coming in. Almost €4 million has been spent under the built heritage investment scheme, BHI, and the structures at risk funds. Bullet payments are made in October and November. Work on 431 projects is ongoing during the year. That may help clarify the position. We will spend the full allocation. Sometimes the bills come in at the end of the year. Apologies, I indicated we had reached 80% of profile when I should have said 90%.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: It does not matter because it is irrelevant. This is done in the Department to avoid me asking the awkward question about why it is so far behind profile.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: No, we are not.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: If the Department had put in the profile *pro rata* across the year the way the bills should have come in and the work should have been done-----

Deputy Josepha Madigan: We are 90% of profile.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: That profile is low to avoid awkward questions. The Minister is telling me the Department has probably been billed for €4 million but work to a value of €7 million has probably been done. I want to know why was there a delay in getting the bills in if the work is done. This messing goes on in agencies all of the time and in two weeks' time, we will have exactly the same argument with the Minister of State, Deputy Michael Ring.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Most of the work happens during the summer.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Na billí.

Chairman: Please allow the Minister to reply in full.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: I only wanted to say that much.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: We will move on. As the Minister knows, with go deimhin the Chairman, I have been very involved in the issue of Moore Street. It is a very important issue on which work is ongoing in the Department. Will the Minister indicate what the Department's plans are for 14 to 17 Moore Street? Also, we notice in the ten-year plan, to which the Minister alluded in her opening statement, that capital moneys will be made available. We welcome this. Two projects were specifically mentioned. There is to be an Irish language centre in Dublin, while further space is to be provided for the museum. I wonder if work is ongoing in the Department to scope out these projects. Is the Minister looking at Moore Street and its environs as possible locations for both projects? The Irish language centre project will be central for the city, the northside, in particular, with its many transport links. On the museum project, I could not think of a place in the city where there would be a better footfall than the area around O'Connell Street, Moore Street and Henry Street. What are the Minister's thoughts on the matter? I know that she has a big interest in this issue and wonder if progress has been made in scoping out the projects to see how we will progress from here.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: We plan to undertake some repair works, in conjunction with

the Office of Public Works, at 14 to 17 Moore Street. We will also continue to assist the consultative group and are engaged in dialogue on possible cultural interests. Nothing has yet been firmly decided.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I thank the Minister.

Chairman: Buíochas. Tosnóimid anois leis an Aire Stáit, an Teachta McHugh.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Leithdháileadh €43.5 milliún in 2017 do chlár C don Ghaeilge, don Ghaeltacht agus do na hoileáin. Tá maoiniú reatha de €33.196 milliún san áireamh anseo, mar aon le €10.348 milliún i gcaiteachas caipitil. Ba é €15.818 milliún an t-ollchaitheachas iomlán do chlár C go dtí 30 Meitheamh 2018. Mar is eol don gcoiste, tá réimse leathan oibre agus gníomhaíochtaí idir lámhe agam féin agus ag mo chuid oifigigh chun tacú leis an Ghaeilge. Is orainn atá an fhreagracht fhoriomlán as cur i bhfeidhm na Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030 mar aon leis an bPlean Gníomhaíochta cúig bliana 2018-2022 lena mbaineann, ina leagtar amach spriocanna sonracha agus na hamscálaí a bhaineann leo. Sílim go bhfuil sé tábhachtach a aithint gur cuid lárnach de chur chun feidhme na Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge an obair agus an infheistíocht leanúnach atá ar bun i ndáil le raon leathan scéimeanna, beart, clár agus tionscnamh atá á maoiniú ó rannóg na Gaeltachta sa Roinn.

Ó cuireadh tús leis an bpróiseas pleanála teanga ceithre bliana ó shin, is ar ullmhúchán pleananna a bhí an próiseas dírithe den chuid is mó. Lean an obair seo ar aghaidh i gcaitheamh na bliana anuraidh. I mbliana, áfach, is ar chur chun feidhme na bpleananna sin atá an fócas. Tá mo Roinn ag cur allúntas ar fiú €850,000 chun cuidiú le cur chun feidhme an phróisis pleanála teanga sa bhliain reatha. Tá an chéad deich gcinn de na pleananna seo seolta anois agam agus tá allúntas ar fiú idir €100,000 agus €150,000 an ceann á chur ar fáil sa chéad bhliain chun tús a chur lena gcur chun feidhme. Tabharfaidh an t-allúntas seo deis do na coistí áitiúla oifigigh pleanála teanga a fhostú chun tús a chur le cur chun feidhme a gcuid pleananna. Anuas air sin, dár ndóigh, beidh fáil ag na coistí seo sa ghearrthéarma ar na tacaíochtaí éagsúla atá ar fáil faoin réimse leathan scéimeanna atá á riaradh ag mo Roinn agus ag Údarás na Gaeltachta. Tá sé beartaithe cúig phlean eile a cheadú i mbliana. Níos luaithe i mbliana, d'fhéach mo Roinn ar na riachtanais choiteanna a bhí sonraithe ag na pobail éagsúla ina gcuid pleananna agus rinneadh leasú ar scéimeanna na Roinne chun freastal ar na riachtanais sin. Ag baint úsáide as an gcur chuige seo, leithdháileadh líon suntasach airgid bhreise do Ealaín na Gaeltachta, Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta agus Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta chun tacú le hearnálacha na n-ealaíon, an teaghlaigh agus na luathbhlianta faoi seach sa Ghaeltacht. Tabharfar tacaíocht bhreise chun tacú le forbairt óige sa Ghaeltacht fosta. Ag baint úsáide as an gcur chuige seo, táim thar a bheith muiníneach go mbeidh an Stát in ann freastal ar an mbealach is cuí agus is éifeachtaí ar riachtanais an phobail leis na hacmhainní atá ar fáil.

Cuireann mo Roinn maoiniú ar fáil do Údarás na Gaeltachta, agus oibríonn sí i ndlúthchomhar leis mar an ghníomhaireacht forbartha réigiúnach don Ghaeltacht. Maidir le buiséad caipitil an údaráis do 2018, ardaíodh an figiúr bunlíne go €7 milliún i mbliana. Cuirfidh an maoiniú breise seo ar chumas Údarás na Gaeltachta poist a choinneáil ina chliantchuideachtaí sa Ghaeltacht agus tuilleadh infheistíochta a mhealladh go ceantair Ghaeltachta. Chuige sin, de réir mar a thuigim, tá sé mar aidhm ag an údarás 500 post nua a chruthú sa Ghaeltacht in 2018. Cuireadh acmhainní reatha breise ar fáil don údarás i mbliana freisin d'fhonn tacaíochtaí do chomharchumainn agus eagraíochtaí pobail a mhéadú.

Glacadh roinnt céimeanna anseo in Éirinn agus sa Bhruiséil chun deireadh a chur leis an maolú ar úsáid na Gaeilge in institiúidí an Aontais Eorpaigh in 2021. Tá thart ar €1 milliún

á leithdháileadh arís i mbliana don earnáil tríú leibhéal chun cúrsaí oiliúna cuí a sholáthar do na phoist san Aontas Eorpach. Tá borradh faoin earnáil sin faoi láthair, agus d'fhógair an European Personnel Selection Office, EPSO, 72 phost d'aistritheoirí le déanaí. Tá an obair maidir le deireadh a chur leis an maolú á déanamh de réir an sceidil agus táim lánmhuiníneach go mbeimid in ann deireadh a chur leis an maolú in 2021. Maidir le teagasc na Gaeilge in ollscoileanna thar lear, tá an-rath ar an gclár seo agus tá méadú leanúnach ag teacht ar líon na n-iarratas faoin scéim bliain i ndiaidh bliana. Mar aitheantas ar an méid sin, tá deontais ar fiú €1.8 milliún san iomlán iad ceadaithe don tréimhse 2016-17 go 2018-19 le haghaidh os cionn 40 ollscoil agus coláistí tríú leibhéal timpeall na cruinne. Cuireann an scéim seo go mór le lé-ann na Gaeilge sa phobal acadúil idirnáisiúnta agus ardaítear stádas na teanga dá réir.

Chairman: Míle buíochas as sin. Istigh anseo i dTithe an Oireachtais bímid i gcónaí ag caint faoi silos. Is cuma cén coiste atá ann bímid i gcónaí ag caint faoi silos agus nach mbíonn na Ranna ag obair le chéile ar chor ar bith. Chuir an Teachta Smyth ceist ar an Aire Stáit níos luaithe faoin méid Gaelscoileanna atá cruthaithe sa tír seo agus dúirt sé nach raibh a fhios aige cé mhéad a bhí tógtha an bliain seo agus go bhfaighidh sé an t-eolas ón Roinn Oideachas agus Scileanna. Mar Aire Stáit atá freagrach as an Ghaeltacht, tá sé dochreidte nach mbeadh sé ar an eolas faoi cé mhéad Gaelscoileanna atá tógtha sa tír seo. Taispeánann sé an easpa ceangal agus cumarsáid idir an Roinn agus an Roinn Oideachas agus Scileanna - an Roinn ina bhfuil an tábhacht is mó ann i leith an Ghaeilge. I rith an tsamhraidh seo, chualamar go mbeadh na páistí ag dul ar ais go dtí an meánscoil in Inis Meáin agus nach mbeadh múinteoir le fáil do cuid de na hábhair i nGaeilge. Taispeánann sé sin an mana uafásach atá ag an Roinn ar an Ghaeltacht. Ba cheart go mbeadh an dá Roinn fite fuaite le chéile mar gheall ar a chuid pleananna agus gníomhaíochtaí. Nuair a bhíonn Creative Ireland, an Chomhairle Ealaíon agus Údarás Craolacháin na hÉireann anseo labhraíonn siad faoin easpa dualgais atá orthu an Gaeilge a chur chun cinn. An seachtain seo chaite chualamar go raibh an Aire Sláinte, an Teachta Harris, chun dul ar aghaidh le rabhadh sláinte a chur ar buidéalí alcóil ach nach mbeadh sé á déanamh ach in aon teanga amháin. Is cosúil go bhfuil blinkers capaill ar an Roinn seo agus go bhfuil sí dírithe ar a cuid oibre amháin agus gan a bheith ag féachaint ar an tionchar iomlán atá aici ar gach taobh den Rialtas. Chun troid in aghaidh an nóis sin, bhí an tAire Stáit chun bheith mar chathaoirleach ar choiste idir-rannach chun go mbeidh an t-eolas sin ag sruthú ó gach taobh go dtí gach taobh eile. D'ardaigh Teachta eile pointe faoi na hoifigí poist sna Gaeltachtaí. Tá a fhios ag an Aire Stáit féin go bhfuil an Ghaeilge ag brath ar gach Roinn a bheith ag obair le chéile ar an ábhar seo. Muna bhfuil aon duine in ann é sin a tharraingt le chéile, beimid i dtrioblóid. Sin an chéad cheist mar gheall ar na blinkers atá ar an Roinn seo.

Mar gheall ar chaiteachas, d'ardaigh mise an t-ábhar faoi Fhoras na Gaeilge ach má fheictear ar an gcaiteachas iomlán ar an nGaeilge táimid fós ag caint faoi chúrsaí na leathphingine i gcomparáid leis na Ranna eile. Tá Údarás na Gaeltachta fós thíos mar gheall ar an airgead a chaitheann sé. Má bhreathnaíonn duine ar an IDA nó Fiontar Éireann, tá ardú de 50% tar éis teacht ar an airgeadas a fhaigheann siad. Sin an cheist eile.

Mar gheall ar na pleananna teanga, b'fhéidir go bhfuil an t-eolas mícheart agam ach ceapaim nach bhfuil pingin faighte ag aon phlean teanga go dtí seo fós. Bhí an t-iarTeachta Dinny McGinley i gcathaoir an Aire Stáit in 2013 agus thóg seisean an Bille sin isteach. Táimid ag caint faoi 2018. Tá cúig bliana imithe anois agus, cé go bhfuil a fhios agam ón ráiteas a thug an tAire Stáit dom go bhfuil sé ar tí an t-airgead a chaitheamh ar an earnáil seo, níl an t-airgead ag dul isteach i leith na rudaí seo fós.

Mar gheall ar Bhliain na Gaeilge, is léir ón bhfreagra a thug an tAire Stáit don Teachta

Niamh Smyth nach bhfuil aon slat tomhais ann. Dúirt an tAire Stáit go bhfuil an CSO nó an daonáireamh ann mar gheall ar bheith cinnte faoin méid daoine a bhíonn ag labhairt na Gaeilge lá i ndiadh lae, ach tá go leor pobalbhreitheanna ar fáil ó RED C agus a leithéid. Bíonn comhlachtaí príobháideacha ag úsáid na heagraíochtaí sin i gcónaí chun a fháil amach an bhfuil daoine ag cloisteáil a gcuid teachtaireachtaí nó an bhfuil siad ag aithint an branda atá acu nó rudaí cosúil leis sin. Is féidir leis an tAire Stáit agus an Roinn a bheith giota beag cruthaitheach idir daonáirimh chun a fháil amach an bhfuilimid ag fáil luacha mar gheall ar an gcaiteachas ar an rud sa tír seo.

An bhfuil aon scéal faoin gcultúrlann i mBaile Átha Cliath? Chuala mé go bhfuil dul chun cinn tagtha ar an ábhar sin agus ba mhaith liom dea-eolas a chloisteáil faoi más féidir. Nuair atáim ag dul thart timpeall na tíre agus ag caint leis na comharchumainn áitiúla agus clubanna óige sna Gaeltachtaí, tá siad i gcónaí ag gearán faoin méid airgeadais atá siadsan ag fáil agus faoin mbrú uafásach atá ag teacht orthu dá bharr. Sin mo mhéid.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCathaoirleach. Bhí cúpla moladh agus cúpla ceist aige. Ní aontaím leis maidir leis an Roinn a bheith ag obair i silo. Níl a fhios agam cén Gaeilge atá ar silo, ach níl sin fíor ná ceart. Tá sárobair déanta idir mo Roinn féin, an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna agus an Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige maidir leis an obair a éiríonn as an phlean gníomhaíochta cúig-bliana. Chomh maith leis sin, tá go leor déanta maidir leis an obair a éiríonn as an Bhille teangacha freisin. Mar shampla, an chéad uair a tháinig mise isteach mar Aire Stáit le freagracht as an nGaeilge in 2014, ní raibh an caidreamh idir an Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe, an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna agus an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta rómhaith ach anois tá sé an-difriúil. Tá comhaontú déanta maidir leis an figiúr de 20% de phoist sa Státseirbhís a bheith líonta le daoine le Gaeilge. Táim muiníneach go mbeidh dul chun cinn déanta air sin roimh dheireadh na bliana.

Chomh maith leis sin tá an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna agus mo Roinn féin ag obair as lámh a chéile maidir le pleanáil teanga agus maidir le polasaí oideachais. Le bheith ionraic, tá deacrachtaí ann. Mar shampla, tá deacrachtaí maidir le teacht ar mhúinteoirí scoile le Gaeilge. Tá an ceart ag an gCathaoirleach. D'ardaigh sé ceist fadúda Inis Meáin. Tá rud soiléir ag baint le hInis Meáin. Bhí an Taoiseach ansin cúpla mí ó shin. Bhí mise leis. Beidh stádas na meán-scoile sin aitheanta. Tá rudaí dearfacha ag bogadh ar aghaidh.

D'ardaigh an Cathaoirleach ceist fadúda buiséad caipitil Údarás na Gaeltachta. Tá mé i gcónaí ag lorg breis airgid fá choinne cúrsaí caipitil. Sin an fáth go bhfuil sé ráite sa phlean náisiúnta go mbeidh breis airgid ar fáil amach anseo. Tá brú ormsa agus orainn-----

Chairman: An féidir liom teacht isteach le giota beag? Bím ag cloisteáil go bhfuil sé i bplean forbartha an Rialtais go bhfuil sé chun caiteachas de €1.1 billiún a chur ar fáil, go mbeidh 15% den mhéid sin dírithe ar an nGaeltacht, agus go bhfuil sé seo iontach, ach sa phlean forbartha náisiúnta, Transforming Ireland, a bhí ann idir 2007 agus 2013 bhí €2.1 billiún i gceist agus bhí 22% den figiúr sin ag dul go dtí an Ghaeltacht. Is titim iomlán atá i gceist. An freagra a bhíonn ann mar gheall ar an titim uafásach in Údarás na Gaeltachta ná an méid airgid atá an Rialtas chun tabhairt go dtí an earnáil sa todhchaí. Tá an freagra sin lofa i gcomparáid leis an airgead a bhí curtha isteach roimhe.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Bhí na spriocanna ar pháipéar in 2007 ach níor cuireadh an plean seo i bhfeidhm riamh. Ba shin an smaoinreamh a bhí ann ag an am sin agus ba am difriúil é fosta. Anois tá muidne-----

Chairman: Tá an méid caiteachais agus an buiséad iomlán don tír mar an gcéanna agus a bhí sé in 2008.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Níor cuireadh é i bhfeidhm. Anois tá gealltanais déanta maidir leis an €178 milliún don bhuiséad caipitil thar na deich mbliana atá romhainn. Tá gealltanais déanta maidir leis sin.

Maidir le pleanáil teanga, bhí an Cathaoirleach ag caint fadúda 2012. Tá an ceart aige. Thug an t-iarTeachta Dinny McGinley, mar Aire Stáit ar a raibh freagracht don Ghaeilge, an Bille isteach ag an am sin. Bhí muidne ag obair go dian ar an phlean sin. Anois táimid ag streachailt chun déileáil leis an éileamh ar an talamh. Is léir go mbeidh an pobal tiomanta don phleanáil teanga fosta. Mar shampla, chas mé le fear ó Ghaoth Dobhair Dé Luain. Tháinig sé isteach sa phost cúpla seachtain ó shin. Tá Gort a' Choirce agus ceantair eile, mar shampla, Cois Fharráige, ag iarraidh agallaimh a chur ar dhaoine. Táim sásta leis na pleananna a bheidh á mbaint amach sna ceantair Ghaeltachta, agus taobh amuigh dóibh freisin má chuirtear na bailte seirbhíse Gaeltachta san áireamh. Dá mbeadh an t-éileamh ann, bheadh an gealltanais ann. Tá an bunlíne anois €2.2 milliún. Beidh sin ina bhunlíne. Sa bhuiséad an tseachtain seo chugainn beimid ag iarraidh airgead breise mar tá an t-éileamh ag ardú. Beidh na daoine uilig ag teacht isteach sna poist, agus b'fhéidir go mbeidh an t-éileamh níos mó an bhliain seo chugainn. Tá an bunlíne sábháilte agus táimid ag dul ar aghaidh ina dhiaidh sin.

Bhí an Cathaoirleach ag caint faoin slat tomhais. Tá slata tomhais difriúla ar fáil maidir leis an nGaeilge. Mar shampla, i leith ceantar láidir Gaeltachta, mar shampla, Gaoth Dobhair nó an Ceathrú Rua, beidh líon na ndaoine a úsáideann an teanga ó lá go lá ina slat tomhais. Is é an slat tomhais líon na ndaoine a úsáideann an teanga agus iad ag dul isteach sa siopa nó go dtí Aifreann. Sin an slat tomhais. Sin an measúnú a fheicimid ar an talamh. Chomh maith leis sin, is slat tomhais an caidreamh leis an obair atá ag dul ar aghaidh. Mar shampla, inniu bhí lainseáil sa Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála de thogra idirnáisiúnta ina mbeidh Conradh na Gaeilge ag obair leis an Roinn. Beidh siad ag cur trealamh agus sonraí ar fáil do dhaoine Éireannacha taobh amuigh den tír. Tá cuid mhór oibre déanta ó thaobh an chomhoibrithe atá ar fáil maidir leis sin.

Chairman: An féidir liom teacht isteach go sciobtha ar an bpointe sin? Tá seanfhocal i mBéarla a úsáidtear i gcúrsaí bainistíochta, "if you cannot measure, you cannot manage". Muna bhfuil togra slaithe tomhais á chur i bhfeidhm ag an Roinn sin go rialta chun a fháil amach cén impact atá i gceist-----

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá an tionchar agus an slat tomhais le feiceáil san obair atá déanta ag an Aire, an Teachta Bruton, ar an pholasáí oideachais. Nuair a bhí sé-----

Chairman: Ní slat tomhais é sin.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Is slat tomhais é sin. Tá an Roinn ag déanamh comhairliúchán leis na bunscoileanna agus na meánscoileanna agus ag iarraidh breis tacaíochta dóibh. Tá bearna mór i gcúpla ceantar Gaeltachta nach bhfuil múinteoir scoile ar fáil dóibh. Tá an deacracht chéanna i nGaelscoileanna taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht. Mar atá a fhios ag an gCathaoirleach, tá éileamh mór ar dhaoine le Gaeilge chun matamaitic, fisic nó ceimic a mhúineadh.

Chairman: Nílím ag caint faoi éileamh.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Is é sin an slat tomhais, áfach, na daoine le Gaeilge. Sin an cheist a chur an Cathaoirleach orm.

Chairman: Tá brón orm. B'fhéidir go bhfuil míthuiscint ann. Níl mé ag caint faoi-----

Deputy Joe McHugh: Níl aon míthuiscint ann.

Chairman: An ligfidh an tAire Stáit dom críochnú? Níl mé ag caint faoi éileamh. Tá a fhios ag gach uile duine sa tír seo go bhfuil fíor éileamh ar na seirbhísí seo. Táim ag caint faoi rud éigin eile. Táim ag iarraidh a fháil amach conas a mbíonn a fhios ag an Aire Stáit agus a Roinn go bhfuil a gcuid uirlisí, cosúil le Bliain na Gaeilge, ag obair? Conas a bhfuil a fhios acu go bhfuil tionchar acu nó go bhfuil dul chun cinn tagtha ar an líon daoine atá ag labhairt as Gaeilge? Sin an slat tomhais atá ann. Dá mbeinn i mo chomhlacht príobháideach bheinn ag déanamh pobalbhreitheanna go rialta chun a fháil amach an bhfuil daoine in ann an teachtaireacht a chloisteáil agus an bhfuil siad ag athrú a gcuid iompair dá bharr.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Nuair a chuir an Teachta Niamh Smyth an cheist orm ar dtús, bhí mé ag caint fadúda an daonáireamh. Is é sin an slat tomhais maidir leis an líon daoine a úsáideann an teanga ó lá go lá. Nuair a tháinig an polasaí oideachais isteach, bhí measúnú déanta ag an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna freisin. Bhí comhairliúcháin ann agus bhí sí ag obair le chéile le daoine. Sin an fáth go mbeidh an pleanáil teanga thar a bheith tábhachtach amach anseo. Is é an ról a bheidh ag na daoine a tagann isteach mar oifigigh pleanála teanga ná sárobair a dhéanamh sa cheantar agus measúnú a dhéanamh fadúda na bunscoileanna, na meánscoileanna, rudaí spóirt agus rannóga agus earnálacha eile. Beidh tionchar mór acu agus iad ag obair. Sin an fáth go bhfuil an reachtaíocht de dhíth.

Maidir leis an gceist faoin gcultúrlann, tá tiomantas agus gealltanas déanta fadúda an €4 milliún. Táimid ag obair as lámh a chéile le Conradh na Gaeilge. Táimid ag déanamh réamhoibre fadúda an t-ionad seo.

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae: I am glad to have the opportunity to speak at this committee. For some time I have been hoping to talk to the Minister of State in a public forum such as this because what I have to talk about is very important to some on the Ballinskelligs side of my constituency. Across the road today we met wonderful people from Conradh na Gaeilge which does great work and is trying to survive. We also met people from the islands. The Minister of State also comes from a county that has islands lying off it. We must support them in whatever way we can to ensure people will remain on them because it is tough going. I know that they do well in the summer, but the winter is long. They point out that since 2007 or 2008 the budget for the islands has been cut by 70%. They are not asking to have it restored all in one year and have made out a programme. Their hope or wish is that from next year, through 2020 and 2021, the Government will at least restore the budget to what it was in 2007 and 2008. As we all know, costs, including the cost of living, have gone through the roof. This is a very reasonable request because the people in question do wonderful work.

I am not a good Irish speaker, but I can understand what is being said, in case anyone thinks I do not. Again, we have to support those who speak the language. They are part of our heritage and trying to do their best. It is very important that the Minister of State remember and fight for them. I know that he is not the senior Minister, but he must tackle the fellows to ensure he will get a slice for the people both he and I represent.

The proposed closure of the post office in Ballinskelligs has frightened the daylight out of the people living there. It is a wonderful community which is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean on three sides. If one were to travel westward, the next stop would be New York. When I hear the Minister of State say that if the post office is not retained in Ballinskelligs - I hope it will

be - he will provide supports in post offices in adjoining areas - Cahersiveen and Waterville - I have to remind him of the distances involved. For many living on the islands, it is 22 km one way or a return journey of 44 km, or about 30 miles, which is not on. We have the advantage of having a local shopkeeper who has signalled that he would be prepared to tender for the post office contract. One of the early meetings we attended was in respect of Ballylongford post office. I am sorry to say I was notified today that the appeal to have the contract tendered for has been refused by An Post. I hope that will not happen in the case of Ballinskelligs post office for reasons to do with the Gaelic language and culture. There were up to 400 people at the meeting which I attended. What was very interesting about it was that everyone of the many who spoke mostly spoke in Irish. In that context, it would not be fair to take them out of that environment to a place where English is mainly spoken such as Cahersiveen or Waterville. When they go into the post office in Ballinskelligs, they speak in Irish to their neighbours and whoever else is in it at the time. It is totally different. If we cannot save this one post office, we do not have much hope of saving the Irish language and I cannot see where we are going. In the light of the fact that the Minister of State said he was prepared to provide resources in adjoining post offices, I ask him to ensure whatever resources he is prepared to provide be used to support the retention of the post office in Ballinskelligs and that he support any associated appeal. We are very lucky. We have the one person who is interested and has another business that would be run side by side. His name is Nicholas Brown. I will do everything to support his application. I appeal to the Minister of State to follow this up because I believe he has a role to play in supporting the Irish language.

Peadar Mac Fhlannchadha travelled all the way from Galway to that meeting in the very deepest corner of south Kerry to support the people who were badly upset and completely at sea. If they lose this post office, they will lose their identity as a Gaeltacht Irish-speaking community. I am asking the Minister of State for all the support he can give in the appeal by this community to save its post office.

Chairman: As Deputy Collins wishes to address a similar issue, we might take the two together before an answer is given.

Deputy Michael Collins: I thank both Ministers for appearing before the committee today. The Minister of State, Deputy McHugh, said that approximately €700,000 of his budget remains to be spent. This might be an ideal opportunity for him to spend a little more of that budget on education and housing. My constituency has eight islands off the coast of west Cork. People are coming to my constituency clinics and I am going to Sherkin Island, Hare Island and other islands. They are finding it difficult and costly. The schools have been closed on both those islands. The parents are trying to work. They are leaving early in the morning. There is nobody to bring their children to school on the mainland other than perhaps an aged grandparent. The schools were closed because of the falling numbers on those islands. This issue has been going on for some time. They have been looking for a chaperone or some resolution to the issue but none is available. I met parents who are being charged for bringing their children from the island to the national schools on the ferry. I respect that the ferry operators need to survive. Part of the budget should be set aside to address these issues because the education of the children on our islands is very important.

Housing on islands is being totally ignored. If social housing is repeatedly overlooked in budgets, there will be no future. Young couples and young single people are leaving the islands and not returning. The census shows falling population numbers on all the islands. The Government must find some way to turn this around. The only way to do so is to make life a little

easier for those who have to leave the island to work every day by ensuring they do so in the knowledge that their children are brought to and from school. On the mainland, schoolchildren are given bus transport. On the islands, parents are asked to pay the ferry operator which causes serious financial difficulty for some of them. They also need somebody to accompany the children on their way to and from school. In schools, special needs assistants and all sorts of other help are provided to children who have difficulties. Maybe something along these lines could be considered to help people on the islands.

As Deputy Danny Healy-Rae said, we met representatives of Conradh na Gaeilge today. I am not very fluent in Irish and I will not point the finger at anybody who can speak the language. I wish I could. Maybe down the road I could tune up on it a bit. The language is in need of extra funding because it is dying on its feet as we speak. We might have an opportunity next Tuesday to turn that around. I ask the Minister of State to look at that. I know we are in the dying hours before the budget and I presume many decisions have been finalised. Investment in our language is vital for this country. Most other countries are very proud of their languages. We also should think along those lines.

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae: I was asked to highlight one further matter. As the Minister of State knows, Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne is operating in west Dingle. One of the managers, whose name is Páidí Ó Sé, highlighted the problem it has getting people to participate in the community employment scheme. One of the difficulties the organisation is encountering is that people cannot be on the scheme after the age of 60. It is difficult to get people on these schemes because of reducing numbers. Youngsters have gone, people are emigrating and everything. Community employment does invaluable work for communities. The local authority is fine for certain things. Particularly in Gaeltacht areas I ask the Minister of State to look at the silly rule that people have to leave the scheme at 60 years of age. It should be extended to the normal pension age and the schemes should be allowed to operate away. Participants are only getting €20 more for their trouble, but they feel they are doing a service and the work gets them out of the house. It is good for their mind and for the organisations for which they are working.

Deputy Joe McHugh: I thank the Deputies for raising a broad spectrum of important issues. It proves how multifaceted rural Ireland is. My colleague, the Minister of State, Deputy Griffin, has contacted me about the issue Deputy Danny Healy-Rae mentioned. I wish the individual who is making the application well with the process. It is an independent process and obviously there will be no political influence on the outcome. I wish the community well and hope something good comes out of that.

I acknowledge the Deputy's emphasis on the language. Men and women coming in from very rural areas to meet people engaging in the language goes back to the point I made to the Chairman earlier. How can we measure scientifically or exactly who is using a language, when they are using it and what groups are using it? I always go back to the core basics that if somebody is going to the shop to buy a loaf, to the post office or other public area or to the bingo, our aspiration is that he or she will not think twice about using the Irish language. It should be natural to speak Irish. I acknowledge what the Deputy is saying.

My predecessor, the Minister of State, Deputy Kyne, was involved with my colleague, the Minister of State, Deputy Griffin, in setting up an interagency task force in that part of Kerry. We might be able to set up some sort of connection with Deputy Danny Healy-Rae and the group in question. Údarás na Gaeltachta is very much involved. It would be an important group to contact on this issue also.

The Deputy mentioned community employment schemes. Outside the CE schemes, Údarás na Gaeltachta also has a brief. Obviously it works within the rules and regulations. It might be worth the Deputy's while exploring that through the task force because it is an interagency and interdepartmental group. Its report should be completed shortly. We can connect the Deputy into that. Páidí Ó Sé would be in the Dingle area. We will get that connection.

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae mentioned Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne. It has great people working on the ground and it is very hard to put a job description on their role. Let us say they go straight to the category of any other business assigned. They work with elderly people and the younger population and in healthcare, education and the community. They work on a broad spectrum of areas and I agree they need support. Deputy Ó Cuív raised it in the Dáil yesterday that we need to look at resources for them. I am working hard. I have had a meeting with the Minister for Finance, Deputy Donohoe, regarding the budget. Nothing has been decided. We will find out next Tuesday. In the past two years, we have increased the funding by €350,000. I know we can increase it further. I take the point that has been made. I know there is a big stocaireacht, or campaign, in Buswells Hotel today. I will try to get over to meet those involved.

Deputy Michael Collins raised some broad issues and referred specifically to ferry services. We were involved in that. We dealt very closely with Aisling Moran, a great worker who has led on a number of fronts in the arts area, etc. We found solutions when we had difficulties. The community took the decision to close the school. We understood that there were issues with ferry times because people had to get back and people had to wait. We allocated extra money for additional ferry services. Obviously, that is still not a solution. I implore the people who have a role in making decisions on the timetabling of ferry services to continue to link with the community. There is an extra funding stream there for an extra service. Obviously, it is still not a solution. The Deputy also referred to the resources being sought by the Irish-language comharchumann. I will take that on board as well.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: It is unfortunate that there was an overlap with committee meetings earlier. The Minister stated that an unprecedented amount of money is being provided for the Irish language under the national development plan. Given that the provision of €178 million works out at €17.8 million a year, I ask her to outline the basis for her statement to the effect that the amount is unprecedented. In 2008, national expenditure on Voted services was €61.86 billion. In 2018, it is €61.7 billion. The amounts are almost exactly the same. All of the Estimate to which I refer was spent. That can be seen by looking at what was spent in 2007. The Estimate for 2008 provided for total expenditure of €121 million under the Vote for an Ghaeilge, an Ghaeltacht, na hoileáin agus an Foras Teanga. The equivalent figure for 2018 is €62 million, which is approximately half of the figure from a decade ago. I remind the Minister that I am comparing two periods of identical national expenditure. The amount of money being provided for an Ghaeilge, an Ghaeltacht agus na hoileáin has been halved. An examination of capital expenditure, which is basically what is in the national development plan, will show that there was capital expenditure of €73 million in 2008, whereas €10 million is being provided for in 2018. That is a ratio of over 7:1. I have to say I find the Minister's statement to the effect that this is an unprecedented plan difficult to take. I ask the Minister to outline the basis on which she refers to the plan as unprecedented. Perhaps she means that it is unprecedentedly small.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: I do not accept what the Deputy states. The €1.2 billion capital investment plan, which we launched earlier in the year, is an unprecedented plan. It relates to cultural heritage and the Gaeltacht. It is the tripartite of all those different sectors. It is

absolutely unprecedented. I do not think there has ever been a spend of such significance in this area. That is well acknowledged. The announcement was made at the launch with the Taoiseach, the Minister for Finance and the Minister of State, Deputy McHugh. I do not think we should take 2008 as a benchmark. I assume that is the benchmark. We all know what happened. I do not think we should look at it in that context. I am very pleased with the amount of money - €178 million - going into the Irish language. It will create 1,000 jobs in the Gaeltacht each year, supported through Údarás na Gaeltachta. We have the Bliain na Gaeilge, which has been mentioned, this year. We have support for the island communities. It is hoped that a flagship language and cultural centre and hub will be developed in Dublin city. Help is being given to the Aran Islands and Tory Island, etc. I think it is unprecedented because it is a ten-year plan. It is limited to the national planning framework as well.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I hear what the Minister is saying. She is saying it is for the culture and the heritage, but it is not for the Gaeilge.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: It is for the Gaeltacht.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: No. There is €17 million a year for the Gaeilge. If the Minister is not happy with 2008, I can tell her that the expenditure on Voted services for 2007 was considerably less than the expenditure for 2008 and therefore considerably less than what we are spending this year. The Minister and I understand what Voted services are.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: The Deputy is taking 2008 as the benchmark.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: No, I am talking about 2007 now.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: I would not accept 2008 as anything to set a benchmark against.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Then we will take 2007.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: With respect, the spending had spiralled out of control.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: No, I am saying that if-----

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Then we found ourselves in a situation in which there was no money left to spend on anything. In my view, what we are doing now is worthwhile. I think it is unprecedented. I think it will help the Irish language as well as culture and heritage. Luckily, after ten years we are in position to do this. We were not in a position to do this before now because of the unrealistic spend we saw over previous decades, including in 2007. That is my view.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I want to talk about the facts. There was a budget surplus in 2008 and an even bigger surplus in 2007. The overall spend of €61.8 billion in 2008 is exactly same as the overall spend of €61.8 billion this year. Those are facts. It is also a fact that the slice of the cake being given to the Gaeltacht and the Irish language is absolutely minuscule compared to when we were in government. That is a fact.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Yes, but-----

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: We will move on.

Deputy Josepha Madigan: We will move on.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tá roinnt ceisteanna agam don Aire Stáit. Ar chuir Údarás na

Gaeltachta in iúl dó go bhfuil an méid airgid atá curtha ar fáil don údarás go dáta caite acu? Go deimhin féin, tá an caiteachas sa taobh sin láidir. Tá an cás seo neamhchosúil leis an mhéid a bhí á rá agam ar ball, nach rabhthas in ann an t-airgead a chaitheamh in am. Dá mbeadh breis airgid ar fáil don údarás roimh dheireadh na bliana, an bhféadfadh an t-údarás é a chaitheamh ar thograí caipitil?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Táimid i gcónaí ag labhairt faoi bhreis airgid a fháil. Tá mé ag déanamh fíor-iarracht faoi láthair. Tá sé i gceist go mbeidh €7 milliún ar fáil i mbliana le haghaidh na dtograí caipitil. Níl aon toradh maidir leis an gcaiteachas reatha go fóill.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Ag éirí as sin, is léir ag an bpointe seo nach gcaithfidh an tAire Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail a chuid airgid caipitil i mbliana. An raibh aon chomhrá ag an Aire Stáit leis an Aire, an Teachta Ring, agus leis an Aire Airgeadais, an Teachta Donohoe, go dtí seo maidir leis an gcuid den airgead nach mbeidh an tAire Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail in ann a chaitheamh a chaitheamh ar an nGaeltacht agus ar na hoileáin?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Má tá aon airgead breise ar fáil, tá mé anseo. Bíonn mé ag labhairt le mo chomhghleacaithe - an Aire, an Teachta Ring; agus an Aire Stáit, an Teachta Kyne - mar chuid den chomhoibriú idir an dá Roinn. Má tá aon airgead ar fáil, beidh mé sásta é a chaitheamh.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Chuirfinn comhairle ar an Aire Stáit labhairt leis an Aire, an Teachta Ring. Tá go leor airgead nach mbeidh sé in ann caitheamh roimh dheireadh na bliana.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Okay. Go raibh maith agat.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tá €2.65 milliún ar fáil i mbliana faoi cheannteideal áirithe sna Meastacháin - an phleanáil Gaeilge faoin straitéis 20 bliain don Ghaeilge. Dúradh liom leathbhealach tríd an mbliain nach raibh ach €100,000 íoctha amach ag an Roinn as an €2.65 milliún sin. Cé mhéad atá íoctha amach ag an Roinn anois?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Is féidir liom é a bhriseadh síos go dtí €825,000-----

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tar éis naoi mí, tá €825,000 íoctha.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Yes.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Is céatadán an-bheag den airgead é sin tar éis naoi mí.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Ag deireadh mhí an Mheithimh, ní raibh aon airgead caite.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: An féidir é sin a mhíniú?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá €825,000 íoctha anois.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: An bhfuil sé i gceist ag an Rialtas €1.8 milliún a chaitheamh sna trí mhí deireanacha den bhliain?

Deputy Joe McHugh: An mbaineann an cheist sin le planáil teanga?

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Baineann.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá an t-éileamh i gceist anseo. Tá an scéim seo tiomanta ag an bpoibál, mar is eol don Teachta. Beidh mé sásta má tá an t-airgead caite roimh dheireadh na bliana

agus tá mé muiníneach go dtarlóidh sé sin.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tá rudaí faoi leith i gceist leis an €2.65 milliún sin. Ní pleanáil teanga amháin atá i gceist. De réir mar a thuigim, tá caiteachas ar rudaí eile i gceist. An féidir leis an Aire Stáit mionbhriseadh síos ar an gcaiteachas measta a thabhairt dom? Céard a bhí i gceist leis an €2.65 milliún sin? An raibh sé i gceist cuid de a chaitheamh ar rudaí eile ar nós feidhmiú pleananna teanga agus réiteach pleananna teanga?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Is féidir liom an maoiniú atá ceadaithe a bhriseadh síos. I gcás Údarás na Gaeltachta, mar shampla, tá maoiniú de timpeall €1.5 milliún ceadaithe le haghaidh 2018 agus tá timpeall €730,000 íoctha amach ag an Roinn go dáta.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Céard atá an maoiniú sin le haghaidh?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá maoiniú de €156,000 ceadaithe le haghaidh Foras na Gaeilge, agus tá €93,000 íoctha amach ag an Roinn don fhoras. Tá gealltanús de €270,000 bainte amach ag Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta, ach níl aon phingin íoctha amach go fóill. Faoin teideal “eile”, tá €181,000 ceadaithe le haghaidh Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta, ach níl aon airgead íoctha amach faoin scéim sin go fóill. Is é €325,000 an figiúr atá i gceist le haghaidh Ealaín na Gaeltachta, a chlúdaíonn an Crannóg agus an Gaelacadamh, mar shampla. Tá maoiniú de €203,000 i gceist le haghaidh gnóthaí óige.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: An bhfuil aon chuid den airgead sin íoctha amach?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Níl.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: An bhfuil aon rud íoctha amach i gcás Ealaín na Gaeltachta?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Níl faoi láthair, ach beidh.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Bhí €1.65 milliún ar fáil don phleanáil teanga idir Fhoras na Gaeilge agus Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Cinnte.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Cén briseadh síos idir réiteach pleananna agus feidhmiú pleananna atá i gceist sa €730,000 atá íoctha amach ag an údarás?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Is féidir liom an briseadh síos sin a fháil. Fan go bhfeicfidimid.

Chairman: Tá an t-am beagnach istigh.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Chaill muid cuid mhaith ama ag caint faoi oifigí an phoist agus rudaí eile.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá €120,000 ag dul chuig na dreamanna fá choinne na pleananna a fheidhmiú.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: An bhfuil sé sin íoctha amach?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá sé íoctha amach ón údarás go dtí na dreamanna uilig ar an talamh.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Dá bhrí sin, tá an €610,000 eile le haghaidh pleananna a réiteach.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá €108,000 caite go dáta in 2018 ar ullmhú na pleananna.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Dúirt an tAire Stáit go raibh €730,000 íoctha amach. B'fhéidir gur féidir leis an Aire Stáit na figiúirí a sheoladh chugam.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá €730,000 íoctha amach ag an Roinn go dtí an t-údarás.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tá sé ar fad fós i bpócaí an údaráis.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá an t-údarás tar éis €120,000 a chur amach go dtí na dreamanna uilig ar an talamh.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Deirtear liom go bhfuil teorainn ama againn, ach ba mhaith liom ceist nó dhó eile a chur. Cén fáth nach bhfuil aon éileamh déanta ag Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta, Ealaín na Gaeltachta, na heagraíochtaí gnóthaí óige agus Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta ar an airgead seo? Tá sé deacair é sin a thuiscint. Tá naoi mí den bhliain imithe.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá siad ag fanacht ar phoist a líonadh, mar shampla. Mar is eol don Teachta, tá an Gaelacadamh ag obair chun 15 múinteoir scoile, b'fhéidir, a fháil. Tá mé muiníneach agus dóchasach go mbeidh achan dream ag iarraidh an t-airgead a fháil roimh dheireadh na bliana.

Deputy Niamh Smyth took the Chair.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tá sé sin an-spéisiúil. Baineann an chéad cheist eile atá agam leis an gcrúinniú a bhí ag an Aire Stáit leis na comharchumainn agus na heagraíochtaí pobalbhunaithe inné. An bhfuil sé in ann dóchas a thabhairt dúinn go mbeidh ardú suntasach ar fáil dóibh? Mar a thuigeann an tAire Stáit, níl dóthain airgid acu le gnóthaí cearta a dhéanamh sna heagraíochtaí sin.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Le bheith ionraic, tá ardú á lorg agam. Níl mé san áit chun cinneadh a dhéanamh i dtaobh an mhéid a bheidh i gceist.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Léiríonn na tuarascálacha an méid airgid atá ar fáil dóibh. Laistigh de na srianta sin, ní bheimid in ann daoine a choinneáil. Chuala muid go bhfuil daoine ag imeacht ón Arm. Imeoidh na daoine is fearr agus ní bheifear in ann daoine maithe a mhealladh. Mar a dúirt an tAire Stáit, tá jabanna breátha ag teacht aníos sa Státseirbhís i gcomhair oifigigh feidhmiúcháin le Gaeilge agus mar sin de. Tá go leor acu siúd nach bhfuil ar an gcineál pá a bheadh ar fáil don obair a dhéanfaidís sa tseirbhís poiblí. Caithfidh an pá a bheith réalaíoch. Cé mhéad airgead atá caite go dáta i mbliana ar fhorbairt na gcéanna ar Inis Meáin agus Inis Oírr?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá feabhas suntasach tagtha ar an líon daoine atá ag teacht agus ag imeacht ó ché Inis Oírr le roinnt blianta anuas. Nuair a chas mé le daoine ó Inis Oírr nuair a bhí mé ar an oileán, agus arís i nGaillimh an tseachtain seo caite, labhair siad faoin tábhacht a bhaineann le forbairt a dhéanamh ar ché Inis Oírr. Chas mé fosta le dream forbartha ó Inis Meáin agus le daoine ón gcomharchumann agus labhair siad faoi thábhacht na gcéanna fosta. Níl figiúr agam maidir leis an mbriseadh síos. Ós rud é go bhfuil ról ag Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe fosta, b'fhéidir go mbeidís sásta an figiúr sin a fháil don Teachta.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Cé mhéad a chuirfidh an tAire Stáit sna Meastacháin le haghaidh na forbartha sin?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá na Meastacháin le plé. Tá gealltanais déanta. Gheobhaidh mé

an figiúr.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Okay.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Beidh €300,000 ar fáil.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: An mbeidh sé sin dóthanach don mhéid atá le caitheamh i mbliana?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Beidh.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tuigim go bhfuil plé ar bun le tamall maidir le forbairt a dhéanamh ar Shráid Fhearchair. Tá sé tráthúil go mbeadh a leithéid de phlé ann, ar ndóigh, ós rud é gur i Sráid Fhearchair a bhí banc Shinn Féin in 1919-20. Bhí sé ag bailiú airgid le haghaidh an tír seo a rith faoin Rialtas nua a bunaíodh ag tús mí Aibreán 1919. Mar is eol don Aire Stáit, bhailigh an Chéad Dáil le chéile ar 21 Eanáir 1919. Cén dul chun cinn atá déanta leis an togra seo? An mbeidh an Roinn ag cur airgid ar fáil don togra fíorthábhachtach seo a bhaineann le foirgneamh fíorstairiúil?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá an gealltanas déanta maidir leis an €250,000. Tá staidéar féidearthachta agus comhrá cuimsitheach agus comhar ag gabháil ar aghaidh anois idir Chonradh na Gaeilge agus an Roinn fosta. Aontaím leis an Teachta maidir le stádas an togra stairiúil sin. Beidh an gealltanas sin de €250,000 ar fáil amach anseo.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Maidir leis na naíonraí taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht, an bhfuil aon éileamh déanta ag Foras na Gaeilge ar bhreis airgid agus airgeadú ceart mar atá ar fáil sa Ghaeltacht do na naíonraí atá taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht?

Deputy Joe McHugh: An é sin i dtreo Fhoras na Gaeilge?

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Nach é Foras na Gaeilge a thugann an t-airgead do na naíonraí Gaeilge taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht? An bhfuil Foras na Gaeilge tar áis airgead a iarraidh?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá fadhb leis an gcóras sin maidir leis an North-South Ministerial Council, NSMC, mura bhfuil an Rialtas ann ina shuí faoi láthair. Le bheith ionraic faoi, níl me in ann comhrá a dhéanamh le mo chomhghleacaí sa Tuaisceart maidir leis.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: An bhfuil aon chosc ar Rialtas na hÉireann airgead díreach a chur ar fáil do dhreamanna de réir mar a oireann dóibh féin?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Níl aon chosc.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Ní cuimhin liomsa go raibh. An mbreathnóidh an tAire Stáit air sin?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Táim i gcónaí ag amharc i dtaobh an spioraid chomhaontaithe idir an Tuaisceart agus an Deisceart-----

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Nuair nach bhfuil siad ag damhsa sa Tuaisceart, caithfidh an duine damhsa ó dheas. Ní féidir leis an Tuaisceart ceist na Gaeilge a choinneáil siar i mBliain na Gaeilge. Bíodh misneach ag an Aire Stáit. Tá sé alright a bheith á rá go gcaithfidh comhoibriú a bheith ann. Ar thug an tAire Stáit cuireadh do Karen Bradley fós?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Rinne an comhaontú in 2016, agus b'shin an bunlíne a bhí i gceist

fá choinne an airgid achan bliain ina dhiaidh sin.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: D'fhéadfadh an tAire Stáit dul agus airgead breise a fháil do na naíonraí Gaelacha a d'fhógair sé díreach as sparán na hÉireann.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Chuireamar airgead breise isteach cúpla uair ach d'ardaigh an Cathaoirleach an cheist fosta maidir le Foras na Gaeilge. Táim cinnte maidir leis an comhaontú atá i gceist idir an Tuaisceart agus an Deisceart, áfach, agus táim rud beag buartha i dtaobh an rud ar fad.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tabharfaidh mé faoin gceist ar bhealach eile. Nuair a bhí mé i m'Aire, nuair a foilsíodh an Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge, bhí moladh ann go dtabharfaidh cumhacht reachtúil no dlí d'Údarás na Gaeltachta airgead a íoc le heagraíochtaí Gaeilge taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht leis an sáinn seo a shárú. Fiú amháin ag an am sin, níor theastaigh uaimse a bheith ag coinneáil siar de bharr easpa maoinithe ón Tuaisceart. An mbeadh an tAire Stáit fábhach sa Bhille nua teanga go dtabharfaí an chumhacht sin don údarás?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Rinne an Rialtas cinneadh ag an am sin gan an chumhacht sin a thabhairt don údarás. Dá mba rud é go mbeadh aon athrú maidir leis an gcinneadh sin, is polasaí Rialtais a bheadh i gceist.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Cinnte.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Beidh mé sásta comhrá a bheith againn. Ba cheart don Teachta fanacht i dteagmháil liom agus má tá smaointe aige, bheadh fáilte rompu.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Ar ndóigh, ní raibh éinne ag súil go dtiocfadh deireadh leis an bhFeidhmeannas.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Tá sé deacair mura bhfuil daoine ag labhairt le chéile. D'ardaigh an Teachta ceist agus rinne sé moladh inniu agus táim cineál oscailte ina dtaobh. B'fhéidir go mbeidh polasaí Rialtais i gceist.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: An nglacann an tAire Stáit leis nach raibh an ceart ag an Aire Sláinte faoin méid a dúirt sé sa Dáil maidir le lipéid nuair a dúirt sé go raibh fianaise i dtuarascáil taighde a rinneadh Amárach dó maidir le héifeacht lipéid dháttheangacha, mar nach bhfuil a leithéidí d'fhianaise istigh sa tuarascáil seo? An nglacann an tAire Stáit leis sin?

Deputy Joe McHugh: B'shin ceist fá choinne an Aire Sláinte.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: No. Tá a dara cuid den cheist seo agus tuigfidh an tAire gur ceist dó a bheidh ann. An nglacann an tAire Stáit nach raibh an ceart aige?

Deputy Joe McHugh: B'shin an cheist agus b'shin an fáth a mbeidh mé ag treabhadh ar aghaidh maidir le hAcht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla agus na rudaí atá i gceist leis. Mar shampla, an tseachtain seo, beidh plé i dtaobh an Bhille fá choinne tionscal na gcon nó an greyhound industry. Bhí siadsan ag déanamh plé faoi cén focal is fearr, agus táim ag treabhadh ar aghaidh faoi Bhille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla agus an t-athrú atá ag teacht. Mar shampla, beidh teideal úr Gaeilge amháin ann, is é sin "rásaíocht chun Éirinn" agus ní bheidh Bord na gCon i gceist amach anseo. B'shin an fáth go mbímid ag leanúint ar aghaidh maidir le Bille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: An bhfuil an tAire Stáit sásta mír eile a chur sa Bhille sin, is é sin

go gcaithfí lipéid rogha sláinte a bheith curtha sa dá theanga ar leithéidí buidéal, cannaí agus pacáistí tobac?

Deputy Joe McHugh: Beidh mé sásta labhairt leis.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Go raibh míle maith leis an Aire Stáit.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth): Go raibh maith agat. We are now moving on. Tá brón orm, tá an Teachta Canney ag iarraidh teacht isteach.

Deputy Seán Canney: I will be short and sweet. On reading the reports, I want to make a comment on the expenditure in the area of the development and enhancement of the amenities we have around the country. In my time in the Office of Public Works, OPW, my eyes were opened to the amount of assets we have, like hidden gems. I am delighted to see that Coole Park is being developed by the Department and it is important that we continue to do these in the regions. It is very important that we create and promote all of the good things we have in the constituencies and in the regions.

The other important thing is the collaboration between the OPW, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, local authorities and Fáilte Ireland in promoting all of these assets as part of our tourism product. Very simply put, we have the assets, we just need to make sure that we use them and enhance them for the user and the increase in tourism we need to get into the regions.

I have one small problem for Minister of State, Deputy McHugh. In our talk about the Irish language I have one mystery about it. We spend time in primary and secondary school - I am not from a Gaeltacht area - learning and being taught Irish, not just my generation but my son's generations also, and we cannot speak Irish after 13 years. This is a bit of a mystery to me. We spend a lot of time teaching but it seems that we lose it the minute we go out the door of the school and do not want to use it again. It has come home to me, because I am learning Irish now again to have the confidence to speak it. I would not dare try it with all of the experts in Irish that are here today. It is a deficiency in my language skills that I am ashamed of, after spending 13 years learning it and still not being able to speak it. We need to ensure when we are teaching Irish that we are teaching it for the love of the Irish and that people will be able to speak it afterwards and have that legacy.

I have some problems with signs in Galway after the completion of the motorway. The Gaeltacht comes out to Claregalway and is called Baile Chláir. The signage, unfortunately, is in Irish and a substantial number of people using the motorway, which is great, are arriving in a small pace called Belclare beside me. They are going into the local pub wondering where Claregalway is because Belclare and Baile Chláir look very similar. The signs need to be changed in that the English version needs to be added as well so that we can get around the motorways. Perhaps the Minister of State could see his way to give a few spare euros to put up a few signs, because it is very important.

We had a book launch in Claregalway two weeks ago about ploughing in Galway. One of the national directors of the ploughing association came up from Cork, and he was an hour and a half going around the motorway, trying to find Claregalway in the dark and he could not see a Claregalway sign any place. The satnav was not working right because of poor reception. It is a small thing and I would appreciate if this could be done. I thank the Minister and say "Well done".

Deputy Josepha Madigan: I thank Deputy Canney, previously a Minister of State, for his comments. I appreciate them in respect of Coole Park. As he will know, I launched a master interpretative plan there in July. It is a very special place, particularly Lady Gregory's Irish home, which was the great salon of Irish literature. I am even more determined to ensure that we protect the nature, culture and heritage which all coalesce in that area. I thank Deputy Canney again for his comments and I accept everything else he said also.

Deputy Joe McHugh: I congratulate Deputy Canney for his iarracht, his effort to go back learning Irish. Many people talk about doing it. I was one of those people who talked about it for the best part of two decades. That was up to the point when I was put in a corner and had no choice. It was either sink or swim. My experience is different to most people but anybody who makes that decision to go back and learn has to be admired. Deputy Canney will also act as an inspiration for people in his constituency, so well done.

The Deputy has already spoken to me about the Claregalway sign and I have had a number of other representations from Galway, including from Councillor Frank Kearney. I have already asked my officials to organise a meeting with a delegation from Galway, including Deputy Canney, Councillor Kearney and whomever else wants to be part of it. We would be happy to facilitate that.

There was another matter. It was the teaching of Irish. We are fortunate at the moment with the calibre of education we have. I see my children coming home from school. It is not the usual doing of homework by ticking boxes. They have to use their imagination. My kids are in a non-Gaeltacht school but they are doing great work and they are creative with the language. It is a different type of experience now compared to some of the more negative experiences some of us had. Going back 30 or 40 years, some people say they were taught in a positive way as well. It was for some and not for others. There is an issue with the demand for Irish teachers at the moment but part of the Gaeltacht policy is trying to encourage more people to go in and look at the different funding streams for training. We are doing quite an amount of work on that.

There was also a question about the number of Gaelscoileanna built this year. I am going to get those figures. I will put those I have on the record. Of the 30 new primary schools established since 2011, seven were Gaelscoileanna. There are 47,614 pupils in Gaelscoileanna outside the Gaeltacht. Of those, 37,090 are in the bunscoileanna. There are 59,084 pupils in Irish-medium education. There are 189 Gaelscoileanna outside of the Gaeltacht areas, that is 145 bunscoileanna and 44 secondary schools. There are 134 Irish-medium schools in Gaeltacht areas. That is 106 primary schools and 28 secondary schools. The stand-out figure is that there are 59,084 people going through the medium of Irish and learning Irish in primary school and secondary school.

That bodes well for the future, especially when we look to provide opportunities for people as translators and interpreters in Brussels and Strasbourg. Those are well paid jobs and there is no great tax on them. It is €4,500 per month for people who are proficient in Irish. That is an unbelievable opportunity, especially at a time when there is much talk in different countries regarding the EU and either remaining or leaving it. We have an opportunity as part of the EU and there are tremendous opportunities. That message has to go out not just to the 59,000 people in the Gaelscoileanna but also to the people who are learning Irish outside that category as well.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth): I congratulate the Minister of State. I am passionate and, like Deputy Canney, I have been trying with the language. I was up in Donegal last year at the Gaeltacht at Oideas Gael-----

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Deputy Joe McHugh: Oideas Gael in Glencolmcille.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth): If anything, it gave me a love of the language again even though I am not proficient. In Cavan, we look at Monaghan with envy. It has four primary schools, namely, those in Clones, Monaghan town, Castleblayney and Carrickmacross. There is also the fabulous Coláiste Oiriall secondary school in Monaghan town. We have just one primary school, namely, that in Cavan town. Perhaps the Minister of State could make it part of his bigger master plan to see some Gaelscoileanna come to County Cavan in the years ahead.

Deputy Joe McHugh: We will pass that message on to the Minister for Education and Skills. That is no problem at all.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth): I thank the Minister of State. We are almost at the conclusion of our meeting. We still have programme D. We have the Minister's speech on it, so perhaps we could just note that and if any members have questions, we could email them to her directly. Would that be acceptable?

Deputy Josepha Madigan: Yes, that is fine.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth): Is that agreed? Agreed. I thank everybody for attending.

The joint committee adjourned at 4.25 p.m. until 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 17 October 2018.