

# DÁIL ÉIREANN

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**AN COMHCHOISTE UM CHULTÚR, OIDHREACHT AGUS GAELTACHT**

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, HERITAGE AND THE GAELTACHT**

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*Dé Céadaoin, 29 Bealtaine 2019*

*Wednesday, 29 May 2019*

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The Joint Committee met at 1.30 p.m.

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Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

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| Michael Collins, | Fintan Warfield. |
| Danny Healy-Rae, |                  |
| Fergus O'Dowd,*  |                  |
| Niamh Smyth,     |                  |
| Robert Troy.+    |                  |

\* In éagmais / In the absence of Deputy Martin Heydon.

+ In éagmais le haghaidh cuid den choiste / In the absence for part of the meeting of Deputy Niamh Smyth.

Teachta / Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

*The joint committee sat in private session until 1.50 p.m.*

### **Statement of Strategy 2018 to 2020 and Project Ireland 2040: Discussion**

**Chairman:** Táimid chun déileáil inniu le hoifigigh ón Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta maidir le Ráiteas Straitéise 2018 to 2020 agus Project Ireland 2040. Tá fáilte roimh na haíonna seo a leanas ar fad as teacht anseo inniu, roimh Katherine Licken, Ard-Rúnaí agus roimh a comhghleacaithe ar fad atá anseo, roinnt díobh atá feicthe anseo agam cheana agus roinnt eile díobh nach bhfuil.

Déanfaidh mé i dtosach báire an méid seo a leanas a rá toisc go bhfuil an taifeadadh iomlán ar siúl: sula dtosóimid le fianaise na n-aíonna ba mhaith liom a chur ar aird na bhfinnéithe go bhfuil de bhua alt 17(2)(l) den Acht um Chlúmhilleadh 2009, finnéithe faoi chosaint ag lánphribhléid maidir leis an bhfianaise a thabharfaidh siad don choiste seo. Má ordaíonn an coiste dóibh, ámh, éirí as fianaise a thabhairt i leith ní áirithe agus má leanann siad dá tabhairt amhlaidh, ní bheidh siad i dteideal dá éis sin ach pribhléid cháilithe i leith a gcuid fianaise. By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to so do, 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 entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. I also advise witnesses 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.

Cuirfidh mé tús leis an gcomhrá inniu agus tugaim cuireadh anois do Katherine Licken an cur i láthair a dhéanamh agus na baill atá léi a chur in ár n-aithne dúinn, lena toil. Gabhaim buíochas léi.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCathaoirleach agus leis an gcomhchoiste as an deis a theacht i láthair ag an seisiún seo de chuid an chomhchoiste chun obair na Roinne a phlé i ndáil leis an Ráiteas Straitéise 2018 to 2020 agus le cur i bhfeidhm an chláir infheistíochta faoi Thionscadal Éireann 2040 - Infheistíocht in ár gCultúr, in ár dTeango agus in ár nOidhreacht. I am grateful to have the opportunity to attend this session of the joint committee to discuss the Department's work on its statement of strategy and in the implementation its investment programme under Project Ireland 2040 - Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage. I look forward to the discussion with and hearing the views of committee members.

I am accompanied by Mr. Conor Falvey, the assistant secretary with responsibility for our culture programme which encompasses culture policy, oversight of the national cultural institutions, Culture Ireland, the Creative Ireland programme, the audio-visual action plan, among other areas. Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú is the assistant secretary with responsibility for the heritage division which has responsibility for the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the National Monuments Service, the Heritage Council, national parks and nature reserves, as well as sup-

porting all aspects of the built and natural heritage. Representing the Gaeltacht and island communities, as well as promoting the use of the Irish language outside the Gaeltacht, are Mícheál Ó Conaire, príomhoifigeach, an Ghaeilge taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht; Sorcha de Brúch, príomhoifigeach, Oileáin, An Foras Teanga agus Logainmneacha; and Seán Mac Eoin, príomhoifigeach, Gaeltacht agus Pleanáil Teanga.

The Department plays a key role in protecting, preserving and promoting Ireland's culture, language, built and archaeological heritage, as well as its biodiversity and unique landscapes. It encompasses a wide range of functions from support for the arts and culture, conservation and safeguarding our biodiversity to supporting sustainable communities. Its remit also extends to Ireland's global identity and national well-being, as well as fostering enterprise and tourism development. The work of the Department speaks directly to our understanding of ourselves and our national identity. It anchors us in our past, through the safeguarding of our cultural, built and archaeological heritage; gives context to our present, through the Department's decade of centenaries programme; and sets out the values we want to protect in our future, through the national heritage plan - Heritage 2030, among others, to include the 20-year strategy for the Irish language. The Department is also a key driver of well-being across government, through opportunities to experience and participate in arts and culture; engage with our natural environment in national parks; and appreciate our language and heritage, including the islands. It occupies a unique space within government with its very broad policy and programme remit, as well as having a presence in every part of the country in national parks and monuments, cultural centres, schools and local authorities and through our direct involvement with Gaeltacht and island communities.

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

In our work we engage directly with communities across the country, through the work of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the National Monuments Service and our colleagues in the Gaeltacht division. We work directly with and through local authorities, most recently to deliver a national programme to foster creative communities.

Our statement of strategy which covers the period 2018 to 2020, inclusive, was prepared in accordance with the Public Service Management Act, following the appointment of the Minister, Deputy Josepha Madigan, to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. We are now just over one year into its implementation. The Department's overarching mission is to promote, nurture and develop Ireland's arts, culture and heritage; to support and promote the use of the Irish language; and to facilitate the development of the Gaeltacht and the islands. Our core functions are to provide policy and funding support in the development of the arts, culture and creativity, including cultural infrastructure development; to provide for oversight of Ireland's national cultural institutions; to protect and preserve Ireland's natural heritage in line with national and EU legislation, national policies and strategies and to support sustainable development; to preserve our built heritage as part of the regeneration of cities, towns, villages and the countryside in accordance with the principles and values of Project Ireland 2040, and to

protect our unique archaeological heritage. We also assist in the sustainable development of island communities, including through the provision of transport links. We promote North-South co-operation through the work of Waterways Ireland and An Foras Teanga. These functions are translated into action through a number of policies and strategies, including Culture 2025, the audio-visual action plan, the 20-year strategy for the Irish language and the associated five-year action plan, the tourism interpretive master plan for national parks, the national biodiversity action plan and Heritage 2030, which is still at consultation stage.

To deliver on this policy framework, we structure our work across three policy divisions, namely, culture, heritage and the Gaeltacht, which are supported by a corporate division. Each division is led by an assistant secretary or director and we meet weekly as a management board to oversee and monitor our progress. Each division has responsibility for a particular high-level goal or goals under the statement of strategy. Goal A which falls to our culture division provides that the Department will support and develop engagement with and in the arts, culture and creativity by individuals and communities, thereby enriching individual and community well-being, and promote Ireland's arts and culture globally. Goal B relates to the work of the heritage division. It sets out to conserve, protect, manage and present the built and natural heritage for its intrinsic value and as an inspiration to creativity and environmental appreciation, as well as a support to local communities, regional economic development and sustainable employment. Goals C and D rest with the Gaeltacht division and provide that we will support the use of the Irish language throughout Ireland, strengthen its use as the principal community language of the Gaeltacht and facilitate the sustainable development of island communities. Goal E which involves the Gaeltacht and heritage divisions provides that we will work to promote North-South co-operation, particularly through the work of An Foras Teanga and Waterways Ireland.

At the core of the delivery of these strategies will be the development and enhancement of cultural, linguistic and heritage infrastructure under the Department's €1.2 billion programme of investment, Project Ireland 2040. Other priority areas for the Department are the delivery of supports for the arts and culture, including the audio-visual sector, the delivery of the Creative Ireland programme to promote individual, community and national well-being and the completion of the decade of centenaries commemorative programme.

In the heritage area we are in the process of developing a new national heritage plan, Heritage 2030, for protecting, preserving and promoting national heritage. We have just completed a comprehensive consultation process and will be developing the plan in due course. Our activities to promote the Irish language will continue to focus on implementing the five-year action plan for progressing the 20-year strategy for the language.

Project Ireland 2040 represents a once in a generation opportunity for the Department to protect, preserve and enhance cultural, linguistic and heritage infrastructure. It has the potential to be a transformative investment, conserving our unique culture and heritage and enhancing opportunities to experience it, while also stimulating tourism and local economies. The Department's investment plan under Project Ireland 2040 is an important vehicle in delivering sustainable communities, valuing the built heritage through regenerating town centres and creating spaces for people to express themselves artistically or through the Irish language, while also providing direct support for the development of local enterprise. It has also been transformative for the Department in bringing together for the first time all aspects of our heritage, namely, cultural, linguistic, the built and natural, under a single programme of investment with an holistic vision. A cornerstone of the Department's investment programme is the €460 million that has been set aside for the regeneration of the national cultural institutions. This year we have

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

The Department continues to progress other projects through the appraisal and evaluation stages of the project life cycle, including the Natural History Museum and the Crawford Gallery in Cork. We also support the development and enhancement of regional cultural infrastructure through a number of schemes and initiatives. In terms of our culture and creativity programme, we have a major new strategy for the audio-visual industry which is guiding the €200 million Project Ireland investment in expanding this vital creative industry. This year alone, the Department will provide funding support of more than €16 million for Screen Ireland to deliver the strategy and support the Government's ambition to develop Ireland as a global hub for the production of film, TV drama and animation.

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

A further strand of our programme under Project Ireland is the investment of €285 million over ten years in the built and natural heritage. An important delivery vehicle for this investment is the tourism interpretative masterplan for key tourist sites and heritage amenities in the national parks in partnership with Fáilte Ireland. It will see us leverage our investment to maximise the value for money of projects throughout the parks and reserves network for the enjoyment of 4 million visitors every year. We are also working closely with colleagues in the Department of Rural and Community Development in investing in a wide range of new trails and other visitor amenities in national parks and nature reserves. In addition to work in national parks and wildlife reserves, we are working to deliver on commitments to protect the built heritage through the built heritage investment scheme and historic structures fund which leverage private funding, local authority structures and central government grants to protect the built heritage, while utilising local craft and construction resources.

The national planning framework under Project Ireland specifically recognised the importance of protecting unique Gaeltacht and island communities, underpinned by a funding provision of €178 million to 2027. In that regard, we are working to deliver key capital actions in the five-year action plan for the Irish language, while also supporting Údarás na Gaeltachta in fostering enterprise and supporting communities across the Gaeltacht. Údarás na Gaeltachta will invest some €10 million in these communities this year. In addition, we are working in partnership with Dublin City Council, Conradh na Gaeilge and others to develop a flagship Irish language and cultural centre in Dublin city centre. The project has recently completed its feasibility study stage and we are preparing to move to planning.

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

That is just a snapshot of what we are seeking to deliver and progress throughout the year and into 2020. We continue to work closely with colleagues in the Department of Public Ex-

penditure and Reform on the overall management and oversight of the programme. With the growing ambition for the Department under Project Ireland 2040, we need to ensure it is capable of delivering on these ambitions. To that end, we have undergone an organisational capability review in the past six months. The review process which was signalled in our statement of strategy and is part of a wider Civil Service renewal initiative has seen us look closely at our capabilities in demonstrating leadership in our sectors, developing policy and strategy and implementing and evaluating our work. The review was undertaken by a team from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, with our support, and overseen by an independent external review panel. It is at the final stages of drafting and once finalised will be presented to the Government. It has been a useful experience, one which will enable us to enhance the Department's capabilities to deliver on its statement of strategy. Increasingly, it is clear just how broadly our work impacts on the lives of everyone in Ireland, as well as on how we view and present ourselves on a global stage. With such a broad remit, our collaborative approach with the national cultural institutions and agencies, other Departments, North-South bodies, the public sector and the committee continues to be essential to the delivery of the high-level goals in our statement of strategy and Project Ireland 2040.

**Chairman:** Is léir ón méid atá sa ráiteas tosaigh cé chomh fairsing agus atá an remit atá ag an Roinn.

**Deputy Danny Healy-Rae:** I thank the officials for coming before the committee and for their presentation which is very important. I also thank them for all of the great work they are doing. I need to highlight a few things that need to be done in the vicinity of Killarney and the national park. While the national park in Killarney is a massive attraction for the town, Kerry and the whole south of Ireland, there are issues which must be dealt with. The primary issue is one of access. Traffic queues and jams going through Killarney is a big issue. I ask that the officials here would liaise with Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII, because as it stands the only access to the park out the Muckross Road is through the town. There is no need for that to continue and I do not think it will. Cars are parked on the national secondary road, starting at Kenmare Place in Killarney all the way out the Muckross Road, day in, day out, coming in and going out. People from around the country, whether Limerick, Cork or elsewhere, must go halfway around Killarney town. It is a major obstacle. I fear that people will think it is not worthwhile to continue to Muckross House or out to the national park if they meet this blockage every time they try to go out there. We ask that there be liaison with TII and that the link road or bypass, which was supposed to go ahead in 2004, be followed through, and that a road be built from Lissivigeen to Castlough in Muckross. I am highlighting this today because it has been put to me at various forums over the years I have represented the people of Killarney and south Kerry. It is a major obstacle which needs to be addressed. It must be taken on board by the highest level of Government.

While we are talking about roads, the issue of deer arises. At this stage they are everywhere but the biggest numbers are in the national park. There have been serious accidents at Ballydowney to the west of Killarney. They are coming into the Demesne in Killarney town. People are afraid of stags. I have nothing against deer but there needs to be some way of ensuring that people who travel on our roads are safe. We know that a woman with three young children was killed at Ballydowney because she swerved to avoid a deer. That cannot and should not be allowed to be repeated. I called in the Dáil Chamber for the Army to undertake a cull, but there are other ways too. In Canada and other places, perhaps in the Baltic countries, there is a system where if an animal is coming on to the road, that a sensor picks it up and a light will flash to alert any oncoming motorists. I have not done any research on that but the facility is

there. Killarney is surrounded by deer. Some 18,600 vehicles go through that road daily, which is only one part of the town, and people's lives are being jeopardised. I am asking for the officials' help to address this issue.

More funding is needed for the repair of paths in the vicinity of Muckross House. The width and capacity of the paths need to be increased. A growing number of cyclists and walkers are using these paths, which is laudable, but they do not have the capacity. People have had near misses with bicycles hitting off walkers and children, for instance. It is an issue that must be addressed.

There is an old road, the Mangerton Road, which needs urgent attention. The potholes are as big as -----

**Chairman:** The matter of roads is one for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport or the local authority.

**Deputy Danny Healy-Rae:** The local authority has no remit on this road. It cannot go into it at all. I am asking the National Parks and Wildlife Service to see to this because people are driving on it and walking, but it is a hazard and needs to be addressed.

Another matter about which I am very concerned is the burning that took place in the national park this year. Some years ago, when I was on Kerry County Council, I asked that the national parks would ensure that they would have fire belts all around their property where possible and to divide properties in their ownership so that if a fire started in one place, it would be prevented from spreading elsewhere. This is only common sense. I do not think this has been addressed properly. We understood that like the North of Ireland, people would be allowed to burn all through the month of March but this year, the Minister, in her wisdom, said she would not allow burning in March. I am sure she must not have gone to Kerry because what people in Dublin do not realise is that in Kerry, we had a great deal of rain in February. As March progressed, it got dryer and that is when the fires started. People in Dublin need to realise that it rains in Kerry on far more days than it rains in Dublin and we need to have the month of March to have controlled burning. Thousands of acres were burned in the last episode. Much of it started inside the national park, and no one knows how. Those issues must be addressed. I appeal to the Minister that in future years she consider that we get more rain in Kerry, in Killarney and Mangerton, where these fires start -----

**Chairman:** I thank the Deputy. We must give the officials a chance to answer and I do not think they can answer about the rain. Leitrim is the wettest part of the country. I assume that most of the officials are not from Dublin.

**Deputy Danny Healy-Rae:** There are hedges along our roads which need to be cut for the safety of everyone that uses the roads. I have no problem with hedges in the countryside and I have built hedges in my own land. I like hedges, and that is the gospel truth. However on roadsides which are in the remit of the National Parks and Wildlife Service will have to be cut. The Department should in no way prevent roadside hedges being cut in the name of anything. People's safety is a priority with me, first and foremost.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** I am pleased to say that only two of us here are from Dublin.

**Chairman:** And even those of us here from Dublin have spent a lot of time in Kerry education.

**Deputy Danny Healy-Rae:** And they are very welcome but the Minister -----

**Chairman:** It did rain when I went to school there, too.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** Our two assistant secretaries on culture and heritage are both from Kerry.

**Deputy Danny Healy-Rae:** I am very glad of that.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** They have a deep appreciation of the park especially. The Deputy is correct that Killarney National Park is one of the oldest of Ireland's national parks. I believe it was started in 1932 and along with Wicklow National Park it gets almost 1.5 million visitors per year. I will ask Mr. Ó Donnchú to address the details of the issues raised

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** I counted seven questions but if I forget to answer any of them, I ask that the Deputy Healy-Rae remind me.

I am very familiar with access and traffic in Killarney town. Killarney has always been a bottleneck. That is to some extent the price of success and it is also partially caused by the difficulty of getting around the town. In the context of the existing bypass on to the N72, the National Parks and Wildlife Service is very co-operative about ceding part of the demesne to the bypass. We are very aware of the problems. The Deputy will be glad to hear that the appeal to An Bord Pleanála regarding the proposed revamp of the car park at Muckross House has been overturned and we will proceed with the project. We are in constant contact with the local authority on traffic management issues and we are acutely conscious of them. As the Chairman pointed out, our remit is not around the extension but there is no doubt that we will be consulted on it. We are acutely aware of the importance of getting visitors safely to and from the national park. We will continue our dialogue with the local authority and Transport Infrastructure Ireland with regard to dealing with this long-running traffic management issue. Deputy Healy-Rae will be well aware that Killarney is an absolute bottleneck but we will certainly do our bit around that.

On the deer issue, fencing Killarney National Park, our largest national park, is not feasible and I know the Deputy is not suggesting that we do so. We have a new management regime in place in Killarney. We have taken a very serious look at the deer population. More than 270 deer have been culled this year. We have to be very careful to achieve a balance in this regard. There are reasons for doing so related to animal husbandry, public safety and so on. The cull is larger than in previous years for a variety of reasons. The demesne is part of the national park and the deer can access it. The Deputy is absolutely right-----

**Deputy Danny Healy-Rae:** The demesne to which I referred is a housing estate.

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** I see. Deer are wild animals which will roam. Our responsibility extends to the wild animals within the national park. We take our animal husbandry role as seriously as we take public safety issues. Anybody who approaches a stag, particularly a rutting stag, is asking for trouble and they should not do so. The Deputy will be well aware that we have erected signs to that effect. If there is a technological solution, we will look certainly at it. We are looking at a variety of technology interventions in the area of fire prevention, to which I will return, and habitat and species management. For the Deputy's information, we are working in a partnership with the Canadian authorities' administration of its national parks and we will ask it to share any technological solutions they might have.

We are very mindful of the dangers on the road. I know the N72 very well. It is a dangerous and narrow road that is built across some of the most scenic countryside in the country. People need to exercise due care while travelling on the road. We work with Kerry County Council on signage and speed calming and so on. We will continue in our dialogue with Kerry County Council, the local chamber of commerce and others on raising awareness of the dangers of speeding or driving with undue care on the road. We are conscious also of the numbers of foreign visitors who may not be used to driving on the left side of the road. We will continue to address these public safety issues.

The roads within the national park are shared facilities and cyclists and walkers need to use them on that basis. The Deputy will be aware that we have invested significantly in the roads in the park. I acknowledge that the Deputy brings issues to our attention. We are very grateful for his local knowledge in that respect. I am not sure if the Mangerton Road is an accommodation road but I will examine the issue on the basis of the information the Deputy provided. I doubt the potholes are of the size described because they would be craters. We will certainly look at that issue and if we can find the wherewithal within our budget, we will seek to address it as best we can. It must be borne in mind that we have relatively limited resources, which we try to use to best effect especially in the public facing parts of the infrastructure. We will, however, take a look at Mangerton Road.

The burning was very regrettable. To be clear, the area involved was 175 acres, not thousands of acres. There are firebreaks within the park. These fires are wildfires for a reason. The direction in which they move depends on prevailing conditions. At the time, the ground was extremely dry in Killarney. It was a tinderbox. Ironically, what arrested the spread of the fire were the efforts of our park colleagues, the fire brigade and the rhododendron because the rhododendron was fresh growth. I say this without any hint of irony. That is just a fact. Every time there is a fire, we learn from it and invest in firebreaks based on the direction in which fires might move. We recently deployed drone technology in Wicklow as a prevention measure and as a detection and fire management measure. It was extremely useful because it was the week-end of an orange fire alert. We will look to this technology. The key message is awareness. We are still trying to determine how the fire in Killarney started. It could have caused by a cigarette that was disposed of carelessly or a barbecue. We are currently investigating that. We do not allow the lighting of fires in national parks for a very good reason. It is very hard to police every hectare in an area of 87,000 ha., nor can we legislate for a lack of cop-on and common sense. This is how we address the awareness issue.

On the extension of burning into March, the Deputy contributed to the lengthy debate on the Heritage Act. The analysis conducted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service involved an analysis of meteorological data from every station in the country. Based on this analysis, the advice given to the Minister was that rainfall in the six months of the open season for burning was significantly lower than the 30-year mean rainfall. This applied across the country, including Kerry and I am very familiar with rainfall in the county. The analysis conducted by our regional teams indicated that in the circumstances there was no justification this year for opening the pilot scheme that is allowed under the Heritage Act. The Minister accepted that advice. At the end of February, there were a significant number of wildfires in Wicklow and the Air Corps had to be called out to help quell them. The fires caused a significant amount of damage. This fed into the decision because it showed, as the Minister stated in the press release, that the extension of the season would not be wise in circumstances where ground conditions were extremely dry. Our meteorological data from each of the stations showed that ground conditions were so dry that it was not advisable to extend the burning season into March last. I accept that

the weather changed in March but that was after the burning season in any case and farmers had the previous six months in which to burn.

The Heritage Act aligns the hedge-cutting regime with the road safety regime. That is a very important change in that the road safety regime takes primacy. In his contributions to the debate on the Bill, Deputy Healy-Rae made that point very well. The provision in the Act addresses that long-standing anomaly, which needed to be addressed. It also provides for the extension of the hedge-cutting season into August by allowing the trimming of a season's growth on the road-facing side of a hedge. This is a welcome measure under a two-year pilot. We are working on the regulations around that, which will be published for consultation quite soon. I hope I have addressed the Deputy's questions. I am not sure if I left anything out.

**Deputy Danny Healy-Rae:** I thank Mr. Ó Donnchú very much. I will make one suggestion. When the fires start I cannot understand why track excavators are not used to control them.

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** The Deputy knows the terrain as well as I do. He is aware that sometimes it is impossible to get heavy machinery out to these locations. We will deploy such machinery where we can.

**Chairman:** The Deputy might know where it is all stored.

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** Where we can deploy them, we will.

**Deputy Danny Healy-Rae:** Someone might like to say that I am saying that for myself but I am saying local-----

**Chairman:** Local people know best in most of these cases.

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** I appreciate that.

**Deputy Michael Collins:** I thank our guests for coming before the committee and outlining the programme of the Department. They referred to the audio-visual programme and I assume some funding in the Department's programme goes to film festivals. I have to commend the officials if they are funding film festivals following the festival in Schull last week. It was phenomenal for our local community. It was slightly out of season and shows the benefit to the rural community when any funding goes to good use. Schull was packed with all sorts of famous and ordinary people who came to enjoy the film festival for a week. I know that the organisers have many plans for the future and they will, hopefully, come before the committee in September to explain where they have come from and where they are going. I would appreciate if the Department would keep in close contact with them because this is one of the best rural film festivals in the country.

**Deputy Niamh Smyth:** There is also one in Clones.

**Deputy Michael Collins:** I remember Deputy Smyth said that. I commend any support that has been given to film festivals such as the one in Schull. It will be interesting to hear what the organisers have to say when they come before us in the months ahead.

There are eight islands off the coast of my constituency in west Cork that I often visit. They may be poorly populated but they need a voice. I do not think I have ever heard anyone on an island giving out about the ferry service and I assume that is a product of the work of the Department. We must call a spade a spade. The service is good and provides great connectivity between the mainland and the islands and people are happy that is in place. However, there

are issues and I ask the Department to liaise better with the islands on them. For example, the people of Sherkin Island are trying hard to have a chaperone. We must encourage young people from the island to live there to continue its growth. That is not happening at the moment. The chaperone issue probably applies to every other island - Whiddy, Bere, Long, Cape Clear, Dursey, Heir or Garnish islands. Parents must accompany their child on the ferry taking them to the mainland when the school on the island is closed. There is no one to stay with the child, to get them on and off the ferry safely. It means that one of those parents cannot work and, most likely, their only option is to leave the island and live on the mainland. That is not good enough. We should be promoting living on our islands. I have brought this up repeatedly but it is like a football that is being kicked from one side to another with each Department saying the issue is not its responsibility. No one has come up with a solution. There are special needs assistants, SNAs, in schools and there must be some kind of system available through the Department of Education and Skills whereby the equivalent of an SNA could accompany those children to and from the ferry in order that their parents can work and will continue to live on the island and keep the islands populated.

Another issue is social housing because people need houses on the islands in the same way as on the mainland. There are great islands in west Cork, like Bere and Whiddy islands, which need new life. The only way that can happen is through investment in social housing to give their young people an opportunity to have a home and live on the island, where they want to live. These young people are being forced off the islands because there is no social housing.

The following is probably true of most islands throughout the country but I can only talk about west Cork. There are community councils for the islands and I ask that an umbrella group be set up on these islands and that those representatives meet departmental officials once or twice a year to iron out issues and forge a closer relationship with the Department. My brother ran in the local elections and I canvassed the islands because I wanted to hear what they had to say. People on Bere Island told me they cannot get access to the mooring. They want to come on and off their boats safely and they cannot access moorings when they sail to Castletownbere. They are going through very dangerous situations to be able to access the mainland. These are small but very important issues.

Deputy Healy-Rae has touched on the issue of burning. I chaired a meeting when this passed through committee and my assumption was that the Minister would be totally out of order if he changed the recommendation of the committee. My assumption was that burning would be allowed in March and that is what a majority of us here agreed to in a vote after everybody was entitled to debate the matter. That has now changed. If one lives on a farm in a rural community, especially in west Cork where the fog and dampness does not blow over until May or June, March is the only opportunity for a controlled burn. That has been stopped by a Minister who received an instruction from this committee that burning was to go ahead but the powers-that-be have struck it off with a pen. Someone in Met Éireann seems to have more control than we have, from what I can gather.

Does the budget the Department has for the arts amount to €363 million? I stand to be corrected on that. I was frustrated that 48 local, voluntary community projects in Cork did not secure funding from the rural regeneration fund. I represent the people of Cork. Some of those voluntary community groups spent €500,000 in local community money to get projects off the ground and they were still told they were not going to get funding. The Department has a budget in excess of €300 million and it received money under rural regeneration funding. I know the Department will say that it applied for that funding and is entitled to do with it as it wishes.

I accept that but the system is unfair. The Department should not be tapping into other budgets where local, community, voluntary organisations have not a hope of competing because they do not have the expertise or funding to tick the boxes. They are not getting any help from the Department of Rural and Community Development. The Department will say that money was there to be taken up but where did the money go? Did the Department get €8 million? I stand to be corrected on that but 48 voluntary groups in Cork received nothing.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** I will ask some of my colleagues to come in on some of those questions. We are subsidising ferry services to 14 different islands, including those to which Deputy Collins referred. Since 2013, that has facilitated 2.5 million passenger journeys. Clearly they are lifeline services and I am glad he has not had any complaints about them. We are cognisant of the issue to which he referred and I will ask Ms de Brúch to talk about that in a moment.

I am glad we are supporting the BA in visual arts on Sherkin Island with €120,000 in funding.

Social housing is not a matter for this Department but we work across Departments. In fact, everything we do in our Department is through working with other Departments because our reach extends into everything. We are happy to take up the issue of social housing with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The Deputy is correct about the rural regeneration fund. The Department's budget is €356 million and we received €9 million in rural funding. That is a policy issue for the Department of Rural and Community Development. The funding we received was on the Gaeltacht and heritage side so it was all about investing in our national parks. It is about rural communities, as is the case for much of what we do. We also do a lot in respect of improving infrastructure in Gaeltacht areas. We will put that funding to good use for citizens in rural areas, including Glengariff. Mr. Ó Donnchú might fill us in on the project there in a moment.

I am glad to hear Deputy Collins' feedback on the festivals. The Department funds festivals directly, as does the Arts Council. Cruinniú na nÓg is a day of creativity for young people organised by Creative Ireland and there will be 700 events across the country next month. We are very much seized of the idea of empowering local communities. That concept has come from the decade of centenaries programme, the sense of well-being and empowerment that gives and how it sustains jobs and communities. We will do anything we can to help. Ms de Brúch will speak about the islands.

**Ms Sorcha de Brúch:** We have been working very closely with Sherkin Island Development Society, SIDS, to arrive at a solution in respect of school transport. The Department has put up funding for an additional sailing in the morning but I understand there remains an issue in the afternoon. There was a recent meeting involving Senator Lombard, the Department of Education and Skills and SIDS to try to come to a resolution. I take the point entirely that it is a very important issue. We are working very closely with the different community groups to try to improve the services and to keep them running as they are lifeline services.

The point about the umbrella organisation is well made. There is Comhar na nOileán and Comharchumann na nOileán and the Department has met both in the past couple of weeks, along with the Minister of State. We will attend meetings with them on a regular basis throughout the year to make sure we are aware of the issues that arise on the islands and can intervene as early as possible to offer solutions. The inter-agency group in Cork, involving the county council, the HSE, the Department and all the players, functions very well. It fosters healthy

debate and meets on a quarterly basis when representatives come from all the islands to air their issues. It is a model that we are trying to roll out in other counties that have islands. It helps us to get in there early and come up with solutions.

We are also looking to develop a cross-cutting islands policy so that we can be an advocate for the island. We are not responsible for things such as housing but we can advocate for the island communities and it is my role to do that. I am glad to hear the members appreciate the work that is being done with the ferries. The numbers on Sherkin Island, and some of the others, have gone up substantially in recent years and it is great to see this added life on the islands.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** The Minister of State has asked us to look at the policy on the islands. We have a fairly good track record at dealing on a cross-Government basis in other policy areas, particularly in respect of our engagement with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on the issue of language in the Gaeltacht. We are taking on extra staff to address the islands specifically.

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** We have a very good nature reserve in Glengariff, which is one of the set of rural projects that have been funded under the rural development fund. These projects have to be rurally based. There are 78 reserves and six national parks and they are the fulcrum of local social and economic activity. They had been under-invested for a number of years but they are suited to the rural development fund because of their spin-offs. We take an all-of-Government approach to this. We are not competing with local communities and many projects are in partnership with local authorities. If the Deputy would like us to work with communities in the vicinity of Glengariff, or any other national park or reserve, we would be very happy to do that. The parks and reserves do not work or survive without engagement with the local community.

I acknowledge the Deputy for chairing the committee dealing with the Heritage Act 2018. It was a lengthy process and, while I do not have the Act in front of me, I recall what section 7(1) states, which is that the Minister may make regulations to allow the burning of vegetation during such periods in the month of March, and in such parts of the country, as she may determine. She made the decision after a public consultation and based on advice from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, as well as other information following the consultation of which met data were a part. The Deputy will recall that there is a six-month open season for burning, from 1 September to 28 February. There was a great deal of discussion regarding what would determine the approach and it was decided that the weather in the previous six months would be taken into account. Last autumn, and in the early part of this year, the weather was exceptional. People were walking around in tee shirts in February and the underground conditions were very dry, with fires in Wicklow and other parts of the country. This had an impact on parks and it required a huge amount of effort by ourselves, the fire services and the Air Corps to bring the fires under control.

It is a pilot initiative and nothing the Minister has done is repugnant in any way to the decision the Oireachtas, and the committee, made. When it comes around again next year, we will again consult with the public and Members of the Oireachtas before giving advice to the Minister on how to proceed.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** On page 32, it is stated that in the context of the Creative Ireland consultations, there was a widespread desire for creative spaces, studios, performance spaces and simple work spaces where artists and other creatives could experiment and collaborate. It states that the Department would work with local authorities to identify such spaces. I assume

that spaces come under part 3 of the plan, which covers investment in local arts and cultural infrastructure nationwide. I cannot see it coming under other commitments, such as in the financial area. Has the Department started this process? What work has been done? Can our guests clarify whether the €40 million includes the spaces to which I referred? A building always seems to be the answer to everything but I hope the right questions are being asked. Will the building be relevant in ten years' time? What art forms will be practised in ten years' time? How will they improve the financial well-being of artists who earn around €10,000 per year? A building should be the end point of a much deeper development. The financial commitments identified in this plan could be greater and, given that artists are struggling to make ends meet, is it wise to not prioritise spaces as much as we prioritise national cultural institutions? Some of the national institutions have not been looked after for a long period but they are all in Dublin.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** We are very seized of the need for artist spaces and we support facilities, such as Annaghmakerrig in Monaghan, which provide critical support for artists so that they have the time and space in which to work. We have a cultural institution in Cork, the Crawford Gallery, of which we are very proud. The work they are doing is not just nice to have; we need to have it. The National Library is in the process of moving its books out of the west wing, which will secure them from fire and damage, from a health and safety perspective. Safeguarding the collections is important. The Senator is right that we have not invested in this in decades because of the recession and other factors. They need that investment. We saw from the National Gallery of Ireland the inspiration that it provides when new spaces are opened, and the feeling of security for the collections. Mr. Falvey might like to pick up on the artists' spaces.

**Mr. Conor Falvey:** Under the national development plan, we have a proposal with Dublin City Council looking at identifying a sum of money. That issue has come back strongly in feedback generally. It came back in our Culture Ireland engagement with the art sector at the end of January as well. There are fewer marginal spaces that artists can move into because of development and the growing economy. It is more difficult now. Dublin is probably the area where the issue is most acute. It is worth seeing what we can do in the first instance in the city.

More generally on the national cultural institutions, through the Government capital and current funding is available, and the two are not always interchangeable. The Department made a bid under the national development plan to maximise resources. The outcome was a substantial programme for the national cultural institutions. Historically, there has perhaps been some under-investment in the national cultural institutions. There is a demand, as the Secretary General has identified. In the National Library, for example, there has been a risk associated with the storage of the collection of books in the west wing, which has been well known for some time. That has now been addressed by the development of the new storage in the old National College of Art and Design building adjacent to Leinster House. In the coming weeks, as those materials migrate, the risk will be mitigated significantly. There are other issues relating to everything from access for people with disabilities to the Natural History Museum to issues at the National Concert Hall in respect of the operation of that building that require to be addressed. I would not like to characterise one as being necessarily at odds with the other.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** Difficult choices have to be made. There is enough money for both but, if there clearly is not, is the category of investment in local arts and cultural infrastructure nationwide where artists' spaces are included? That is on page 17 of Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027.

**Mr. Conor Falvey:** That is all capital funding.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** That is capital for regional-----

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** Artists' spaces are capital. They are both capital.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** Yes.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** Can I just assume when we hear commitments from the Department about artists' spaces that they come under this heading? I do not see "artists' spaces" written in respect of any of the financial commitments.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** Yes.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** It is €40 million versus other vast sums. The National Concert Hall has €78 million and the Abbey Theatre has €80 million.

**Mr. Conor Falvey:** Going back, the thinking when the national development plan was being drawn up was that there had been significant investment during the previous decade in local arts infrastructure, particularly in regional locations. Quite a number of arts centres were built under the access schemes in the late 1990s and into the 2000s. The question was more around what the priority was and if €40 million was enough to deal with emerging demands and the maintenance of those facilities. In fairness, we are in something of an evolving situation with the rate at which economic growth is taking place. The pressure on artists' spaces is an evolving and emerging issue to some degree. There is scope within the national development plan to respond to those pressures. We are engaged with the local authorities in the areas where those issues are most acute.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** We would be happy to see proposals from local authorities on artists' spaces. We have also increased funding to the Arts Council significantly in the past year. The Minister secured a €7 million increase in its funding. Money that goes to the Arts Council goes to artists. It is another piece of the jigsaw in terms of supporting artists but we are cognisant of the issues in urban areas particularly, the pressure on buildings generally and the impact it has on artists.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** My concern with the Arts Council moneys is that we can put €20 million, €30 million or €40 million more into the Arts Council and it will be spread around but the people moving from project to project will still earn €10,000 a year. It will not do anything to address security in people's lives. The capital funding is an opportunity to offset some of the costs and pressures on people. The negative effect of not having creative people in our city centres is well documented. There is creative flight; I am seeing friends go to Berlin or London. More could be done. Political priorities have to be set for the period up to 2027. I do not see artists' spaces as being prioritised with the likes of the cultural institutions.

I will move on to the hedgerow conversation that has been going on over the past six weeks. There have been high-profile hedgerow cutting cases which led to destruction before cutting was restricted under the Heritage Act. I refer to cuttings in Offaly performed by Irish Rail, on the N7 performed by Kildare County Council, and vegetation cutting in Trinity College, Dublin. The protection of national heritage and biodiversity and conserving our natural and built heritage are commitments from the Department in this plan. Considering that all of the cases I mention were performed by State bodies, possibly outside of the law, is the Department aware of them and will action be taken?

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** We are aware of those three cases. They are being investigated.

We are in discussions with the bodies involved. I cannot go any further than that at this stage. There may be very good, valid safety reasons that these works were undertaken. They are being looked into at the moment.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** I accept that. We had the copyright Bill back in the Seanad. I accepted an amendment from the Department deleting an amendment I had previously had accepted in the Chamber relating to a digital deposit scheme. The witnesses spoke about safeguarding collections being a priority. There does not seem to be much urgency from the Minister of State, Deputy Halligan. I am constantly told it is the remit of either the officials or the Minister of State, Deputy Halligan. Can I have an update on the digital deposit scheme? We are losing our digital memory very fast and most web pages disappear within 100 days. We are losing our national memory. I am anxious that a lead is not being taken on the issue.

**Mr. Conor Falvey:** I understand that the National Library is engaged in collecting archived websites. I can get an update on that for the Senator. In terms of digitalisation generally, that legislation is not ours but there is a fund under the national development plan for digitisation which is aimed primarily at national collections or other projects in terms of cultural content. That is about promoting access and engagement and providing opportunities for people to engage with national collections who may not be able to make the physical journey to visit a national cultural institution in Dublin. I will get the Senator an update on the role of the National Library in that matter.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** We have funding of €2.3 million going out mainly to our cultural institutions for digitisation, with €550,000 going to the National Gallery, €272,000 to the National Museum, €675,000 to the National Library, which is heavily involved in digitisation, €284,000 to the Irish Museum of Modern Art, IMMA, and €200,000 to the Chester Beatty Library, which just launched its digitised collection. This makes it less of a Dublin cultural institution and opens it up to the rest of the country and the rest of the world. The National Archives received €120,000. Everybody is aware of what we did with the census data and the major success that was, apart from preserving what is there. The Crawford Art Gallery in Cork received €18,000 for digitisation and the Church of Ireland representative church body library received €100,000. The Irish Traditional Music Archive received €100,000 and the Contemporary Music Centre received €20,000. All that funding was for digitisation and we are very alive to the importance of preserving the collections through digitisation, as well as through the structural works we are doing in the institutions.

**Chairman:** I will have to go shortly to another meeting so I might ask Deputy Smyth to chair the meeting. The sum of €10 million for digitisation is a minuscule amount in comparison with what is required, given the scale of the amount of material involved. Approximately 95% of museums' material is in storage and has never been digitised. We do not even know what is there or what has gone missing. There is value in putting this online, available or at least recorded in some way. I appeal that we do as much with the national collections as possible. I acknowledge the fund is there over the period of the strategy. I have been trying to get the Minister to fast-track the publication of the census in advance of 2026 for a range of reasons. It is not the only relevant collection and every national institution has a wealth of material that it wants to share with the world. We have the opportunity to do it. I know this takes much money and there is only a certain amount of expertise in the country but it is a bugbear of mine.

I have many other questions but the hedgerows and the roads of Killarney took the time today. We can come back to them at another stage.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** We would be happy to engage with the Chairman bilaterally on those other questions.

**Chairman:** Thank you.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** With regard to digitisation, the difficulty with the census data is that the legal period involved is 100 years. With the 2011 census and earlier census data, a project of “semi-digitisation” already had been done and this made the process much easier. We have to go right back to the drawing board for the 1996 data.

**Chairman:** I am referring more to the historical ones. There was a 1911 census and nothing else until 1926, leaving a 15-year gap. With regard to the decade of centenaries, I have argued that these data could be made available. It is in the lap of the Minister because of the 100-year rule. Given the interest stirred up by the decade of centenaries and the major interest in one of the more successful digitisation projects dealing with pension records, more families will look to their own heritage and genealogy. Much is being done online now, which also helps. We can look at the number of hits on these sites from abroad to see how this is a tourism resource, aside from being an historical and genealogical resource for us here. The material can encourage people to come to Ireland and find out where this, that and the other happened. I will publish slightly changed legislation in the next week or so to try to encourage the Minister to bypass the 100-year rule. In the past it was suggested that the period should be 75 years and this was approved but then ignored by the Seanad.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** There may be issues, including general data protection regulation issues, involving people who may still be alive. There is also a physical issue. We are planning a digitisation project but it will take years.

**Chairman:** We understand and that is why we want it to start now.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** All right.

**Chairman:** I had published legislation in 2013 in the hope it could be finished this year.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** Even starting now, it will take us years but we are on to it. We should also mention the Beyond 2022 digitisation project being run by Trinity College Dublin.

**Mr. Conor Falvey:** The Chairman may be aware of the expert advisory group advice accessed as a member of the all-party Oireachtas committee. There is a proposal to reconstruct as much of the archive records that were lost, as 700 years of material were blown up on 30 June 1922. It is a very exciting project but it is still at an appraisal stage. It offers potential, both in partnership with the National Archives of the UK and the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland in the current context with a North-South and east-west dimension. There are many positive elements and they can go to a great many sources to explore for duplicates of records that could be recreated digitally and made accessible as part of the commemorations programme. It is a recommendation in the advice that has been accepted by the Government and is subject to appraisal now.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** We offer our condolences to the family and colleagues of Mr. Seamus Lawless, as he was one of the key players on that project from Trinity College.

**Chairman:** It would be appropriate to offer condolences from all of us.

I apologise, as I must now escape to save Moore Street.

*Deputy Niamh Smyth took the Chair.*

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth):** I apologise as I missed the first part of the presentation but I have a few questions about the bits and pieces I have heard today. I have heard Cruinniú na nÓg advertised quite a lot nationally and it is wonderful to see. Are the witnesses confident the professional artists taking part will receive a professional fee for their expertise? I heard a figure of approximately 700 projects and that is really important. Will the witnesses speak about the Irish involvement in the Venice Biennale? Is there any collaborative or conversational relationship with the North of Ireland show in Venice as well? Is the work in silos or is there any sort of collaboration?

We spoke a little about film festivals and there is some nice literature. To get parochial, what is the departmental involvement with the Clones film festival? The Market House in Castleblayney has been very much in the headlines. It is a building of huge significance, both in historic, cultural and heritage terms. It was used as a signature piece for the architectural Biennale in Venice as well but it is really falling apart. I have had meetings with the Department about this and I know Monaghan County Council owns the building. What is the involvement of the Department to ensure that building is safe and can be conserved, with a plan for its future put in place? Senator Warfield spoke about artists' spaces and there are not that many of them in Monaghan or Cavan. We have the Tyrone Guthrie Centre but we could do with much more space and this would be an ideal venue for something like that.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** Our policy with Cruinniú na nÓg, the Creative Ireland youth plan, is to pay all artists. Our director of Creative Ireland is not here to confirm it but the committee can pretty much take it as read that artists are all paid. Cruinniú na nÓg is curated through local authorities as well.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth):** Is it part of the criteria that local authorities should ensure that artists should not just be taking part voluntarily? We know artists are wonderful at sharing their time, space and expertise but is it part of the criteria with local authorities that artists are paid a professional fee?

**Ms Katherine Licken:** I am pretty sure it is. I can confirm it for the committee. We had big success in last year's Venice Biennale of Architecture, in that it was curated by our own architects. Mr. Falvey can speak to this year's arts Biennale. A delegation from the Department went to it.

I imagine the Clones film festival is funded by the Arts Council. I do not have the details, but we can definitely come back to the Deputy on it.

On the market in Castleblayney, Mr. Ó Donnchú might talk to the Deputy further about it. In fairness, as the Deputy has engaged in quite a lot of dialogue with us on it and asked the Minister a number of parliamentary questions about it, we are familiar with the issue. There is an historic structures scheme in place to deal with such buildings. Again, we liaise through the local authorities to enable them to come up with proposals for us.

**Mr. Conor Falvey:** On the Venice Biennale, Eva Rothschild curated the Irish pavilion this year. It is supported by the Department in partnership with the Arts Council of Ireland. Representatives of both the Arts Council of Ireland and the Department, through Culture Ireland, attended the opening of the event in Venice. Culture Ireland also liaises with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in its primary role of supporting artists in travelling overseas to build audi-

ences, establish networks and support their work. In that bilateral engagement it also engages on other matters. We primarily see the Arts Council of Northern Ireland as separate, but we do have a relationship with the agency in the Department that delivers that support. It will run until November this year. We were intending to provide the committee with information on showcase events supported by Culture Ireland and Irish artists who are being supported in travelling overseas, including to the Edinburgh festival and Venice, etc. For the information of the committee, in case there are events or showcase events that might be of interest-----

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth):** I am surprised that the committee was not invited. Mr. Falvey talked about a delegation from the Department going to see the show. To me, it is the critical show internationally for the contemporary arts and it is really important for Ireland and this committee to at least be represented at it at some point. I know that it will be open until November. Is it not protocol for the committee to be represented at it?

**Mr. Conor Falvey:** There is nothing to preclude it from being represented if the committee so decides. We will make it our business to make sure it is aware at the start of the year of the full programme of showcase events. If there is anything of interest to committee members, we will facilitate whatever engagement is sought.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth):** That is important because there was little talk about it here and little communication on it. As a former practitioner of contemporary arts and curator, the committee should be represented at the opening to meet the artists, see the space and the exhibition and what is happening internationally.

**Mr. Conor Falvey:** Ultimately it is a matter for the committee to decide what events its members would like to attend or visit.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** We might look at how we should engage with it. The committee has carried out a lot of work and produced a lot of valuable reports, including the most recent report on arts matters. We might think about how we engage in signalling events to the committee on the calendar that might be of interest to it.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth):** Going back to the Venice Biennale, I know that we are getting back to Castleblayney and the market house, but was there a possibility that the show would come to Castleblayney? The building was not used as a model because of its architectural significance?

**Ms Katherine Licken:** I did not hear about that, but we will follow up on it for the Deputy.

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** The market house in Castleblayney could probably not be used and the Deputy knows why, namely, that it is in a dangerous condition. We were delighted to facilitate the recent meeting with Catriona Ryan and our colleagues. Ms Ryan is head of the built heritage division. We are continuing to liaise with Monaghan County Council and Paul Clifford and his colleagues on what is possible. We are in the business of salvage and repurpose, if I can put it like that. The Deputy is right in the context of what her colleague, Senator Warfield, asked about artists' spaces, for which there is funding available on the heritage side. Buildings are best when they are reused or repurposed, as distinct from just being a pretty picture. We would welcome proposals from Monaghan County Council under either the historic buildings fund which will be opened again in November for projects next year or the built heritage investment scheme. As the Deputy knows, last year the Heritage Council of Ireland singled out Castleblayney in the context of historic towns, but, unfortunately, it was unable to accept funding for

the building because of the state it was in. However, our door remains open to the Deputy and Monaghan County Council to discuss what might be done.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth):** Has the Department received any potential plan for it yet?

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** Not that I am aware of since the Deputy's meeting with colleagues in the last two weeks, but we will continue to follow up on the matter. We have stated clearly to Monaghan County Council which is the owner of the building that we will work with it on what is brought forward. We will be open and practical about the salvage and repurchasing of the building.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth):** As Mr. Ó Donnchú knows, the trader was helpful at the meeting. There are many community activists from Castleblayney who dearly love the building which is in a prime location within the town. We have reiterated Mr. Ó Donnchú's invitation to Monaghan County Council and hope we will be able to facilitate the Department and Monaghan County Council to ensure a concrete plan and money will be put in place to salvage the building because it is stunning.

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** I am familiar with it; I have seen it and agree. If there is an opportunity to repurpose it, it could become an artists' space, a performance space or a multi-purpose space for the artistic community. I also stress that the national cultural institutions are artists' spaces.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** They would debate that.

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** We will continue to work constructively with Monaghan County Council.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** Is work on the architectural policy progressing?

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** Yes, but not as quickly as we would like. It is nearing conclusion and we have made commitments to make it publicly available by the end of the year. It is at an advanced stage and we have concluded most of the consultations at this point.

**Ms Katherine Licken:** Mr. Ó Donnchú and his team have been focused on Heritage Ireland 2030. They received 2,000 submissions and there have been 70 consultations worldwide. Therefore, they have been busy, but we are also onto the architectural policy.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** It is important to reflect the feelings and desires of graduate and younger architects who have been frozen out of that sphere.

**Mr. Niall Ó Donnchú:** If we can facilitate a meeting on the issue, we will be happy to do so.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** I appreciate that.

I have a question about nightlife, on which a meeting was held recently with stakeholders. We are losing venues and places in which to dance and socialise. They are culturally significant, not just drinking factories such as those on Harcourt Street. They contribute to the culture of the city and we are losing them. They are being strangled by the licensing laws. Workers in this sphere pay most of their money to get taxis home because there is no public transport available. We spoke about how the Department interacted with all other Departments. Twenty-four hour transport services are one issue, while the licensing laws at night and the Department of Justice

and Equality are another. This is probably an area in which relationships and collaborations are forged and artists make money, but the culture of the city has been hollowed out by hotels and tourism interests. It would not require a huge amount of money from the Government to reform the licensing laws to make it more rewarding for artists, creative people, promoters and musicians who make their money during these hours and do not necessarily need a grant. There is a living to be made and basically we are holding people back. I welcome the moves being made in that regard. It is something about which I have been talking for a while in the Seanad. Will there be a report? If so, can we expect it soon? Will it include recommendations from across Departments for those Departments?

**Mr. Conor Falvey:** The meal took place in April at the Irish Architectural Archive and it was convened at the Minister's behest to get the views of stakeholders on a range of issues. We have an interest in night time culture. Culture Night has been a great success in recent years. We want know to what extent one could increase the usage of cultural institutions such as rolling opening times later in the evening and so on and the feedback on culture and creativity issues. The issues that the Senator raised were brought into sharper focus with the closer of the Tivoli Theatre and District 8 back in the autumn. There was newspaper coverage on the impact the closures would have on the sector. People have given us their views, which we have condensed into a range of issues that have been identified. However, many of them are outside the remit of the Department. As the Senator will be aware, structures have been put in place in other jurisdictions such as night tzars or night mayors, and different terms have been used, to facilitate that engagement and address issues that he raised. We will be in a process of bilateral engagement next with some of the other Departments involved, and perhaps Dublin City Council, to condense the information into a number of concrete measures that could be brought forward for consideration.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** I do not oppose a night mayor but it seems that because there was no focus on this issue for so long, we suddenly need a night mayor. We know what the issues are and a night tzar or night ambassador should not be the main focus at this point.

Earlier this year I attended a meeting with 300 other people in the Sugar Club. There is significant demand and appetite for change in this area. The Catholic Church does not run the dance hall anymore. This follows on from civil marriage and repeal of the eighth amendment. In terms of a political meeting, there were way more people at that early event than I have seen at any meeting on securing marriage equality and repeal of the eighth amendment. This issue suits the Department and we need champions like the Department to run with this cause.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Niamh Smyth):** That concludes the consideration of this matter. I thank the officials again for attending and assisting us with our meeting.

The joint committee adjourned at 3.23 p.m. until 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 12 June 2019.